

**INDIA-PAKISTAN RIVALRY IN THE CONTOURS OF SHANGHAI
COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL (2017-2020)**

By

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to my Parents and my Supervisor Dr. Sarwat Rauf.

ABBREVIATIONS

SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
CARS	Central Asian Republic States
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
LoC	Line of Control
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
SAFTA	South Asian Free Trade Area
SAPTA	SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement
IPI	Iran-India-Pakistan
CBMs	Confidence Building Measures
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
IPRI	Islamabad Policy Research Institute
UNODC's	United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crimes
CARICC	Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre
PLA	People Liberation Army

METCP	Multilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation Program
OBOR	One Belt, One Road
MSR	Maritime Silk Road
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
INSC	International North-South Corridor
UN	United Nations
PoW	Prisoner of War
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
IOK	Indian-Occupied Kashmir
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
RAW	Research and Analytical Wing
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
CCA	Cultural Cooperation Agreement
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammad
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
FATA	Federally Administrated Tribal Areas
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor
CMREC	China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor

EAEU	Eurasian Economic Union
TTP	Tehreek-e-Taliban
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
BLA	Baluchistan Liberation Army
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
CASA	Central Asia-South Asia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
CAS	Central Asian States
SCO-ACG	SCO-Afghan Contact Group
OIC	Organization of Islamic Countries
QCG	Quadrilateral Coordination Group
IS	Islamic State
JLC	Jiangxi Copper Company
MCC	Metallurgical Group Corporation
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation

ABSTRACT

The study analyzes India and Pakistan's rivalry and possible pathways of cooperation after attaining full membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Since the world is moving towards multipolarity, the possibility of attaining cooperation of rival states seems possible. This study examines the role of the SCO in reducing or intensifying tensions between India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan have had cold relations, leading to different wars and arms races. India and Pakistan's rivalry has become a puzzle for the peace agents and policymakers as almost all attempts at peaceful coexistence between the two have failed. SCO was considered a useful instrument to quell regional tension and engage the rival states to preserve stability in South Asia. In this setting, the present study argues that after testing SAARC, the SCO is regarded as a toolbox for fixing frictions between Pakistan and India. They have the potential to enhance relations between India and Pakistan. This thesis analyzes the possible scenarios through which India would accept China's leading role in the region and may get some positive energy from the platform of the SCO for Pakistan's efforts for regional stability.

Keywords: India-Pakistan rivalry, SCO, South Asia, Central Asia, Regional Integration.

Introduction

This study is an endeavor to highlight the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the mitigation of tension between India and Pakistan. SCO has its roots in Shanghai five, which was created in 1996 for cooperation and understanding among the member countries. It was created to settle and de-escalate the border issues between China, Russia, and the three neighboring Central Asian Republics (CARs), namely Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. In 2001, with the inclusion of Uzbekistan Shanghai, five converted into a larger organization, i.e., SCO. The SCO had been a successful platform for the entire member states. Therefore, it is anticipated that SCO would be a helpful instrument to gauge and engage the two important states of South Asia. Since 2005, India and Pakistan have been struggling for full membership but could not be succeeded. After 15 years of establishment, the organization announced its expansion in 2017 when Pakistan and India were the new complete members of the SCO.

Ostensibly, the addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO brought some new dimensions and opportunities for the SCO members. These two states are important South Asian actors in terms of their economy, security, and geography. The two dominating powers, China and Russia, patron status in the SCO, are very concerned about the stability and peace of Central and South Asia. The main reason for the instability in the region is Indo-Pak rivalry and unstable Afghanistan, which has become a hurdle in the economic projects in China. Apart from that, the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan, Daesh-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has expanded its roots due to the unstable political environment. Furthermore, the most significant factor for the addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO was maintaining Afghanistan's stability for regional integration. Besides that, Afghanistan is the only route that connects South and Central Asia for regional economic integration. The primary objective of this enlargement is to indicate a regional combination for economic and security cooperation and maintain a friendly environment among the Central and South Asian states.

Apparently, it is too early to predict the Indo-Pak rivalry impact on the functioning of the SCO. There are some positive directions for the two nuclear South Asian powers, India and Pakistan. SCO provides a platform for the two states to strengthen their bilateral and

diplomatic ties. Nevertheless, China and Russia believe that the two conflicting states would overcome their problems through dialogues and diplomatic relations. China is very much concerned regarding the stability and peace of the region because of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project and its two regional projects China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline (TAPI). Many experts believe that economic and diplomatic cooperation is the only way to resolve the conflict between the two states and bring peace and stability. Like, Richard Rosecrance, a scholar of interdependence liberalism, argued that conflict occurs only between less developed states. However, the developed states engage with large economic integration and do not wage war against each other.¹ In the case of the India and Pakistan rivalry, SCO can play a productive role in imparting a podium for the neighboring states to start cooperating for economic development and fight against common threats. This economic interdependence averts the conflict between the two states.²

The two states, India and Pakistan, cut down their bilateral ties and sealed their borders for trading with each other. Many scholars also thought that the position of the SCO would be dormant, just like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In the case of SAARC, the dominating power was India; however, in the context of SCO, the dominating power is China and Russia. They both are very concerned about their aims and goals in the region. There are two different scenarios in these two regional organizations.

In addition, the two years of enlargement, still they have icy relations between them. The tensions between the two countries brought a severe risk to the future working of the SCO and its members as well. Some conflicting factors raise the stress between Pakistan and India, i.e.; the Pulwama attack triggered the conflict on the Line of Control (LoC) between the two countries. India has abolished Articles 370 and 35A and the controversial Citizenship Act, worsening the situation. Hence, the role of SCO has become more relevant to India-Pakistan relations.

¹Robert Jackson and Georg Sørensen, "Introduction to International Relations, Theories and Approaches,"(*Oxford University Press, 2013*):47.

²Riaz Khokhar, "Pakistan and India's Membership in SCO: Implications for Bilateral Cooperation," *Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad* vol.VI, no.2 (2019):25.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines the puzzling situation for an important regional organization in the globalized world. This is the world of multipolarity where many different organizations work for the state's security and stability and an economic perspective. Likewise, the SCO is a multipolar forum that worked on protecting its member countries in the past. With the successful historical record of the SCO in the resolution of border disputes among the member countries, Pakistan and India joined the SCO in 2017, where Indo-Pak rivalry has become a conundrum for it. India and Pakistan's rivalry started with their independence as several political, ideological, and geographical factors triggered them. The main problem between the two states is Kashmir. Kashmir dispute has been an unresolvable issue since 1947, and several resolutions have passed along with mediation to settle this issue but failed.

Nevertheless, the problem has not been solved yet because of some pig-headed leaders in India. India and Pakistan brought this issue to SAARC and many other international fora to resolve this matter. However, this issue has been the main reason for conflict between the two states. The situation became more complicated after the announcement of the BRI project in 2013.

The two states participated in joint military exercises held in Russia in 2018 for the first time on the platform of SCO throughout its conflicting history. Apart from the above, tensions between the two states had escalated in 2019 under the new Modi government to cut bilateral ties. The current situation in Kashmir poses the greatest risk for SCO leadership. SCO needed to build peace between the two conflicting bodies of India and Pakistan for their future cooperation. Maintaining peace between the two nuclear powers is necessary to prevent further regional security problems. In this complex situation, this study is being conducted to investigate the role of SCO in resolving disputes in Indo-Pak rivalry. The main question is how the SCO will change the foreign policy behavior of India and Pakistan.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the new dimension in India and Pakistan rivalry after entering into SCO.
- To solve the paradox of compatibility-incompatibility of India-Pakistan's relations with the regional integration project of SCO.
- To analyze the implications of the expansion of SCO for the member states.

Research Questions

1. What role SCO can play in diffusing the tension between the two?
2. How will India-Pakistan's strategic interests impact the functioning of the SCO vis-à-vis regional integration?
3. How would the enlargement of SCO reward or pose risks to SCO members?

Literature Review

The available literature on the current topic is scarce; however, a plethora of books and articles have been produced from a historical perspective. There are so many books and articles written in India and Pakistan. Yet, limited work is done on India-Pakistan's entry into SCO and its regional impact.

An article "What is Driving India's and Pakistan's Interest in Joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?" by Maj Jefferson E. Turner³ elaborated on the strategic interests of India and Pakistan that drive both the states to achieve full membership in the SCO. The two states have been struggling for full membership since 2005. The author discussed the possibilities and implications for India and Pakistan to join SCO. He described many possible situations that occur after they enter the SCO. The current geopolitical and geo-economics dynamics between Central and South Asia play an essential role in the Asian region. The author discusses the SCO members and bilateral

³Major Jefferson E Turner, "What Is Driving India's and Pakistan's Interest in Joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?" *Strategic insights* 4, no. 8 (2005).

relations between India and Pakistan and their benefits for the two states as well as for the SCO member states.

In the article “Beijing's Perspective on Expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: India, South Asia, and the Spectrum of Opportunities in China's Open Approach,” by Jagannath P. Panda⁴ elaborated that China is the founding member of the SCO and is very concerned about its goals and achievement. China views the SCO as a valuable forum for its regional economic projects to promote in the two regions Central and South Asian regions. The writer further discussed that China is contemplating the expanded SCO to include Pakistan and India for further regional integration. He viewed several new strategic trends in the SCO's future goals expansion issues, Afghanistan's stability, and the rise of SCO as a comprehensive regional organization in Central and South Asia. The author explained that there are many questions raised on these trends whether they want to stick to the status quo after inducting new members into the organization or not?

Abdul Rab Baloch in the article “SCO, India, and Pakistan: New Perspectives and New Hopes,”⁵ discussed the organization's background and the strategic importance of the expansion of Pakistan and India in the SCO. The SCO got the new dimensions after adding the two most important countries, Pakistan and India of South Asia, in terms of security, economic, and geographic aspects. The author talks about the important factors that added India and Pakistan to the organization. He discussed the Daesh factor that expanded in Afghanistan after the taking out of the US troops from the state. Russia and China are very concerned about the expansion of ISIS in Afghanistan because Afghanistan is a significant state for the two major powers to achieve their aims in the region. On the other side, China is investing lots of money in Afghanistan regarding its BRI projects that pass-through Afghanistan, and instability in Afghanistan are creating hurdles for China's economic projects. Pakistan and India are the only two states that helped maintain stability and peace

⁴Jagannath P Panda, "Beijing's Perspective on Expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: India, South Asia, and the Spectrum of Opportunities in China's Open Approach," *Asian Perspective* 36, no. 3 (2012):493-530.

⁵Abdul Rab Baloch, "SCO, India and Pakistan: New Perspectives and New Hopes," *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* Vol.50, 2018 (2018):10-13.

in South Asia, especially in Afghanistan. India and Pakistan help in security sectors and help to provide linkage from Central to South Asia through Afghanistan in the future.

The article “Challenges and the future direction of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),” by Stephen Grainger⁶ elaborated on the historical challenges and future of the SCO. He argued that the SCO faces many terrorisms, extremism, and separatism challenges. Due to this, the organization continues to work on the communication and cooperation among all SCO stakeholders and promotes trust relations between member states. He also explained the achievements and challenges of the SCO that the organization achieved and faced in Central Asia for security and stability.

An article of Shabana Fayyaz, “Pakistan and the SCO, Aspirations and Challenges,”⁷ explained the beneficial side of Pakistan as a member of the SCO. There is a positive direction for Pakistan on the political, economic, and diplomatic levels. She further explained that this expansion brings vast opportunities for Pakistan and Afghanistan, India, and the other SCO members. SCO provides Pakistan a platform to strengthen its relations with China, Russia, CARs, and other regional countries, especially India and Afghanistan, for bilateral ties. It provides an opportunity for Pakistan to cooperate with India and Afghanistan to improve regional economic integration that maintains security and peace in the region. India continues to blame Pakistan for giving Pakistan a safe haven to Terrorists, but China and Russia accepted its sacrifices against terrorism and the war in Afghanistan. She explained that China is apprehensive about peace and security in South Asia because of its BRI project. China needs to bring stability to Afghanistan to complete its two regional projects, TAPI and CPEC. SCO provides the two rivals, India and Pakistan, to produce good diplomatic and economic relations to achieve its goals in the region. She describes that China is also concerned about terrorism in the region and makes hurdles in their projects, especially ISIS in Afghanistan, which strengthens its position due to the state's unstable political situation.

⁶Stephen Grainger, "Challenges and the Future Direction of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," *12th EBES Conference – Singapore*, (2014):1691-1710.

⁷Shabana Fayyaz, "Pakistan and the SCO–Aspirations and Challenges," *Journal of Political Studies* 26, no. 1 (2019):95-102.

Another article “Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Conflict Resolution: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and India Bilateral Relations,”⁸ discusses the imperative role of SCO in resolving conflicts between two rival states, India and Pakistan. They describe the two emerging powers, Russia and China, as evolving the two rival states in a diplomatic environment where they interact. The two powers can resolve the conflicts between India and Pakistan through dialogues and diplomatic relations. In the past, the organization has successfully resolved disputes among the members. Hence, this successful behavior set a goal for the regional states that Pakistan and India will surely settle their conflicts through the platform of the SCO. The authors discuss that the primary objective of the SCO for the expansion of the organization is to indicate regional integration and stability for economic cooperation, security, and a friendly environment in South Asia. From China’s perspective, the two South Asian rivals set an unstable environment in the region due to their border disputes. These two states provide the opportunity for regional stability and integration if they resolve their conflicts among them.

In the article “Conflict or Cooperation: India and Pakistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organization,”⁹ by Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Sarfraz Ahmed, and Stuti Bhatnagar explained the possible opportunities for the two countries Pakistan and India in the SCO and the impact of the two rivals over the SCO working in the future. They argued that it is very early to predict the implications of the two rivals’ states over the SCO like SAARC. Russia and China are the two dominating powers in the SCO, while India dominates the SAARC, which sets a huge difference in their working behavior. However, both China and Russia are very concerned about their interests in the region. They will put a pedestal for Pakistan and India to cooperate in the economic and trade sector. The authors also describe that the SCO provides possibilities and cooperation in security and counterterrorism for the two South Asian states, Pakistan and India, to resolve their problems. The two states' have economic interests in the Central Asian States, another factor that the two states cooperate for energy security and trade. It shows some positive aspects between the two states that

⁸Mariam Akhtar, Qurat Ul Ain, and Afifa Kiran, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Conflict Resolution: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and India Bilateral Relations," *NDU Journal* 32, no. 1 (2018):89-97.

⁹Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Sarfraz Ahmed, and Stuti Bhatnagar, "Conflict or Cooperation? India and Pakistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation," *Pacific Focus* 34, no. 1 (2019):5-30.

the two rival states will resolve their disputes and maintain a stable environment for regional cooperation in the future.

The article “Pakistan and India’s Membership in SCO: Implications for Bilateral Cooperation,” by Riaz Khokhar¹⁰ elaborates that the SCO performs a meaningful job in the bilateral relations of Pakistan and India. The inclusion of the two important countries of South Asia, Pakistan and India, in the SCO strengthens and broadens the organization's scope. However, the territorial dispute between India and Pakistan makes this organization a successful platform for the security and economic perspective. The two states' rivalry disrupts the functioning of the SCO like SAARC. The author explained the factors of separatism and territorial disputes responsible for driving the two states, India and Pakistan, into a conflicting zone. Keeping in view the historical background of the SCO that resolves the territorial disputes between the member states raises the question of how the SCO plays a role in reconciling the clash between Pakistan and India. The author explained the two-pronged relations of Pakistan and India in a liberalism paradigm that elaborates on the nature of cooperation between the two rival states. The author describes that liberalist scholars thought that economic cooperation between Pakistan and India brought peace between them. In the case of India and Pakistan, the two countries have less bilateral collaboration, and their borders are sealed for trading with each other. The author explained that the inclusion of the two states in the SCO brought some new dimensions for them to increase their bilateral cooperation, which is good for the two states' security and the rest of the region’s security.

Eva Seiwert explained in the article “India-Pakistan Tensions Test the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Mettle,”¹¹ that the tensions between Pakistan and India test the strength of the SCO. After the two years of expansion, the two states still have icy relations. The SCO was facing a serious summon on its 19th Summit in Bishkek because of an upsurge of violence between India and Pakistan on an Indian base in a Pulwama district that triggered a long conflict between the two states the Line of Control (LoC). The

¹⁰Riaz Khokhar, "Pakistan and India’s Membership in SCO: Implications for Bilateral Cooperation," *Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad* vol.VI, no.2 (2019):23-40.

¹¹Eva Seiwert, "India-Pakistan Tensions Test the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’s Mettle" *The Diplomat*, March 23, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/india-pakistan-tensions-test-the-shanghai-cooperation-organizations-mettle/>

escalation of tensions between Pakistan and India brought a severe challenge for the future of the 18th-year-old organization. The organization needs to get ease between the two rivals if they want to secure its future objectives.

Samarth Trigunaya in the article “Re-Hyphenation of India-Pakistan, Internationalization of Kashmir and the SCO,”¹² explained the strained relationship between Pakistan and India after the expansion of the SCO. The author elaborated on some conflicting factors that suspended the bilateral relations between the two South Asian nuclear powers for the last three years. The gap between the two states deepened when India conceded two contentious legislation the previous year. One was Article 370 of the uncertain area of Kashmir, and the other was the nationality for the refugee of Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Pakistan took the Kashmir issue on many international forums but rejected it. Apart from the above, India uses Pakistan as a critical factor in its electoral gains to win the elections in ‘Bashing Pakistan’ and believes it created many problems in India because of Pakistan. The two states failed to solve the Kashmir issue between them, but when it appeared to sunder the SCO, both the countries acted differently. India and Pakistan have different interests in Central Asia for economic prosperity. The author described that the SCO recently solved the territorial dispute between China and Russia when it moved toward Pakistan and India, how the organization will aid these two rivals’ giants in solving their territorial issue and began its bilateral cooperation. Keeping in view that India will organize the 2020 SCO meeting in New Delhi and invite Pakistan to it. The author argued how the two rivals behaved in this meeting and what implications of this meeting would be on India and Pakistan’s bilateral relations.

Krzysztof Iwanek elaborated in the article “Does India Gain Anything from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?”¹³ In 2020 India will host an annual meeting of the SCO. It is vital for India and Pakistan how much this meeting beneficial for the two states' bilateral relations. Keeping in view that after adding in the SCO, India did not directly confront

¹²Samarth Trigunaya, "Re-Hyphenation of India-Pakistan, Internationalization of Kashmir and the SCO," *Modern Diplomacy*, March 06, 2020. <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2020/03/06/re-hyphenation-of-india-pakistan-internationalization-of-kashmir-and-the-sco/>

¹³Krzysztof Iwanek, "Does India Gain Anything from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization?" *The Diplomat*, January 01, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/does-india-gain-anything-from-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>

China. However, China is the leading member of the SCO and guiding spirit. The SCO forum is essential for India from the Central Asian perspective. India got full membership in 2017, and Pakistan boosted its economy and relations with the Central Asian States, which is already increased in the past. The problem is that India did not have a direct route toward the Central Asian States; it could pass through Pakistan, then Afghanistan, or through Iran. Above all, India and Pakistan did not have good relations, and an unstable Afghanistan created hurdles for India. So, India took the passage of Iran through the Chahbahar port that connects Afghanistan to Central Asia to fulfill its economic thirst. The author argued that there are many questions raised on the functioning of the SCO that how much SCO benefited Pakistan and India by promoting regional peace. Can the SCO take a stance on the Kashmir issue and resolve it? Can the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) take some steps on regional security, whether on the Kashmir issue or unstable Afghanistan? However, Iran and Afghanistan are the observer state of the SCO. It is not only the benefit of India, but the rest of the members benefit as well.

Another article “Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): Opportunities for Pakistan,” by Sarwat Rauf,¹⁴ elaborated that the addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO view as the turning point for the Eurasian belt, especially for Pakistan. Keeping in view that China is involved in Pakistan for its economic corridor CPEC which is significant for China. The SCO dominating powers China and Russia needed to improve regional connectivity between the states from an economic and security perspective. She further explained that CPEC is an economic opportunity for Pakistan and the rest of the states if it succeeds. The author described this new expansion in a theoretical framework of new regionalism, and this is regarding a new beginning of the Eastern Bloc. She further explained that this expansion is not to form an anti-western bloc but to enhance regional cooperation between South and Central Asia for economic and security objectives.

He Zhilong and Abdul Rab in the article “China and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Perspectives,”¹⁵ discussed the significant role of

¹⁴Sarwat Rauf, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): Opportunities for Pakistan," *NUST Journal of International Peace and Stability (NJIPS)* 2, no. 1 (2019):15-26.

¹⁵Abdul Rab and He Zhilong, "China and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Perspectives," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 9, no. 2 (2019):166-171.

China's BRI project that introduced in 2013. It brought so many opportunities and new hopes for the SCO members. They described the BRI project and that this project has six corridors. Furthermore, they elaborated that the main objective of China's BRI is to encourage regional economic connectivity and improve its domestic development. SCO has a vital role in BRI and the 'Silk Road Economic Belt.' The main aim of China is to strengthen its relations with its neighbors' states to achieve its economic goals in the region. In this article, the authors talked about all the economic projects of China that increase the importance of the Central and South Asia region if they succeed.

In the article "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Regional Security," Amna Ejaz Rafi,¹⁶ explained that regional players have an important position in the SCO. The author highlighted the organization's aim and how the organization contributed to bringing peace between India and Pakistan between the two regional states. Some trends are increasing after the two states enter the SCO, i.e., Indo-Pak rivalry, unstable security in Afghanistan, and contradiction over terrorism. Meanwhile, these trends define the future of the SCO regional integration and economic developments in the Central and South Asian regional cooperation. The author discussed that the member countries make an effort for regional security and reduce the risk of terrorism from the Central and South Asia region.

In the article "Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," by Rizwan Zeb,¹⁷ explained that the SCO appeared as a significant component in the global fora in the previous years. Russia and China are two leading key players in the SCO bringing together. The organization is now expanding toward the other three most important regional players, Pakistan, Iran, and India. Many western and American scholars thought that this security bloc has been a challenge for the US hegemony and interests and believe that China and Russia created this body to oppose the US influence in South and Central Asia. Many American scholars believe that it is another kind of Warsaw pact-type body. The author further discussed that the most important factor is that the two emerging powers, China and

¹⁶Amna Ejaz Rafi, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Regional Security," *JoCA IPRIPAK* 3 (2018):100-116.

¹⁷Rizwan Zeb, "Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," In *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2006): 51-60.

Russia, jointly dominate this organization. In the future, what results will come from this partnership to see the current events in Central Asia.

Theoretical framework

The framework of institutional liberalism posits that international institutes increase the chances of cooperation among states. The roots of Institutional Liberalism well expressed in the work of Robert O. Keohane. In his theory, he argued that organizations play a mediating role between states to maintain mutual trust to reduce their differences. Moreover, organizations also have an impact on state behavior in the formulation of policies and agreements. Institutions also observe the security competition between rival states to foster cooperation and endorse peace and stability. International bodies endow the security information to countries to diminish security threats that could appear out of chaos.¹⁸ The 20th century has widened the conflicts among the states. With the increase in economic interdependency, the world indulged in more conflicts. It seems that world peace and the economy have in danger. Since 1945, economic interdependency has enhanced, and cooperation among the states has become wider. Besides this, interdependency has two sides, positive and negative. Economic interdependency can reduce unemployment and inflation and exceed the growth and prosperity of a state. However, on the other hand, sometimes powerful countries use this dependency as an instrument to exploit the resources of developing countries for their interests. Keohane argued that cooperation could not be misguided when mutual interests exist among the states. However, it has become worse when one group cheats on another.¹⁹ In terms of interdependency, cooperation is necessary to achieve the specific target. Increasing collaboration and mutual trust between states can enhance human values. It can improve the policy coordination and confidence among the governments of each state which is more beneficial for pursuing the common interest. Furthermore, the theory explained that in an environment of global and regional integration, the chances of cooperation increase among states. The economic and strategic interdependency built a long-term relationship among states based on behavior and mutual

¹⁸Robert O Keohane, "Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism," *International Relations* 26, No. 2 (2012). 126.

¹⁹ Robert O Keohane, "After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy," (*Princeton University Press*, 1985).49-57.

interests to gain a particular goal. In the era of terrorism and environmental problems, the cooperation between states has become more powerful than before. Cooperation and trade activities are more beneficial than territorial control and military competition. Despite this, there are two important aspects. On the one hand, the era of a self-governing world is over. Therefore, states are economically interdependent, which reduces the risk of aggressive acts among states. While on the other hand, nuclear competition and territorial control are more dangerous and costly. Instead of all these, economic development is a better approach to reducing state differences towards each other. Therefore, non-cooperation behavior increases the risk of mistrust between states and increases the fear of deception towards each other. The theory examined under what conditions cooperation can be organized when mutual interests exist?

This theory guides comprehension of the importance of SCO in monitoring apprehensions between India and Pakistan. Although it is difficult to attain peace yet, Liberal Institutionalists have brightened the chance of cooperation between states by accepting common interests. In collaboration with RATS, SCO is improving the security tensions between India and Pakistan and managing Peace Missions and joint military operations where the two states participate, enhancing mutual trust between them. Xi Jinping, a Chinese President, stated at the 18th SCO Summit, “We need to expand our security cooperation program from 2019-2021 and keep up with Peace Missions and Military operations to impede terrorism, extremism, and separatism.”²⁰

Since the beginning, Kashmir has been the central element of tension between Pakistan and India. This territorial conflict caused mistrust among them. Nevertheless, it is essential to maintain trust between the two rivals to prevent further problems in the region. In the context of the SCO, it will give a platform for the two rival states to cooperate. The two dominating powers, Russia and China, in the organization have a significant role in fostering mutual trust among them. China is introducing many economic projects in South and Central Asia, where the two states cooperate based on their economic aims and goals.

²⁰ Mukesh Gupta, “Reducing tensions between India and Pakistan needs a regional effort. Here’s how it can happen,” *World Economic Forum*, March 02, 2019. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/03/reducing-tensions-between-india-and-pakistan-needs-a-regional-effort-here-s-how-it-can-happen/>

However, cooperation is the only key factor in resolving the disputes between the two states. SCO will be the best platform for Pakistan and India to solve its long-lasting border dispute to preserve stability and peace. Unfortunately, over time, the relationship between India and Pakistan has become worse than before. It proclaimed that free trade has catered to the security dilemma and brought peace and prosperity between the two rival states. However, the continuation of different treaties such as the Indus water treaty, agreements of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), gas pipelines like Iran-India-Pakistan (IPI) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) agreements and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) are mentioned as cooperation lean towards each other. The continued violence in Kashmir and threats of terrorist activities are mounting the concerns and tensions between the two nuclear states, Pakistan and India. It is now important for China and Russia to bring the two rivals together on one platform and change their foreign policy for each other.

Research Methodology

This research is based on the qualitative method and focuses on the prevailing relations between Pakistan and India. The interpretive approach has been used to understand the complexity of the issue. This approach encompasses social theories and perspectives, showing that reality is socially constructed. The study is analytical.

The sources used to collect data for this research are secondary. Secondary sources of data have given preferred importance, including books, journals, magazines, policy papers, and research articles. It analyzes the newspaper stories and magazine articles as well. It studies the articles related to India, Pakistan, and the SCO and development happening in economic and security areas. Preferably, The Times of India, Dawn, The Nation, The Express Tribune, China Daily, and The Diplomat will be examined intermittently, being published in India, Pakistan, and China. The intended objective is to get material from all sides to remain balanced and impartial. The study includes books of both Western and Asian writers and reports of think tanks working on India and Pakistan relations.

Significance of the Study

The study explores the geostrategic importance of the expansion of Pakistan and India in the SCO. The successful historical background of the SCO brought new opportunities and hopes for the two countries, Pakistan and India, to resolve their disputes through this platform. It discovers the roots of the rivalry between Pakistan and India and its impact on the SCO functioning. It explores the enmity between Pakistan and India with reference to institutional liberalism and gives new momentum to how the two states control their disputes through cooperation. We have studied Indo-Pak rivalry many times in history, but the SCO contours provide a new dimension to the scholars that will help in the future. It gives how regional organization plays their role in resolving the conflicts between the two rival states by using the pattern of regional connectivity and economic development in South and Central Asia.

The research covers the different perspectives of India and Pakistan rivalry, which shows several convergences and divergence interests that could help to strengthen the bilateral relations. This study is an addition to the existing knowledge of Pakistan and India relations in the contours of the SCO. It would help the researchers and academicians open new avenues of research in India and Pakistan relations. The research findings contribute a theoretical point of view that benefits the policymakers to critically analyze the common interests of India and Pakistan for cooperation to make better relations between them.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to Indo-Pak's conflicting interests in the SCO that cause unrest in South Asia. The time for this study would be from 2017 to 2020, as the addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO brought a new dimension for the two states to resolve their constant border dispute and make this region a terror-free region.

Organizational Structure

The study is divided into six sections.

The first part is the Introduction. It will present an overview of the study.

The first chapter, “The Formation of SCO” will present the historical perspective of the SCO and its role in the mitigation of inter-state rivalries.

The second chapter, “India-Pakistan Relations on the heels of SCO Membership,” examines the hostile relations between Pakistan and India and likely chances of cooperation.

The third chapter, “Regional Integration: New Avenues of Cooperation,” focuses on the geostrategic importance of regional integration and the conflicting interests of India and Pakistan.

The fourth chapter, “Enlarged SCO and its Implications on the Ongoing Efforts of Regional Connectivity,” presents the impacts of expansion on the SCO members and anticipates the management of disagreements.

The sixth part is the conclusion which renders recommendations and findings of the research.

CHAPTER- 1

THE FORMATION OF SCO

This chapter discusses the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) from a security alliance to an absolute regional economic forum. Its remarkable progress in the past and present will likely be a challenging forum in the international arena. The admission of Pakistan and India to the SCO brought new hopes and many threats to the organization and member countries. However, regional players viewed the SCO as an opportunity to curtail non-traditional threats from Central and South Asia. Moreover, SCO provides a viable cooperative platform where member states interact with each other without any trouble.

1.1 Genesis of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

During the 1990s, the fall down of the USSR changed the entire geopolitics of the world. Fifteen states gained independence from USSR, including five Central Asian countries. CARs shared borders with China and Russia, and the region was struggling with an extreme level of violence and civil war, especially in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. During the early Post-Soviet years, China's involvement in Central Asia was minimal; however, Russia and the US had an important presence in the Central Asian region. Many reasons forced Beijing to engage in Central Asia, including; newly independent states at the western border, unstable security problems, and the rise of extremism. The most significant concern of China was its western border with several ethnic minorities, and the Uyghur population that had a strong connection with the Central Asian states created serious problems for Beijing. Under these circumstances, China needs to deal with this region and its strategic partners, Russia and the US. Moreover, there was a need to recognize the borders between the former Soviet states and China. Therefore, in 1996, China took the initiative in a Shanghai summit meeting to establish the 'Shanghai five mechanism' to secure and identify the borders between them.²¹

²¹Michael Fredholm, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics: New Directions, Perspectives, and Challenges," (*NIAS Press*, 2012):33.

Surprisingly, it was the first time two competing powers with divergent interests cooperated under one platform. They signed an agreement of ‘Deepening Military Trust’ and ‘Reduction of Military Forces’ in border regions within the same year to maintain the mutual trust between the five states and prevent security threats at borders.²² These agreements among the five states Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, developed a group named ‘Shanghai five.’ With the addition of Uzbekistan to the firm, they opted to expand the group into a larger regional organization for security and economic perspectives.

The SCO is a permanent intergovernmental organization and signed the declaration on 15 June 2001.²³ The key purposes of this organization were to solve the issue of border security and cope with the growing security threats in Central Asia. The organization aims to combat the three evils of terrorism, extremism, and separatism. With a primary focus on security cooperation, the organization also highlights economic collaboration. In 2001, the six group members signed a Declaration on the founding of the SCO and formed the regional organization.²⁴ Later, Pakistan and India’s admission to the SCO extended the organization. The membership of the SCO grew, along with eight members, four observer states viz Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia, and Belarus, and six dialogue states, namely Azerbaijan, Turkey, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Armenia.

Initially, the organization's main objective was to build strong, friendly relations, cooperation, and mutual trust among the members. However, over time, the SCO expanded from confidence-building measures to security collaboration to fight the three demons: separatism, extremism, and terrorism. The organization deal with regional security along with economic integration simultaneously. The organization members stated that the organization's main focus is on security, economic, and political areas. The most important

²²Stephen Aris, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Mapping Multilateralism in Transition," *International Peace Institute*, no. 2 (2013):2.

²³Nabila Jaffer, "The First Enlargement of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Implications," *Institute of Regional Studies*, Vol. xxx No. 1 (2016):3.

²⁴Alyson JK Bailes et al., "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Stockholm* 17 (2007):4.

principle of the organization is that there is no interference in the internal matters of member countries, so they focus less on domestic issues.

The terrible incident of 9/11 in the US brought many new realities of geopolitics and started the “war on terror” campaign in Afghanistan to fight against terrorism. This incident pushed the SCO members to rethink the objectives and goals of the organization to secure its role in the international world. In June 2002, the organization charter was adopted to assert an open way for third-world countries to participate in the SCO. The charter introduced many new areas of participation that include observer status, full membership, dialogue partnership, and individual projects. However, in 2003, the organization was declared an International Organization at the global level.²⁵ According to some analysts, the SCO is the structure of collective security for all the member states. In the view of Mikhail Troitskiy, the SCO postulated a joint platform for the security of the Central Asian states to prevent interstate conflict. They also provide a podium for the cooperation of economic gains.²⁶ A Chinese scholar, Pan Guang, argued that the SCO provides a broader platform for security cooperation and stipulates a huge platform for economic cooperation. It is observed that the SCO requires a platform for the third world countries to cooperate for regional security and stability.²⁷

In 2004, Regional Anti-Terrorism Centre (RATS) was introduced to figure out Central Asia's terrorist organizations and terrorist activities. This organization organ also enhanced cooperation and coordination between the member states. In addition, Mongolia got observer status in the same year; however, Pakistan, Iran, and India took observer status in 2005.²⁸ The color revolution crisis in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia again increases the concerns of the SCO member states, especially Russia and China. In this context, the member states collaborate and manage the region's security again.

²⁵Michael Fredholm, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics: New Directions, Perspectives, and Challenges” (*NIAS Press*, 2012):36.

²⁶Mikhail Troitskiy, "A Russian Perspective on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SPRI)*, (2007):40.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Michael Fredholm, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics: New Directions, Perspectives, and Challenges,” (*NIAS Press*, 2012):37.

Moreover, Afghanistan has been a significant security concern for all the SCO member countries in the past. From the Soviet-Afghan war to the US war on terror that ended with the withdrawal of the US forces in Afghanistan, had a great concern for the SCO members. The political, security, and economic condition of Afghanistan after 2014 had a paramount concern for the SCO member's interests, especially China.²⁹ Many experts stated that the withdrawal of the US forces in Afghanistan brought many new opportunities and challenges for the SCO members. However, it is now the responsibility of the SCO that they continue to cooperate with Afghanistan economically and politically. Senator Arifullah Pashtun stated at a conference of Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) that there is a need to restore the Silk Route that brought many economic activities for members and Afghanistan. SCO should seize Afghanistan in combined economic projects that increase the country's legal economy. China also invested in the infrastructure developments of Afghanistan and removed all barriers to the trade route for the country's stability.³⁰

In the context of economic integration, Afghanistan is a very important state for China and the other members because of its geographical location that connects Central and South Asia to the Indian Ocean. Meanwhile, the inclusion of India and Pakistan is one of the important security apprehensions of the organization that help preserve the security unrest in Afghanistan. China did not forget the struggle of Pakistan in the war on terror campaign that badly destroyed Pakistan internally. Therefore, Pakistan and India are the two South Asian regional powers that help China and the other members of the SCO to stabilize Afghanistan's condition for regional security and peace. Moreover, since 2005 the SCO took large Peace Missions and military exercises conducted in the SCO member states.

²⁹João Arthur da Silva Reis and Guilherme Henrique Simionato, "The SCO and Post-War Afghanistan: New Challenges to Regional Cooperation," *Model United Nations Journal*, Vol. 1 (2013):135.

³⁰Senator Arifullah Pashtun, "Prospects of SCO's Role in Afghanistan Beyond 2014" (paper presented at the SCO's Role in Regional Stability Prospects of its Expansion *IPRI*, 2013):74.

1.2 Pragmatic Dimensions of Cooperation

The SCO is expanding its cooperative role in security and economic areas to deal with terrorism, extremism, and separatism and manage energy crises in Central and South Asia to look up mutual trust and continue friendly relations among member states. Also, the organization work on many bilateral and multilateral economic projects that engage the member states with each other under one platform.

1.2.1 Security Cooperation

The SCO took initiatives from Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) to remove the border tensions among the member states and later expanded as a security alliance. Initially, the SCO's security policy focuses on member's internal issues, such as the stability of the states and their governance, which has been extended to the multinational issue of terrorism. The key component of the SCO is to fight against the term "three evils" in the region. This new regional security approach in the organization focused on the terrorist activities and criminal networks across the region to tackle illegal activities. In this context, the SCO signed a convention on Combating Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism in 2001 to handle the internal instability and insecurity in Central Asia, Russia, and China, such as civil war and anti-regimes groups in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. In 2004, the SCO recognized Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) to overcome these three evils.³¹ It is responsible for accumulating up-to-date records about terrorism, extremism, and separatism throughout the region, sharing intelligence on all illegal activities and balancing tactics and goals among the member states. Moreover, in 2007 the SCO signed a joint-military exercises agreement which was further expanded as a "Peace Mission" to overcome the security challenges in the region.³²

Since 2000, the main feature of the SCO's security approach has been to combat three evils within the region. With the growth of non-traditional security threats, it is observed that the organization adopts a new security approach to control these issues. There is a need to

³¹Stephen Aris, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Mapping Multilateralism in Transition," *International Peace Institute (IPI)*, (2013):4.

³²Marcel De Haas and Frans-Paul Van der Putten, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Towards a Full-Grown Security Alliance?" *Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael*, (2007):18.

highlight these problems that have long-term security implications for the region. It included illegal narcotics trade, organized crime, social and economic deprivation, natural disasters, and elections monitoring.³³ In the past, the illegal narcotics trade becomes the most prominent issue in Central Asia because of the instability in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a hub of trading illegal narcotics that pass-through trade routes from Central Asia and Russia to Europe. In 2010, the SCO and other regional and global platforms handled the illegal narcotics trade across the region and beyond. RATS signed a cooperation protocol with United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) and the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre.³⁴ From 2011-2016, the SCO adopted an anti-drug policy to tackle with all these illegal activities and crimes inside and outside the region. However, this is the most important source that funded the terrorist organizations in the region. In the view of Wang Jin and Kong Dehang, “with each passing day, terrorist and illegal activities increases which is a major concern for the CARs and China. However, the SCO provides a regional and international platform to China and CARs to cooperate and peacefully prevent terrorism.”³⁵

1.2.2 Joint Military Operations

Since 2002, military exercises have had an influential role in the security policy of the SCO. SCO organized these joint-military drills from bilateral to multilateral levels. In 2002, the first anti-terrorist armed exercise started between the Chinese and Kyrgyz at the bilateral level.³⁶ Therefore, the armed forces of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Kyrgyzstan forces held exercises at the border of the two states. In 2003, SCO arranged an anti-terrorist exercise or ‘Coalition 2003’ among the Xinjiang province (China) and Almaty Oblast region (Kazakhstan), and 1000 troops participated.³⁷ It is observed that

³³Stephen Aris, Eurasian Regionalism: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” (*Palgrave Macmillan: Springer*, 2011):102.

³⁴Stephen Aris, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Mapping Multilateralism in Transition," *International Peace Institute (IPI)* (2013):5.

³⁵Jin Wang and Dehang Kong, "Counter-Terrorism Cooperation between China and Central Asian States in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 5, no. 01 (2019):70.

³⁶Richard Weitz, "Military Exercises Underscore the SCO's Character," *CACI*, May 25, 2011. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12293-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2011-5-25-art-12293.html>

³⁷Charles Carlson, "Central Asia: Shanghai Cooperation Organization Makes Military Debut," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 05, 2003. <https://www.rferl.org/a/1103974.html>

this was the multilateral military exercise where China first time participated at the multilateral level. In 2005, joint military exercises were carried out between Russia and China for the first time when two competing powers cooperated on one platform. These military exercises were termed ‘Peace Mission 2005’, which contained 10,000 troops, including navy vessels, aircraft, and military personnel.³⁸ The ‘Peace Mission 2005’ objective was to enhance mutual trust to combat international separatism, extremism, and terrorism and strengthen the mutual trust and practice of modern warfare tactics through military operations between the two states.³⁹

In 2006, SCO member states arranged an anti-terrorist drill in Uzbekistan under the platform of RATS which is based in Tashkent.⁴⁰ This military drill aimed to prevent terrorist groups and increase the capability of the Special Forces of Uzbekistan and provide an in-depth overview of the infrastructure of Uzbekistan. Moreover, the other two military exercises were held in the same year that Tianshan-1’ was rearranged between China and Kazakhstan, whereas ‘Coordination 2006’ was held between China and Tajikistan in Kulyab (Tajikistan).⁴¹

In 2007 the ‘Issyk-Kul Antiterror-2007’ was held between the SCO member states at the Lake Issyk Kul in Kyrgyzstan.⁴² This anti-terror drill aimed to increase the cooperation between the intelligence, law enforcement agencies, and Special Forces in the mountainous areas where terrorist activities expanded with each passing day. Besides, the anti-terrorist military exercise termed ‘Peace Mission 2007’ was prepared between the Russian Chelyabinsk region and China Xinjiang province. It was an important peace mission because all the SCO members participated in it for the first time and organized large-scale military exercises comprised of air and land area. It involved 6500 troops and 2000 military

³⁸Martin Andrew, "Power Politics: China, Russia, and Peace Mission 2005," *The Jamestown Foundation*, September 27, 2005. <https://jamestown.org/program/power-politics-china-russia-and-peace-mission-2005/>

³⁹"First China-Russia war games begin," *The Guardian*, August 18, 2005.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/aug/18/china.russia>

⁴⁰Roger McDermott, "Uzbekistan Hosts SCO Anti-Terrorist Drill," *The Jamestown Foundation*, March 16, 2006. <https://jamestown.org/program/uzbekistan-hosts-sco-anti-terrorist-drill/>

⁴¹Marcel De Haas, "War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the Move," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 3 (2016):383.

⁴²"SCO Conducts Counter-Terrorism Exercises in Kyrgyzstan," *UZ Daily*, May 30, 2007. <https://www.uzdaily.uz/en/post/432>

hardware (technical communication) in this peace mission that was dominated by China and Russia.⁴³

Nevertheless, the 'Peace Mission 2009' was held again between Russia and China at the place of Khabarovsk (Russia) and Shenyang (China) in 2009. In this exercise, 2600 troops were taking part in it and it was a large-scale anti-terror exercise including armed forces of each country.⁴⁴ The 'Norak Anti-terror 2009' exercise was organized in Tajikistan in the same year. The joint staff of anti-terrorist and all the ministers of defense branches of SCO member states have participated.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the exercise aimed to focus on the current complex situation in Afghanistan and highlight the combined action of anti-terrorist activities.

In 2010, the two anti-terror exercises arranged in Russia and Kazakhstan were 'Saratov-Anti-terror 2010' and 'Peace Mission 2010', whereas 5000 troops took part in the exercise.⁴⁶ Tianshan-2 was organized in China in 2011 in the Xingang Uyghur region under the umbrella of RATS.⁴⁷ There were two anti-terrorist exercises, 'Peace Mission 2012' and 'East Anti-terror 2012', held in Khudzhand (Tajikistan) and the Jizzakh region (Uzbekistan), and above 2000 troops took part in these military drills.⁴⁸ There was an area in Shymkent in Kazakhstan where terrorists hijacked the area and conducted illegal activities. Meanwhile, the 'Kazygurt-Antiterror-2013' anti-terror exercise was organized in Kazakhstan, where only three member states participated. However, it was a small-scale military drill conducted in Shymkent.⁴⁹ The 'Peace Mission 2013' arranged between China and Russia in the Ural and Chelyabinsk area seeks to maintain peaceful settlement in the

⁴³Roger McDermott, "The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007," *The Jamestown Foundation*, (2007):13.

⁴⁴Jilin Taonan, "'Peace Mission-2009' Improves Anti-Terror Response: Chinese Military Officer." <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/cetur/eng/xwdt/t576511.htm>

⁴⁵Irina Dubovitskaya, "Norak-Antiterror Is a Military Training for SCO Anti-Terrorist Forces." <http://infoshos.ru/en/?idn=4086>

⁴⁶Richard Weitz, "China's Growing Clout in the SCO: Peace Mission 2010," *The Jamestown Foundation*, October 08, 2010. <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-growing-clout-in-the-sco-peace-mission-2010/>

⁴⁷Richard Weitz, "Military Exercises Underscore the SCO's Character," *CACI*, 2011. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12293-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2011-5-25-art-12293.html>

⁴⁸Roger McDermott, "China Leads SCO Peace Mission 2012 in Central Asia," *The Jamestown Foundation*, June 26, 2012. <https://jamestown.org/program/china-leads-sco-peace-mission-2012-in-central-asia/>

⁴⁹Marcel De Haas, "War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the Move," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 3 (2016):385.

region hijacked by terrorists' activities.⁵⁰ In 2014 the anti-terrorist exercise arranged between SCO member states was termed 'Peace Mission 2014'. It was a large-scale military exercise at Zhurihe Training Base in Inner Mongolia and 7000 troops.⁵¹ Besides, extra military exercises were arranged in the same year at Tokmok, Shamsi Gorge, and Chui region in Kyrgyzstan. The 'Central Asia Anti-terrorist exercise' was organised among the member countries of the SCO in 2015, where all the joint staff of counter-terrorism personnel took part.⁵²

In 2016, the 'Peace Mission exercise' was held in the Issyk-Kul region of Kyrgyzstan among the SCO member states, whereas 1100 troops took part in this exercise.⁵³ This exercise aimed to counter regional crises at the multilateral level to overcome International Terrorism. With the involvement of Pakistan and India in the SCO in 2017, which can change the complete political dynamics of regional security, now their focus is on South Asia and Central Asia. In 2018, the 'Peace Mission 2018 exercise' was arranged among the SCO member states where India and Pakistan participated. It was the first time that Pakistan and India had cooperated in a military exercise at the same platform organized in the Chebarkul town of Chelyabinsk Oblast, Russia. Moreover, 3000 troops took part in the exercise to handle the counter-terrorism activities and develop new techniques to deal with these insurgencies in the two regions, South and Central Asia.⁵⁴ Also, in 2019, an anti-terrorism exercise was held in the area of Orenburg in Russia, where China and other SCO members and India and Pakistan participated.

It is evident that these military exercises did not provoke any arms race in the region but gave a message of mutual trust and confidence-building measures across the globe. Richard Weitz stated that "the military exercises enhance the ability of the SCO members to tackle

⁵⁰ Marcel De Haas, "War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the Move," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 3 (2016):385.

⁵¹ Richard Weitz, "Analyzing Peace Mission 2014: China and Russia Exercise with the Central Asian States." <https://sldinfo.com/2014/10/analyzing-peace-mission-2014-china-and-russia-exercise-with-the-central-asian-states/>

⁵² Marcel De Haas, "War Games of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization: Drills on the Move," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 29, no. 3 (2016):386.

⁵³ Daniel Urchick, "What we learned from Eurasian 'Peace Mission 2016,'" *Defense IQ*, October 10, 2016. <https://www.defenceiq.com/air-land-and-sea-defence-services/articles/what-we-learned-from-eurasian-peace-mission-2016>

⁵⁴ Sadia Kazmi, "SCO Peace Mission 2018: Prospects for Peace in the Region," *Modern Diplomacy*, August 30, 2018. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2018/08/30/sco-peace-mission-2018-prospects-for-peace-in-the-region/>

regional security threats in the region such as terrorism. It also increased the opportunity for the military forces to learn new tactics and techniques to prevent non-traditional security threats in Central Asia.”⁵⁵

1.2.3 Economic Cooperation

Since the inception of the SCO, the organization has focused on political, economic, and social issues amongst member states. The member countries have signed many bilateral and multilateral agreements on security and economic problems. As stated in the SCO Charter of June 2002, SCO members build mutual trust and friendly neighborly relations and promote cooperation in economic, political, security, and social issues.⁵⁶ The organization strictly adopted the charter and performed little effort in economic cooperation because of unstable security conditions in Central Asia. The concentration was on Central Asia at once, and both security and economic elements became interlinked. In 2003, Multilateral Economic and Trade Cooperation Program coordinated many new objectives for economic cooperation. The program was set out over hundred different projects that included trade, infrastructure, telecommunication, transportation, energy, and agriculture. From 2003 to 2006, the organization created new mechanisms such as Business Council, Inter-Bank Consortium, and Development Fund to implement this program successfully.⁵⁷

Economic cooperation is also an important element of the multilateral mutual support between the SCO member countries. Sreemati Ganguli viewed that “SCO member countries shared a rich energy block where all the member countries are rich in natural resources. It is a great opportunity for the organization to cooperate over energy reserves not as a producer but as a supplier.”⁵⁸ They strictly focused on macroeconomic projects to reconstruct transportation routes and develop the state’s infrastructure. SCO played a vital

⁵⁵ Richard Weitz, "Military Exercises Underscore the SCO's Character," *CACI*, 2011, <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12293-analytical-articles-caci-analyst-2011-5-25-art-12293.html>

⁵⁶Michael Fredholm, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics: New Directions, Perspectives, and Challenges" (*NIAS Press*, 2012):254.

⁵⁷ Richard Weitz, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Fading Star?" *The Asian Forum*, August 11, 2014, <https://theasianforum.org/the-shanghai-cooperation-organization-a-fading-star/>

⁵⁸Michael Fredholm, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Geopolitics: New Directions, Perspectives, and Challenges" (*NIAS Press*, 2012):277.

role in the growth of the transportation projects among member states. Central Asian countries are fragile economically and need foreign investment to construct the state infrastructure. In the outline of the SCO, China has become a significant source of an asset in Central Asia. China has invested in many micro and macro-level projects among the SCO member states. In 2004, China generated \$900 million loans for SCO member countries. Again, in 2008-2009, global financial crisis, China endows with \$10 billion loans to SCO member states to develop their economies, which make China a dominant economic player in Central Asian region.⁵⁹ However, the economic institutions of the SCO were weak that imposed barriers on the member countries. Under this arrangement, Vladimir Putin introduced the “Energy Club” in 2006. The idea of the energy club introduced the internal energy market to SCO member states and observer states; however, this idea cannot work properly due to the different interests of members.

The organization recognized that the development of the projects was very slow in the process because they lacked funding sources and relied on the economic support of member states. Therefore, in 2013 the organization discussed the SCO Development Fund, which allocates the funds to increase the SCO joint projects. In this context, China took an immense involvement in Central Asia's progress rather than other member states. China's most concerned about transportation and telecommunication projects in the region because of the new Silk Road Project. The new Silk Road project endorsed the concept of international communications and transportation that increased Central Asia's importance and attracted foreign investments to Central Asia.

Furthermore, the two strong South Asian powers, India and Pakistan, in addition to the SCO, open many new dimensions and opportunities for member countries. It expanded the political and economic landscape of the Eurasian region and increased the possibility of security and peace in the region. With the rise in economic collaboration among the SCO member countries, the Chinese project one belt one road (OBOR) expanded international trade routes along with the other two most important projects: Maritime Silk Road and Silk

⁵⁹Stephen Aris, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Mapping Multilateralism in Transition," *International Peace Institute (IPI)* (2013):7.

Road Economic Belt (SREB).⁶⁰ In addition, China simultaneously expanded these two projects into many other bilateral and multilateral projects in South and Central Asia. While on the other side, Russia also expanded its economic cooperation with China and other member countries. China and Russia signed an agreement to develop an oil pipeline from Russia to China and a gas pipeline from Siberia to China to balance Chinese control in the region.

From the Central Asian stance, the competition between the two powers, China and Russia, neglects the micro-level projects. Their focus on macro-level projects creates hurdles for the internal markets. They are unable to compete with Chinese markets. From a Russian perspective, China is trying to dominate the central Asian region through economic projects. If cheap Chinese products spread in the internal markets, it would threaten Russian dominance.

1.3 Factors Drove India and Pakistan to SCO

The SCO is a regional organization that promotes economic and security interests. Pakistan and India are concerned about their economic and security crisis, and they believe in reducing it by participating in the SCO. They also balanced each other influence on security and economic policies in the region. They have some security and economic interests in Central Asia that both countries pursue to fulfil their objectives.

1.3.1 Pakistan

Pakistan has security and economic interests in joining the SCO. Firstly, terrorism is the most important element that Pakistan has suffered since the war on terror in Afghanistan. Keeping in mind the SCO is a security bloc, and its objective is to curb the three demons of separatism, extremism and terrorism; therefore, membership in the SCO would find an opportunity for Pakistan to tackle the security risks at a domestic and regional level. Pakistan shares its borders with four states: China, India, Afghanistan, and Iran. Pakistan has no good relations with India and Afghanistan. For that reason, Pakistan needs to

⁶⁰Rashid Alimov, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Its Role and Place in the Development of Eurasia," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 9, no. 2 (2018):119.

improve security risks and preserve good relations with its neighboring country to attain prosperity and peace in the region. Secondly, economic interest is another key element, and Central Asia is an imperative region from an economic perspective. To gain access to an energy-rich region, Pakistan should maintain warm relations with CARs. As a member of SCO, it is easy for Pakistan to engage with CARs to meet its economic needs. It is noted that Pakistan and CARs share the same culture and religion; therefore, Pakistan has made efforts to establish a Muslim bloc with CARs to balance India, a rival state of Pakistan, in the past. Pakistan is also concerned about the regional connectivity project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China started in the SCO region. SCO is the best chance for Pakistan to boost its economic growth via connectivity projects.

1.3.2 India

India has joined the SCO for economic purposes. India has three concerns that pushed the country to join the SCO; deepen relations with Russia, expand relations with CARs and prevail over the control of Pakistan and China in the region. Since the beginning, the SCO has made a massive investment in economic cooperation among members. It is noted that the SCO region has a large area of natural resources and a big commercial market for investment; therefore, India desires to meet its two main areas, digital economy and connectivity projects. However, India is not happy with Belt and Road initiative (BRI). Still, it desires to engage North-South connectivity projects such as International North-South Corridor connecting Europe via Russia and linked to Iran through Chabahar port.⁶¹ Therefore, India needs to get full membership in the SCO to meet its goals.

1.4 Inclusion of Pakistan and India in the SCO

The addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO in 2017 inaugurated a new phase of regionalism in South and Central Asia. The two competing powers Russia-China and the two South Asian powers, India-Pakistan, viewed that regional cooperation helps resolve the three evils. This new regional dynamic in South and Central Asia brought many new hopes and opportunities for regional peace and stability. Pakistan and India are the two

⁶¹Asoke Mukerji, "India and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, December 08, 2020. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-shanghai-cooperation-organisation/>

main important nuclear states of South Asia which help the SCO in security and economic cooperation at a regional level. It is evident that India and Pakistan are suffering a long-lasting territorial conflict over Kashmir in the past. The involvement in the SCO gives the two states a platform where they cooperate and resolve their territorial dispute. Keeping in view that Afghanistan is the only bridge country that connects the two regions of South and Central Asia, stability in Afghanistan is the main objective of SCO nowadays.

In 2014, the departure of the US troops left a power vacuum in the country, which caused unrest in the political system of Afghanistan. The instability in Afghanistan is an important concern for both Russia and China because China has invested a lot in Afghanistan's infrastructure and Russia is concerned about Daesh (ISIS) in Afghanistan.⁶² The Chinese Silk Road economic belt project and Russian-led economic integration will be successful if the security problem in Afghanistan is reduced.⁶³ So the two states need to surmount the security concerns in the country.

After participation of Pakistan and India in the last three meetings of SCO, the growing role and potential of SCO were reviewed. Remembering the previous objectives and goals of the SCO, the members established the 'SCO Development Strategy until 2025' that covers all the areas, including political, security, and economics. The member states also stressed the international and regional problems, and Afghanistan's security and stability were the top priority. The cooperation of members on the 'Program of Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism for 2019-2021' has been adopted, giving the SCO-RATS an important role in exchanging complete information on it. The member states make efforts to overcome the political instability in Afghanistan on the bilateral and multilateral level with the help of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group.

It is observed that Pakistan is playing an effective role in dealing with the Taliban while India deals with the Afghan government. However, Pakistan was the main role in fighting terrorism, extremism, and separatism since the 9/11 attack. Hence, the country has good in

⁶²Abdul Rab and He Zhilong, "SCO, India and Pakistan: New Perspectives and New Hopes " *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* Vol. 50 (2018):11.

⁶³William Piekos and Elizabeth C. Economy, "The Risks and Rewards of SCO Expansion," *Council Foreign Relations (CFR)*, July 17, 2015. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/risks-and-rewards-sco-expansion>

dealing with the Taliban. In contrast, India has very good relations with the Afghan government, so it can help the SCO to negotiate with the government and Taliban simultaneously.⁶⁴

In the view of Central Asian states, Pakistan and India's addition to the SCO plays a significant role in economic and security issues. Since their independence, Central Asian states have faced conventional and non-conventional security risks; however, terrorism, extremism, and separatism are the most important issues.⁶⁵ The withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan increases the terrorist activities and drug trafficking in Central Asia more than in the past. Therefore, CARs is very hopeful that India and Pakistan will benefit from overcoming regional security risks and improving the chances of regional integration among the two regions. Central Asia is a landlocked region, so they need the Indian Ocean, and Pakistan is the only place that provides a sea route to central Asian states, and Afghanistan is the only way to enter Pakistan; however, the unrest in Afghanistan can prevent the CARs to get sea access. So, the CARs need to overcome security risks in Afghanistan.

In the framework of Pakistan and India, SCO is helping to overcome the two countries' territorial differences and increase the bilateral cooperation between them. It is observed that China's Silk Road project, CPEC is the most important corridor which passes through the disputed area of Kashmir. It increases the chances of cooperation between India and Pakistan over Kashmir because China never compromises its project. Presently, at the place of Qingdao in 2018, Pakistan and India have expressed their views on regional problems, mutual security threats and challenges and development of economic advancement at the same table with the other member states. It is an effective development of the SCO in the context of Pakistan and India.

⁶⁴William Piekos and Elizabeth C. Economy, "The Risks and Rewards of SCO Expansion," *Council Foreign Relations (CFR)*, July 17, 2015. <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/risks-and-rewards-sco-expansion>

⁶⁵Marcel De Haas, "Relations of Central Asia with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 30, no. 1 (2017):3.

1.5 Causes of Formation and Expansion

The main purpose of SCO's formation is to build mutual trust and friendly relations with member countries, establish valuable cooperation among members from a security and economic perspective and sustain regional peace and stability. To endorse regional security and stability, SCO adopted a charter of non-interference in domestic matters, respect for sovereignty and independence of each member, border security and no use of force towards each other and resolved all matters through discussion. In the beginning, the organization highlighted the three security demons: terrorism, extremism, and separatism, which disturbed the whole Central Asia region and China and Russia. Furthermore, it has expanded its objective towards economic aspects, which leads to regional connectivity projects.

In general, the three conferences annually showed that Pakistan and India discuss regional and international issues, Afghanistan's unstable political environment, economic development, countering security risks, and other cooperative areas such as tourism, sports, culture, and trade. However, the two nuclear powers, Pakistan and India, have not discussed the bilateral issues as SCO restrict the bilateral issues to this regional platform. According to Article 2 of the SCO, independence, mutual respect of sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other internal affairs, territorial integrity of the states, no use of force towards each other, and equality of all the state members, this principle could help Pakistan and India to diminish their bilateral tensions between them.

Nevertheless, the addition of Pakistan and India is an important element for the SCO. Pakistan is a major player in the organization to restrain international terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Pakistan has continuously played an important role in curtailing terrorism and extremism. However, SCO members had suffered security threats, China in Xinjiang province, CARs in Fergana valley, and Russia suffered from Chechens. To overcome the menace, Pakistan is playing a contributive role in it. Geographically, Pakistan provides the SCO member states with the shortest and most costly route to access the Middle East and the Arabian Sea. Besides this, the organization's expansion enhances its potential and development in the international world.

To conclude, SCO's transformative progress in the Eurasian region marked a historic victory. With the growing regional integration trends, the Asian region is the most significant in the light of the global economy. The SCO's progressive effort to combat non-traditional threats in South and Central Asia makes both areas peaceful and stable. Keeping in mind the rivalry of India and Pakistan, instability in Afghanistan, make hurdles in the path of SCO objectives. However, the organization always establishes a way to fulfill its motives just like in the past. Now, it is the responsibility of the SCO how to engage its member countries in cooperative ties and overcome the differences between them.

CHAPTER-2

INDIA-PAKISTAN RELATIONS ON THE HEELS OF SCO MEMBERSHIP

This chapter focuses on the past and present relations between Pakistan and India. The chapter particularly spotlights the change in the level of enmity between Pakistan and India after gaining the membership of SCO. SCO proclaims the resolution of the historical conflicts and cooperation over bilateral peace efforts between the two states, which have never appropriately worked together because of several incidents. In this setting, the current chapter discusses the several dimensions and possible conditions that make the two states involved in cooperative relations overcome their conflictual nature. It is to examine how the SCO plays its cooperative role in involving the two South Asian nuclear powers under one platform for cooperation. To do this, what challenges and opportunities make Islamabad and New Delhi cooperate with each other? However, little progress has been made in the peace process between India and Pakistan within the SCO.

2.1 Reckoning the Pakistan and India's Rivalry

In the past, the two hostile states, India and Pakistan, shared a very cold historical relationship. It is manifest that the two states engaged in four major conflicts throughout history. They fought the first war over Kashmir territory in 1948, where the majority was the Muslim population area ruled by the Hindu ruler Maharaja Hari Singh.⁶⁶ However, the partition was based on the division of the Muslim and non-Muslim populations. The Muslim predominance was part of Pakistan, and the Hindu greater population was part of India. In the case of Kashmir, the ruler was Hindu and decided to accede to India. As a result, it caused a major armed dispute between the two states over the Kashmir area. The combative situation between the two countries was impeded after the UN intervention. In 1965, the second clash between the two aggressive countries was re-recorded over Kashmir territory at the Rann of Kutch area.⁶⁷ This time the war between Pakistan and India was somewhat in a different context. India lost its founding leader Nehru in 1964, which left a large power vacuum in the Indian government, whereas the country also faced unrest in

⁶⁶Muhammad Sajjad Malik, "Pakistan-India Relations: An Analytical Perspective of Peace Efforts," *Strategic Studies* Vol. 39, no. 1 (2019):61.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Kashmir. It gives Pakistani policymakers to plan a final round over Kashmir termed 'Operation Gibraltar'.⁶⁸ According to this operation, a strategy was formulated to deliver aid to the Kashmiri rebellion for fighting against India. Keeping in mind that the unrest in Kashmir was also increased at that time for a change, it was difficult for the Indians to set up any offensive act against Pakistan. Unfortunately, this strategy would not work successfully, and the two opponent countries were involved in a major war, and Pakistan got the victory in this war. The war ended with the intervention of the international community to assemble a ceasefire.

The 1970 elections in Pakistan were the root cause of the third major war between the two countries. The Awami League party won the eastern side of Pakistan (which is presently Bangladesh); however, the power did not shift to the party by 1971.⁶⁹ Therefore, the party's supporters turned to violence and unrest was created in the eastern side of Pakistan. At that time, Z.A. Bhutto won the elections and came to power. To handle the situation, the central government implemented a military crackdown over the eastern side of Pakistan, but the status became worst. Ironically, India intervened in the east part of Pakistan, and each side engaged in a major conflict. Pakistan agonized a defeat and did not secure its eastern side. As a result of this war, several soldiers became Prisoners of War (POW). The Simla Accord was signed in 1972 between the two states to stabilize the relations.

The relationship between the two rivals, India and Pakistan, was in deep crisis during the era of the 80s and 90s. On the contrary, the two countries tested their nuclear weapons. They flared up a new race in the South Asian region that was alarming for the neighboring countries and the International World simultaneously. India tested its nuclear weapon in 1974, while Pakistan exploded its first nuclear test in 1998. The two most important South Asian states declared nuclear power and changed the entire political dynamic of the South Asian region. Besides this, the other minor catastrophes between the two states go from time to time, such as the Siachen glacier, sir creek, water issue, and Kashmir. In 1984, there

⁶⁸Cyril Almeida, "Gibraltar, Grand Slam and War," *Dawn*, August 30, 2015. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1203708>

⁶⁹Muhammad Sajjad Malik, "Pakistan-India Relations: An Analytical Perspective of Peace Efforts," *Strategic Studies* Vol. 39, no. 1 (2019):62.

was news circulating in the media that India planned an attack on Kahuta, which was the nuclear site of Pakistan. In 1986-87, India launched massive exercises termed 'Brass-tacks', which emanated the tension between Indo-Pak, and both states sent their troops to borders to avoid warlike situations there.⁷⁰ To overcome the tension, the US again intervene between the two countries and pushed both countries to send back their troops from the border. During the 1990s, the unrest in Kashmir created tension between Pakistan and India; however, the *raison d'être* behind this tension was the unfair election in Kashmir which started protests in Kashmir. Both the countries blame each other because this protest went on the insurgency in Kashmir. India blamed and accused Pakistan of sending jihadist groups to Kashmir; on the other hand, Pakistan accused India of human rights violations in the Kashmir state. Keeping in mind it was the time of the beginning of the Soviet Union and Afghanistan war. Terrorism was on the rise in the surroundings of both the states. Meanwhile, this era ended with the fourth major war (Kargil war) in 1999 between India and Pakistan.

The Kargil war was the last major war fought between Pakistan and India in 1999, which put both countries' relations at a boiling point.⁷¹ The war went on for three months, and after the intervention of the international community both countries withdraw their forces from the border, but the tension between the two states remains on its peak. The only major concern for the world was that the two countries had become nuclear states that threatened the South Asian region. It is observed that the Kargil crisis destroyed the motive of the Kashmir issue and diverted the international world from human rights violations to the Kargil conflict.

The era of 2000 brought many new challenges and hopes for the two bodies, India and Pakistan. In 2001, illegal terrorist violence on the Indian parliament and later on in 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack diverted the interests of the two sides.⁷² From the Indian perspective, the aggressive reaction came towards Pakistan, and they demanded that

⁷⁰Riaz Mohammad Khan, "Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management: Challenges in Pakistan–India Relations," *Stimson Center* (2018):79.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Riaz Mohammad Khan, "Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management: Challenges in Pakistan–India Relations," *Stimson Center* (2018):80.

Pakistan take serious steps against terrorist groups which ran in Pakistani territory. From the Pakistani perspective, the officials denied the allegations and promised cooperation to investigate the real culprits behind the crisis. In the light of this scenario, the tension between the two states increased with each passing day, and they never came to bilateral talks over the Kashmir issue.

2.2 Indo-Pak Relations under Modi and Sharif Administration

In 2014, a religious-minded party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India, won the elections, and Narendra Modi became the new Prime Minister of India. The relations between Modi and Sharif started with a very warm inauguration ceremony by Modi in New Delhi on 27 May 2014,⁷³ attended by Nawaz Sharif. Sharif was holding the message of peace while leaving Islamabad for a Delhi visit and told the reporter that peaceful dialogues are the only way to overcome the unrest between India and Pakistan. India was also his priority for improving cooperation with them. Again, in August, Pakistan officials met with Hurriyat leaders who impacted India-Pakistan relations, and India cut off all its diplomatic talks with Pakistan. The same year in November, the two leaders, Modi and Sharif, did not hold the SAARC summit meeting at Kathmandu.

The next year would not begin with a fine relationship. Another incident was marked in March 2015 when Pakistan high court commission restrained Zakir Rehman Lakhvi (who India believed was the mastermind behind the 2008 Mumbai attack) and released him. Again, it increased the tension between the two arch-rivals, and India acted against Pakistan in the June UN sanction committee meeting. However, China took the stand on it and said that India did not provide inadequate information regarding this matter. Meanwhile, in July 2015, the two states attended the Ufa summit at the place of Russia, which SCO held.⁷⁴ The two parties stated the issue of terrorism and cross-border ceasefire violations. At the summit, the two sides' joint statement decided that the security advisors of both the states would meet up in Delhi to talk about all the problems related to international terrorism.

⁷³Frederic Grare, "India–Pakistan Relations: Does Modi Matter?" *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2014):101.

⁷⁴"Narendra Modi & Nawaz Sharif: From Bonhomie to Today's Predicament," *Business Standard*, September 26, 2016, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/narendra-modi-nawaz-sharif-from-bonhomie-to-today-s-predicament-116092600100_1.html

Also, they have agreed to release fishers of both sides who mistakenly cross the red line in the sea. Later, Nawaz Sharif faced criticism for not elevating the Kashmir agenda at the Ufa summit. Therefore, Pakistan official Sartaj Aziz stated that we need more information and evidence regarding the Mumbai attack incident. The Kashmir issue was a significant agenda of Pakistan while talking to India. In response to this statement, India decided to stick with the summit's joint statement and focus on terrorism, which is the key element. Delhi and Islamabad cut down their diplomatic ties because India was not agreed to talk on the Kashmir issue. Besides this, a terrorist attack at Gurdaspur increased the tension between the two countries, Pakistan and India. By the end of this year, in November, the two leaders, Modi and Sharif, met in Paris at the UN Climate Change Conference, and both met warmly after the Ufa summit. The security advisors of both the states talked regarding Kashmir and terrorism in the Paris meeting and bilateral exchange issues between the two neighboring states.

Modi surprise visit to Lahore in 2015 and attending the wedding ceremony of Sharif's granddaughter will show the gesture of peace between the two hostile countries and wanted to start a peaceful bilateral dialogue. Keep in mind that Sharif and Modi both are popular leaders and businessman simultaneously.⁷⁵ The two leaders put their business interests over political interests. Therefore, it is observed that if Modi and Sharif concentrated on the economic and trading benefits rather than focusing on their political interests, the two antagonistic countries improved their relations and built mutual trust between them. Unfortunately, in 2016 the attack on the Pathankot and Uri bases⁷⁶ and the Kulbhushan Jadhav incident⁷⁷ changed the complete political dynamics between India and Pakistan. The outcomes of this incident turned the two states into aggression, where the blame game started between them. India accused Pakistan of the Pathankot incident, while Pakistan accused India of dispersion ferocity in Baluchistan to escalate instability inside Karachi and Baluchistan.⁷⁸ Apart from this, Pakistan leader Nawaz Sharif promoted the message of

⁷⁵ Harsh V. Pant, "A Seismic Shift in India's Pakistan Policy," *The Diplomat*, August 25, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/a-seismic-shift-in-indias-pakistan-policy/>

⁷⁶ "Attack on Pathankot Air Force Base," *Dawn*, January 4, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1230545>

⁷⁷ "Who Is Kulbhushan Jadhav?" *Dawn*, April 10, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1326117>

⁷⁸ S Y Surendra Kumar, "The Narendra Modi Government's Policy towards Pakistan," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, 21, no. 4 (2017):130.

peace and cooperation to overcome the tension between the two enmity states. In contrast, Indian leader Modi shows hatred behavior toward the Muslim community in his speeches.

2.3 Bilateral Relations of India and Pakistan under Imran Khan and Modi Era

Narendra Modi has won the 2019 elections and was selected as India's new prime minister.⁷⁹ This second term of Modi brought many new challenges and opportunities for regional and international states. Therefore, the question arose for many analysts that how Modi would take Indo-Pak bilateral relations in his second term; however, his first term was not going as good as the analyst predicted. Keeping in mind the counterpart of Modi is now Imran Khan, who won the 2018 elections and was appointed the new Prime Minister of Pakistan.⁸⁰ As far as Imran Khan has written a congratulated letter to his counterpart Modi over re-elected Indian PM and addressed an offer of peaceful dialogue between the two rival countries. Moreover, Khan stressed the Kashmir issue and other border issues that cause the tension between the two nuclear neighbor states. He suggested that peaceful talk is the mere solution to solve the dispute between the two hostile states and bring peace and stability to the region. He also said that it needed both sides' efforts to improve their bilateral relations peacefully. These are the key factors that the Pakistani PM addressed in his letter. However, Khan did not get the answer at that time, but on 23rd March, Pakistan National Day, he got the answer from Modi that "it is the time for both the countries to come together and make efforts for peace, prosperity and terror-free region."⁸¹ It is evident that the two countries are trying to entrench a dialogue to reform a new start between the two enmity countries.

The tensions increased between Pakistan and India in February 2019 because of an attack on Indian paramilitary at Pulwama, which killed more than 40 Indian soldiers.⁸² As a result, India launched airstrikes against Pakistan in the territory of Kashmir, in which an Indian

⁷⁹ Fahad Nabeel, "3 Scenarios for India-Pakistan Relations under Modi 2.0," *The Diplomat*, June 25, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/06/three-scenarios-for-india-pakistan-relations-under-modi-2-0/>

⁸⁰ Amir Wasim, "Imran Wins Trust of Na Amid Opposition Boycott," *Dawn*, March 07, 2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1611136>

⁸¹ "Pakistan Pm Khan Replies to Indian Counterpart Modi's Letter," *Aljazeera*, March 30, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/3/30/pakistan-pm-replies-to-indian-counterpart-modis-letter>

⁸² Stara Noor and Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Lessons from Balakot: One Year On," *The Diploma*, March 01, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/tag/pulwama-attack/>

Air force pilot Abhinandan Varthaman was detained by Pakistani forces.⁸³ The wave of ferocity continues for many days between the two hostile countries, and both sides play the blame game with each other. Consequently, Pakistan returned Varthaman, which eased the tensions between the two neighbors. It showed a peaceful gesture to India, and in May, the two leaders met again at the SCO meeting in Kazakhstan. The next several months were going very critical between the two states since August when the BJP-led government revoked Article 370, which gives the Indian people the right to attain property in Kashmir and settle their enduringly.⁸⁴ This act conveys that the Indian government diluted the Muslim-majority territory with Hindu-majority territory. It would give a strong aggressive reaction from the Kashmiri people, who have been fighting for 70 years for independence. The outcome of this act was a serious uprising in Kashmir territory, while the Indian government lockdown the Indian-Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and deployed a large number of military forces there to prevent the present circumstances.

Consequently, the bilateral ties between the two states would never ease during Modi's terms. The cooperative relations between the two leaders, Modi and Khan, cannot occur at the level of strategic interests. However, the major gap between Modi and Imran has been an ideological aspect, and the Modi party follows Hindutva ideology, which is the important factor in his winning the elections. On the other hand, Khan has the challenge of staying on the agenda of the Kashmir issue, which was the bone contention between Indo-Pak relations. However, in 2017, the addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO brought many new avenues in security and economic areas for cooperation.

2.4 Influence of SCO on Pakistan and India's Relations

In 2017, the addition of Pakistan and India to the SCO at the Astana (Kazakhstan) summit brought many new dimensions for the political analyst. There are two opinions regarding this enlargement, one is optimistic, and the other is pessimistic.⁸⁵ In the view of optimism,

⁸³ Sudha Ramachandran, "India and Pakistan on the Brink," *The Diplomat*, February 28, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/india-and-pakistan-on-the-brink/>

⁸⁴ "India Revokes Occupied Kashmir's Special Autonomy through Rushed Presidential Decree," *Dawn*, August 05, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1498227>

⁸⁵ Alexei Kupriyanov, "The SCO and the Conflict between India and Pakistan," *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, December 08, 2020, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/sco-conflict-between-india-pakistan/>

Pakistan and India's addition to the SCO will end the long-lasting rivalry between the two South Asian states and bring stability and peace to the region. However, without Islamabad and New Delhi, the SCO members, especially China and Russia, can't maintain absolute stability in Eurasia. While the pessimistic envisaged that the involvement of Pakistan and India in the organization could create a lot of problems for the organization, which could obstruct the organization's progress. Keeping in mind the organization's key purpose is to maintain mutual trust and friendly relations amongst the members and put all conflicts of the member states aside and focus on the organization's motives.

Ironically, it has been for three years after full members of the SCO, and Islamabad and Delhi relations have worsened with each passing day. However, the organization is still alive both the optimistic and pessimistic opinions predicted wrong. Furthermore, the peace dialogue that started under the SCO platform regarding terrorism has also stopped, and there is no hope of renewing the dialogue. SCO initiated some rules for the two states to share their border intelligence with RATS to overcome tensions. It is observed that Pakistani and Indian forces around the Kashmir border share surgical strikes on the LOC almost monthly, and it is very difficult to share intelligence between them.⁸⁶ Both the states are playing the blame game against each other. Indian accused Pakistani intelligence Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is helping the two terrorist groups running in Pakistan and deploying militants on the Kashmir border, which caused unrest on the Indian side of Kashmir. In contrast, the Pakistani blamed Indian intelligence, the Research and Analytical Wing (RAW) agents, for engaging in several illegal activities in Baluchistan and Karachi to forge tension inside the country.⁸⁷ The two bodies, ISI and RAW, share very limited data, increasing the unrest between the two South Asian giants.

Within this context, SCO would become a confidence-building mechanism for Pakistan and India. The two rival states engaged and working on the same platform for the same objectives will increase trust and build friendly relations. This multilateral organization is observed to opens more bilateral cooperation in trade and other fields for interaction

⁸⁶ M. Ashraf Haidari, "The SCO Can De-Escalate India-Pakistan Tensions," *The Diplomat*, March 01, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/the-sco-can-de-escalate-india-pakistan-tensions/>

⁸⁷ Sabena Siddiqi, "Can the SCO Bring India and Pakistan Together?" *The Diplomat*, February 10, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/can-the-sco-bring-india-and-pakistan-together/>

between Islamabad and New Delhi. It is the only way to overcome the ruthless behavior of the two antagonist states.

2.5 Divergences vs. Convergences

Pakistan and India are the two main significant nuclear countries in South Asia, where they fought four major wars because of their bilateral issues. Pakistan and India have many interests in common, such as trade, people-to-people connection, and regional security, while many conflicting interests include border security and political stability. Apart from this, the lack of trust between Islamabad and New Delhi prevented the two states from bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

2.5.1 Trade and Economic Activities

Bilateral economic and trade relations between Pakistan and India were not sturdy in the past because of their strained relationship. After the partition, the first two years between Pakistan and India reciprocated the good trade relations worth 56 per cent exports and 32 per cent imports coming towards Pakistan and India.⁸⁸ Therefore this did not work in the long term because of the three most important wars between Pakistan and India. At that time, the two important developments that occurred in the decline of trade between the two states were the currency devaluation in India and restrictions over trade policies by Pakistan, making the relations more complicated. As a result, the illegal trade started at cross border areas where people smuggle goods and services from each side. Very few developments occurred, such as the Lahore-Delhi bus service and Lahore Declaration, which were meant to improve bilateral relations and develop peace between the two rival states. Later, it did not work long-lasting like other developments because of enmity.⁸⁹ During 2003-2007, the two animosity states restored their bilateral ties and reciprocated their diplomatic ties at the official level. They also signed South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) to recover their trade relations and make modest efforts on Confidence Building

⁸⁸M. Umar Farooq Baloch, "Prospects for Sustained Economic Cooperation between India and Pakistan," *ISSRA* Volume VII, no. 1 (2015):2.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

Measures (CBMs) to retrieve the circumstances.⁹⁰ This agreement allows both the states to cut down their tariff barriers, build a friendly trade environment for each other and the other neighboring states, and ease 20-30 per cent trade tariffs among regional countries.⁹¹ Again in 2011, Pakistan and India reestablished their dialogues and revived their economic and trade cooperation.

During the last three years, Pakistan and India have had very low official bilateral trade relations; however, informal trade relations have increased at the porous borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and India or through the third country such as United Arab States (UAE). However, trade relations completely cut down in August after revoking article 370. In the context of SCO, Pakistan and India are involved in different multilateral projects in energy and security areas with the SCO members. Still, the two states have no direct relations yet.

Currently, after the Modi government in India, the relations between Pakistan and India have been completely shut down. The downward circumstances started in 2016 after the two terrorist attacks in India. The unstable situation in Kashmir increased the aggression between the two rival states and cut down their diplomatic and economic cooperation.⁹² Moreover, in 2018 and 2019, Pakistan tried hard to revive the bilateral relations between Islamabad and New Delhi; however, India never responded positively to this and suspended all their cooperation up to the present time.⁹³

2.5.2 Cultural Attachments

Cultural diplomacy can focus on and build a common culture, history, and experiences between the two states, whereas in the case of India and Pakistan, which shared common history and culture because of the subcontinent, however, their hostile relations are all time high in history. Cultural cooperation can use to maintain peaceful ties between the two

⁹⁰Noreen Mujahid and Aziz ur Rehman Muhammad Ali, "Pakistan-India Relations: Peace through Bilateral Trade," *European Scientific Journal* Vol. 11, no. 4 (2015):84.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹²Tanvi Kulkarni, "India-Pakistan Relations under Imran Khan and Modi 2.0: The Lowest Point in a Decade," *STIMSON*, November 29, 2019, <https://southasianvoices.org/india-pakistan-relations-under-imran-khan-and-modi-2-0-the-lowest-point-in-a-decade/>

⁹³ Haroon Janjua, "Pakistan Faces Dilemma over Trade Ties with India," *Asia-DW*, May 04, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/india-pakistan-kashmir-tensions-trade/a-57102900>

enemies. From the historical perspective, India and Pakistan both worked on their cultural diplomacy towards each other, whereas they signed few agreements on it. Before the 1971 war, they signed a protocol on visits to religious shrines in which people could visit their religious shrines from India to Pakistan without any restrictions. Another agreement signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the 'Cultural Cooperation Agreement' to proceed with media, arts, sports and culture and exchange people-to-people views towards each other. Media played a vital role in cultural diplomacy, whereas both sides of TV news channels started an 'Aman ki Asha' campaign to understand each other individually.⁹⁴ This initiative took a positive image of both the states; therefore, business communities visited Pakistan and India to enhance the business and economic sectors. In the field of arts, India and Pakistan's film and drama industries portrayed a very soft and positive image of both the states at the regional and international levels.

Presently, cultural diplomacy cannot play an active role between the two states because of increasing tensions. The three terrorist incidents, Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama in India and the surgical strike crisis and revoke of article 370 intensified the tensions at a high level, curtailing almost all the cultural cooperation towards each other except the Kartarpur Corridor that opened in 2019 from the Pakistani side.⁹⁵ This was the only peaceful gesture from the Pakistani side, while India has not shown any kind and peaceful gesture towards Pakistan. In an era of social media, the young generation sends a positive and soft image of each one's country to improve the current hard image between the two enemies and send a message of peace through Twitter and Face book and many other social media websites. Hence, the two states cooperate with each other.

2.5.3 Political Rivalries

Political relations between Pakistan and India have many uncertainties. The difference of opinion between India and Pakistan is the unresolved issue of Kashmir, one of the most

⁹⁴Rushali Saha, "The Shrinking Space for Cultural Diplomacy between India and Pakistan," *South Asian Voices (STIMSOM)*, February 24, 2020. <https://southasianvoices.org/the-shrinking-space-for-cultural-diplomacy-between-india-and-pakistan/>

⁹⁵Rushali Saha, "The Shrinking Space for Cultural Diplomacy between India and Pakistan," *South Asian Voices (STIMSOM)*, February 24, 2020. <https://southasianvoices.org/the-shrinking-space-for-cultural-diplomacy-between-india-and-pakistan/>

volatile in the world. Pakistan and India have always contested each other over the Kashmir issue, resulting in three major and two minor wars. Considering the detail that Pakistan and India both are nuclear power, the Kashmir conflict has gained the limelight at the international forum. It also represents a threat to regional as well as global levels. Many efforts have been taken on this issue between the two South Asian powers. Still, no result has been found because of terrorist attacks and the unwillingness of Indian leadership to talk about it. The most important agenda of India is terrorism, whereas Pakistan has the Kashmir issue. It is argued that India only wants to talk about terrorism rather than Kashmir, while Pakistan needs to resolve the unresolved territorial conflict first and then move forward to terrorism. These circumstances increase the tension between the two rival states, and both cut down their diplomatic and political ties on either side.

In the last three years, there has been no breakthrough in the political relationship between Pakistan and India. Still, Kashmir and terrorism are the two main components of tension between the two arch-rivals. At the start, PM Imran Khan showed some peaceful and friendly gestures toward India, but there was no positive response from the other side. The RSS-backed Modi took the wave of Hindutva ideology and nationalism in the country that devised the anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim sentiments among Indians. Unless India has changed its behavior towards Pakistan, it is difficult to attain political development between the two states.

2.6 Kashmir Issue

The Kashmir conflict date back to August of 1947 subcontinent was at the start of Independence from the British. The head appointed by British Louis Mountbatten alienated the subcontinent into the countries of Pakistan and India. The subcontinent also consisted of the multiple princely states that were annexed to the British Monarch under direct supervision by the British. Three states were given the right to decide whether they wanted to abandon Pakistan or India. However, Kashmir was a case where most of the populace was Muslim, but the ruler was a Hindu, Maharaja Hari Singh.⁹⁶

⁹⁶Pranav Asoori, "A Look into the Conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir," *E-International Relations* (2020):1.

Nonetheless, this was by no means the only case. The province of Junagadh was additionally confronted with this contention. The leader of Junagadh was a Muslim who desired to acquiesce to Pakistan against the desires of his kin. Mountbatten prescribed that Junagadh ought to go to India, not just because it was a great extent populated state but also because India encircled it. Nonetheless, the ruler gives up on Pakistan. Infuriated, India captured Junagadh under the guise that the Pakistani founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah expressed that Muslims and Hindus couldn't live in the same state because they dreaded unrest.

The option of the plebiscite to resolve the question of Kashmir was initially anticipated by the Indian administration in 1947 when the debate emerged over the increase of the regal territory of Jammu and Kashmir, both Lord Mountbatten (the Government General of India) and Jawahar Lal Nehru. (Indian administrator) expressed the preference of the referendum to identify the desires of the question of Kashmir. India took this matter to the United Nations, and the choice of the vote was standardized in the two fundamental goals of the United Nations passed in 1948-49.⁹⁷ In any case, the plebiscite was rarely seized, and India did not esteem its vow. Pakistan believes the Indian pledges are confined today as they were first purposely made in 1947-1948. Indian officials have consumed this sensitive issue to alarm their community that Indian may separate if Kashmir isolates from it.⁹⁸

The situation led to the first Indo-Pakistani War, otherwise called the First Kashmir War, between the Indian troopers and the Pakistani tribesmen. In 1948, the Pakistani armed forces penetrated the dispute. Towards the end of 1948, the two sides paved their situations in Kashmir. A ceasefire understanding was made and recognized a line of control (LOC). India was left with approximately 66% of Kashmir, while Pakistan acquired command of over 33% of the area of Kashmir.⁹⁹ This denoted the first of the many conflicts and differences between the two states over Kashmir.

⁹⁷Pranav Asoori, "A Look into the Conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir," *E-International Relations* (2020):2.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹Pranav Asoori, "A Look into the Conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir," *E-International Relations* (2020):2.

The establishment of the LoC in 1948 was not enough steps. At that point, the United Nations acted as a mediator. On the 21st of April 1948, the Security Council passed and implemented a resolution.¹⁰⁰ An order of five individuals went to the Indian subcontinent and helped Pakistan and India reestablish harmony in Kashmir. Also, the committee should help these nations plan for a referendum to conclude Kashmir's issue. A three-venture process was additionally prescribed to ease tension between India and Pakistan. These steps included all Pakistani citizens who moved into Kashmir to fight were to be exited. India was to reduce its forces in the locale continuously. India was to select a mandate chairman who the UN-designated. India approved this resolution. Conversely, Pakistan dismissed it. This provoked no removal of forces and no referendum being held. Furthermore, International negotiations aspired to the Dixon plan, among others. There is another aspect to conflict with guerilla warfare waged by the Kashmiri youth assailants against the Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir since late 1989.¹⁰¹ The Indian government's reaction to constraint through various strict laws and sending the large numbers of Indian forces against the Kashmiri political dissidents have changed the nature of the Kashmir struggle from a simple debate between two adversaries of South Asia to a multidimensional nationalist war.

The political agitation in the territory of Jammu and Kashmir has generally been an after-effect of India's awkward violent techniques. Numerous in India propose more noteworthy independence for the state to change the feeling of the hardship of the Kashmiris. India has vigorously sent security forces that have abused common freedoms of persons and have turned to suffer executions and assault.

2.6.1 Kashmir Conflict under Modi Government

The Kashmir conflict got intensified after Modi held office in India. On 5 August 2019, the Indian government reported the annulment of Article 370 of the Constitution and the

¹⁰⁰ Waqar-un-Nisa, "Pakistan-India Equation: Determinants, Dynamics and the Outlook," *Policy Perspectives: The Journal of the Institute of Policy Studies* 14, no. 1 (2017):28.

¹⁰¹ Mohammad Arif, "The Kashmir Dispute and Pakistan-India Relations: 1972-1992," *Pakistan Horizon* 47, no. 1 (1994):41.

bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) territory into two association domains.¹⁰² This set off an unusual worldwide reaction, particularly to the restrictions in the district. Undoubtedly, most nations concurred that the progressions in J&K were India's "interior matter", and contrasts ought to be settled through exchange between Pakistan and India. Notwithstanding, some of India's neighbors and companions have conversed about fears and condemned the confinement of political leaders and the constraints on common freedoms. It has now ostensibly turned into India's greatest discretionary test to battle the account that the Indian State is stifling the privileges of Kashmiri.

After the proclamation, India set out on a diplomatic effort to mollify the international community's worries. A few investigators accept that the Indian decision of 2019 has gotten serious threats as genuine as the one brought about by the Pokhran II atomic trial of 1998. Indeed, this is the most worldwide consideration Kashmir has drawn towards itself since the 1990s.¹⁰³ Before August 2019, India had persuaded a lot regarding the world that the essential conflict regarding Kashmir was Pakistan-executed terrorism. The modified narrative brings up different questions both at the national and global levels.

Ironically, more than 100 days have passed; still, Kashmir has been under serious ferocity. Recently, Pakistan has made many efforts to resolve this issue through diplomacy and internationalize it. Besides this, the regional and international organizations are very concerned about the act of brutality in Kashmir. Likewise, SCO is also concerned about the Kashmir issue as Pakistan and India are members of it. Therefore, the Kashmir issue has been discussed on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the SCO. According to Vladimir Norov, the Secretary-General of the SCO stated that, "SCO is playing a constructive role in maintaining security and stability in the region and India and Pakistan interaction in every SCO meeting and share their opinions on cross border terrorism, improvement of regional peace and stability, security risks and challenges. This shows a positive step that a regional organization has achieved.

¹⁰²Muhammad Farooq and Umbreen Javaid, "Suspension of Article 370: Assessment of Modis Kashmir Masterstroke under Hindutva Ideology," *Global Political Review* 5, no. 1 (2020):5.

¹⁰³Khalid Shah and Kriti M Shah, "Kashmir after Article 370: India's Diplomatic Challenge," *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, (2020):6.

2.7 India-Pakistan Bilateral Peace Dialogues

In the past, India and Pakistan relations had connected with the two different historical tracks, the one was conflictual, and the other was bilateral peace talks. The two parties sat amicably and showed mature behavior to reconcile their bilateral ties. Since the beginning, Islamabad and New Delhi had appeared in peace talks on different issues such as territorial conflicts, religious problems, terrorism, and water issue, which were the major bone of contention between the two hostile states. Whenever both states come to peace talks, some violent incidents happen, which take the two opposing states away from peace talks, aggravating the mistrust between them. As a matter of fact, these peaceful efforts have not been successful until now.

From the historical perspective, it is evident that the peace efforts started from the Simla agreement, Lahore and Agra summit shows the positive response towards the two states which resume the Delhi-Lahore bus service and reinstated the cooperation in other fields like trade, sports, culture, and economy. In 2001, the Indian parliament attack again enriched the tensions between the two enmities, which cut diplomatic ties and peace dialogues. Apart from this, the composite dialogue was re-established between the two opposing countries in 2004.¹⁰⁴ The period 2004-2007 was the golden time between the two leaders. They discussed territorial disputes, visa policies, trade, and sports to cooperate to resolve these conflicts through negotiations as far as the 2008 Mumbai terror attack again ceased the peaceful dialogues on either side. Moreover, it is observed that in 2011 trade cooperation between Islamabad and New Delhi resumed, which showed a new economic cooperation phase between the two states. Several agreements and dialogues were established in different fields since its inception; however, the objectives of these agreements did not achieve.¹⁰⁵

However, in 2014 ever since Modi became the Prime Minister of India, the two antagonistic state relations have worsened with each passing day. The two parties

¹⁰⁴Mubeen Adnan and Bushra Fatima, "Peace Process with India: A Challenge for Pakistan," *South Asian Studies* 31, No. 1 (2020):293.

¹⁰⁵Shahid Masroor Gul Kiani, "Pakistan-India Relation -Composite Dialogue Process (CDP): Current State and Future Prospects in Bringing Peace to the Sub-Continent " *ISSI*, VOL. 44 (2019):11-15.

completely cut down their dialogues and cooperation till the present. In the start, when Modi took control of the Indian government, India and Pakistan shared a warm, neighborly relation towards each other. Modi called his counterpart Nawaz Sharif's swearing-in ceremony in 2014, while in 2015, Modi visited Pakistan, which manifested a good gesture of friendly relation. Also, External Affairs Ministers (EAM) proposed a Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue in December of the same year to discuss cross-border terrorism and ferocity at the borders of Indo-Pak. Apart from this, the two most agony terror attacks in Pathankot and Uri army bases at the cross-border of India expand the discomfort and distrust on either side. With continued aggression, cross-border tensions increased to a serious military confrontation between the two nuclear powers, severe danger to regional stability and peace. Besides this, in 2018, PM Modi congratulated his counterpart Imran Khan on his winning of elections and in 2019, Khan wished Modi on his continuous second tenure in Government.

Meanwhile, in 2019 again, the Pulwama terror attack and revoke of Kashmir Article 370 widened the tensions and stress at the national and regional levels.¹⁰⁶ In this context, Islamabad and New Delhi completely cut down their diplomatic and bilateral ties. They erupted the surgical strikes on the Line of Control (LoC) every month, killing many people, including military personnel. Furthermore, Pakistan started to protest over the Kashmir issue while Indian accused Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), the two militant groups of cross-border terror attacks.¹⁰⁷ According to India, Pakistan is a terrorist-supporting country and JeM, and LeT is part of it. Nevertheless, Pakistan retaliated like a normal neighbor and tried hard to overcome the stress on each side. Pakistan endeavors to start bilateral ties with India even though India has limited bilateral ties with Pakistan. Keeping in mind the request of the Indian government, Pakistan arranged the Kartarpur corridor agreement in 2018, where Hindu pilgrims visited Gurdwara Darbar Sahib

¹⁰⁶"Conflict between India and Pakistan," *Council Foreign Relations (CRF)*, January 25, 2022.

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-india-and-pakistan>

¹⁰⁷Khalid Shah and Kriti M Shah, "Kashmir after Article 370: India's Diplomatic Challenge " *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, (2020).

throughout the year.¹⁰⁸ It provided a visa-free policy for the pilgrims and showed a peaceful gesture from the Pakistani side.

Consequently, the present situation between the two nuclear powers was tense, and both were at the edge of another major war in 2019. The two enmities need to overcome the stress from LoC and resume their bilateral talks and dialogues for mutual and friendly cooperation. There are other fields where the two countries cooperate, including trade, sports, culture, etc. The fact is that the two states should focus on hard power policies instead of soft power and promote bilateral dialogues from a small level to a higher level. It is the starting point for both the states to increase people-to-people contact, improve trade ties, share cultural views, and avoid previous mistakes. As noted, South Asia is a minimal integrated region where more expenses are used in the security sector instead of human development. Therefore, the two most influential South Asian states must make efforts in their bilateral relations and improve the security and stability of the region for economic integration.

In addition, SCO should identify areas where terrorism has strong roots detrimental to both countries. With the help of RATS, SCO maps the areas between India and Pakistan where the terrorist networks are operating and who they support and fund. Within this context, SCO-RATS establish some strategies and plans to thwart these terrorist networks. Besides this, SCO conducts joint military exercises on counter-insurgencies and counter-terrorism, cooperation, and mutual trust among members.

2.8 Promises of SCO

In the past, the three evils terrorism, extremism and separatism have existed in South and Central Asia; however, the two regions were highlighted because of the 9/11 incident. The geopolitical dynamics of these two regions were completely changed and almost all the states were endured terrorism, separatism, and extremism till now. India and Pakistan have marked historical rivalry which escorts towards the wars, especially Kashmir border. The most significant element of their rivalry is terrorism on the Kashmir border. It is argued

¹⁰⁸Naveed Siddiqui, "Baseless and Fallacious': Pakistan Responds to Indian Claims on Kartarpur Corridor," *Dawn*, November 05, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1588799>

that India is involved in sponsoring terrorist and illegal activities in Baluchistan, Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and Karachi to spread unrest in the country. At the same time, India claimed that Pakistan is supporting terrorist activities in the Kashmir area to profess the ferocity in the people. Despite this, the SCO plays a very important role in curbing these three evils from the region because the key element of the organization is to combat the three evils and assert trust and friendly relations among all the member states.

2.8.1 Joint Military Cooperation

Within this context, SCO is an important platform for the two nuclear power, India and Pakistan, to join hands with the organization and curtail extremism, separatism and terrorism in the region, which have harmed the entire region for many years. Initially, it was a security bloc, but the countries have come to cooperate economically to improve security threats over time. Therefore, SCO originates Joint military drills with the member countries to improve mutual trust among them. The organization organizes Peace Mission 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2010 to diminish antiterrorist threats from the two regions.¹⁰⁹ Almost all the member countries participated in these military drills to curb the non-traditional security threats. Yet, in 2018 SCO arranged the '2018 Peace Mission' anti-terrorist military exercise,¹¹⁰ where Pakistan and India participated for the first time after their inclusion in the organization. It is the first time in the history of India and Pakistan that the two rivals cooperate under one security platform. In addition, SCO established RATS in 2004 to observe all the cross border illegal activities and anti-terrorist attacks among the member states. It is the duty of this organ to examine all the terrorist information shared with all the member countries and provide full support to control these illegal activities. Recently, in the 2021 Peace Mission anti-terror exercise schedule in Russia¹¹¹ where all the member states joined it. These instances have shown us that SCO is very concerned about regional security and actively plays a significant role in cooperating with the member states from each other from a security perspective.

¹⁰⁹Muhammad Uzair Hashmi, "Building Peace between India and Pakistan: The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Social Science of Middle East Technical University*, (2015):49.

¹¹⁰Indian, Pakistani Troops to Take Part in Joint Drills," *Dawn*, April 30, 2018.<https://www.dawn.com/news/1404725>

¹¹¹Xinhua, "SCO 'Peace Mission 2021' Counter-Terrorism Drill Concludes in Russia," *Global Times*, September 25, 2021.<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202109/1235060.shtml?id=11>

2.8.2 Joint Economic Cooperation

It is observed that economic cooperation is the only element that can resolve the two states' rivalry, so in the case of Pakistan and India, cooperative relations and mutual trust should be needed to overcome the enmity. From an economic perspective, SCO member states are the most important states in Central and South Asia because each country has rich in different resources. CARs are rich in energy and natural resources, while Russia has abundant energy resources. India is a growing economic power and a member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). While Pakistan's economic growth has been badly affected by the three evils of terrorism, extremism, and separatism after the 9/11 incident, Pakistan's economy couldn't work properly until the present. China is also the fastest growing economic power in the South Asian region for many decades.

China has endowed a huge amount in South and Central Asia. The best example of economic cooperation is CPEC which was initiated in Pakistan and is worth US\$46 billion.¹¹² This project is used to build the energy sector and infrastructure, including roads and rail tracks, to overwhelm the infrastructural problem. All the SCO members have joined CPEC except India because it claimed that CPEC was built on the disputed territory of Kashmir, and without resolving the terrorism issue it is difficult for the states to get benefits from it. Despite immense trade deals with Pakistan, China and India cooperate on trade deals worth US\$70 billion.¹¹³ During the visit of Modi to China, both countries signed agreements of US\$ 22 billion over railways and roads infrastructure, scientific research and development and education.¹¹⁴ This joint economic cooperation brought the two hostile countries together under one platform, which improved the intensity of the bad relations.

Furthermore, SCO Business Council promotes the SCO development strategy until 2025, covering all areas, particularly the economic and trade sectors. SCO Business Council has

¹¹²"China's Xi Jinping Agrees \$46bn Superhighway to Pakistan," *BBC*, April 20, 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32377088>

¹¹³"India PM Narendra Modi to Visit China in May," *BBC*, February 02, 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-31087807>

¹¹⁴"India and China Sign Deals Worth \$22bn as Modi Ends Visit," *BBC*, May 16, 2015.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-32762930>

expanded project activities during 2017-2021 and promotes regional and international trade, investments, and economic cooperation among members. It plays an important role in implementing the economic projects for practical development among members and establishing an agreement among members on the Facilitation of International Road transport which facilitates the institutions for commercial interests.

Therefore, it is difficult for the SCO to settle the dispute between Pakistan and India without regional economic integration. The struggle between Islamabad and New Delhi stops the organization from attaining its goal; however, the organization is actively trying to overcome the competition between them and involves the two enmities in trade and economic cooperation. It is the only way to settle the disputes between the economically interdependent countries.

Overall, it can be assumed that possible cooperation between Islamabad and New Delhi will restrain their territorial dispute and work with the SCO on the economic and energy sectors. The growing instability in Afghanistan is halting SCO members from regional integration. It is now the responsibility of the SCO members to make efforts over Afghan peace and stability to prosper the South and Central Asia integration. The countries should improve cross border terrorism, extremism, and separatism through the RATS program by sharing all the security information. To analyses the several small steps have been taken in different areas of cooperation to better both sides, but no positive results occurred. The current relations between India and Pakistan share some common and conflicting factors that could help the two rival states to push for bilateral cooperation.

CHAPTER-3

REGIONAL INTEGRATION: NEW AVENUES OF COOPERATION

This chapter focuses on the geostrategic importance of regional integration and the conflicting interests of Pakistan and India. The SCO is an important way for regional integration and has a strong ability to counter regional security risks. It provides a great opportunity for its member states to cooperate under one umbrella not only for security aspects but also for economic and trade investments. It is observed that China and Pakistan signed a bilateral economic project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which took a strong impact on regional integration. Furthermore, this economic initiative showed many positive dimensions for regional and international states for cooperation; therefore, the project transformed from bilateral to the regional level for further support. Meanwhile, India is playing a critical role in CPEC to safeguard its interest in the region.

3.1 SCO as an Instrument to Regional Integration

Regional integration has become an obligatory process of the 21st century which connects different states at a regional and global level. It opens many new opportunities for cooperation for the states in different regions throughout the world. In the past 25 years, many new political and economic institutions were initiated.¹¹⁵ The core idea of the institutions is economic, security and political cooperation, whereas these regional institutions restructure the behavior of the state and initiate possible platforms for state interaction. Recently, regional integration has been an important element among the emerging economies; however, they can enhance cooperation through regional institutions. It is observed that regional institutions have played an important role in curbing security challenges and building a cooperative environment among states. In the 21st century, terrorism is the most significant phenomenon which every state endures, and without countries' cooperation, it is not attainable.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵Uzma Siraj, "The Expanding Role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Context of Inter-Regional Integration between Central Asia and South Asia: Prospects and Challenges," *Global Regional Review* 4, no. 3 (2019):241.

¹¹⁶Muhammad Azhar and Ayaz Muhammad, "South Asia-Central Asia Inter-Regional Connectivity: The Future Perspective," *Central Asia* 77 (2018):34.

By analyzing SCO meetings (2018-2020) yearly, it is observed that in every conference, the organization has discussed three fields: security, politics, and economy. The organization has three main areas: i. SCO's progress on enhancing regional cooperation among member states through the regional connectivity project BRI. ii. SCO actively plays an important role in promoting regional stability and peace. iii. SCO set up efforts to fight extremism, separatism and international terrorism. All the member countries are supporting all the three points except India. India is not in favor of the regional connectivity project BRI.

SCO has a tool to develop regional integration and cooperation among the Central and South Asian regions. The two regions shared the same history, ideology, culture, and security aspects which linked two regions.¹¹⁷ The organization has already provided a mechanism to Central Asian countries even though it can extend its cooperation toward South Asian states, especially Pakistan and India. The two South Asian rival states interact on one platform for common interests and challenges, which could curtail the security difficulty between them. The resource-rich countries got access to the Indian Ocean through the South Asian region, whereas the two South Asian countries fulfil their energy demands from CARs. The two most powerful members of the SCO are Russia and China, which have cooperated with the other members to meet their common interests. China has huge investments in economic projects within Central and South Asian countries to connect the two regions economically, while Russia has concerned about the security of the CARs and keeps its influence on the region, which was part of Russia in the past.

In this globalized world, the competition among the emerging economies has changed the strategic dynamics of regional connectivity. China has introduced many economic corridors in the Central and South Asian region, which began in 2013 under the larger project One Belt One Road (OBOR), afterwards renamed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

¹¹⁷ Muhammad Azhar and Ayaz Muhammad, "South Asia-Central Asia Inter-Regional Connectivity: The Future Perspective," *Central Asia* 77 (2018):39-40.

It connects with two different dimensions: Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and Maritime Silk Road (MSR).¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the six most important economic corridors:

- i. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC),
- ii. The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM),
- iii. The China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC),
- iv. New Eurasia land bridge,
- v. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor and
- vi. China Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (EIPEC) projects regional connectivity, joining South and Central Asia.¹¹⁹

As a result, regional integration in the 21st century is viewed as the development of the Asian region. The countries' common interests in the two regions led to a new regionalism concept, whereas SCO played a significant role in regional connectivity. SCO has given regional and extra-regional actors a new approach to meet their commonalities at the regional and international levels. The organization met with many challenges; however, it cannot prevent the organization from achieving its objectives. It protects the security and economic aspects simultaneously and gives a platform to its members for cooperation.

3.2 CPEC and Regional Connectivity

The Chinese Belt and Road initiative (BRI) consists of land and sea routes, whereas CPEC is a 'crown jewel' project of BRI. In 2015, Russia and China signed a joint declaration connecting BRI with EAEU (a Russian-supported economic organization), a major stimulus for cooperation between SCO and BRI.¹²⁰ It is assumed that CPEC is the renewal of the Old Silk Route in South Asia, which played a key role in promoting trade between South Asia and China. Pakistani official Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that "CPEC and BRI are the supplements of the SCO perspectives of regional connectivity and economic

¹¹⁸Gisela Grieger, "One Belt, One Road (OBOR): China's Regional Integration Initiative," *European Parliament Research Services (EPRS)* (2016):3.

¹¹⁹OECD China's Belt, "Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape," (OECD Business and Finance Outlook, 2018):11.

¹²⁰ Sebastien Goulard, "Reaffirmation of SCO support to the Belt and Road Initiative," *OBOR Europe*, December 27, 2020. <https://www.oboreurope.com/en/reaffirmation-sco-support-bri/>

integration development and appreciated that SCO is an important mechanism in promoting regional integration policy.”¹²¹

Connectivity is a foundation of integration and economic cooperation important for South and Central Asian countries. It can find new economic and trade development avenues and create new stimuli for domestic and regional demand. This is the best way to open the potential for expanding trade and economic productivity of interlinked regions and countries. It reflects the sector to sector and develops all the regional networks through transport, trade, energy, ICT, technology, and people. Regional connectivity is a process to expand regional cooperation, improve infrastructure, and increase communication among the two regions of South and Central Asia. The regional integration process is divided up both in economic and political aspects. In the Central and South Asian regions, CPEC is the best opportunity for regional connectivity among the two regional states. It imparts to upgrade the regional infrastructure, strengthen cooperation and communication, and set up underdeveloped states in South and Central Asia, reinforcing peace and growing economic ease among the states.¹²²

This project has provided great importance to regional progress and stability. It has expanded the growth of cooperation among states in different areas like tourism, people-to-people contact, industrial cooperation, financial cooperation, and human resource development to improve the security situations in both regions.¹²³ The development of CPEC focused on three main areas: Gwadar port, communication infrastructure, and energy reserves. CPEC is an important part of BRI that connects maritime and land routes concurrently.¹²⁴ Therefore, it is seen that several regional and extra-regional states have some common and different interests regarding CPEC. On one side, many states have actively participated in the CPEC project, while on the other side, the opposing actors

¹²¹“CPEC supplements SCO's vision of regional connectivity: FM Qureshi,” *The Express Tribune*, September 10, 2020. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2263396/cpec-supplements-scoss-vision-of-regional-connectivity-fm-qureshi>

¹²²Sabahat Jaleel, Naureen Talha, and Zahir Shah, "CPEC and Regional Integration," *Global Regional Review* 4, no. IV (2019):21.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴"CPEC as a Mean to Regional Connectivity," *IPRI*, September 07, 2017. <https://ipripak.org/cpec-as-a-mean-to-regional-connectivity-2/>

criticize the project and believe that China is increasing its influence in South and Central Asia to prevent the other emerging powers there.

3.3 Reflection of SCO Member States on CPEC:

Member states have been responding to the ongoing projects under CPEC differently. They have different interests in the CPEC project as member states have viewed the project with some positive and negative perspectives that threaten the development of the project.

3.3.1 Pakistan

Pakistan is an important country in geography, and the CPEC project makes it a more strategically interesting place for economic and regional integration. CPEC is a long-term project that began between Pakistan and China to improve infrastructural development, build strong communication and cooperation, and balance economic growth in the South Asian region. In the beginning, CPEC is a bilateral project, but now it expands toward a multilateral level where all the regional and extra-regional states seek to participate in it.¹²⁵ China set up ten projects in place of the Thar Desert, a less developed area in Pakistan that shows a positive addition of development. Another investment of Chinese companies estimated \$35 to \$ 37 billion in power production projects like coal, solar and wind and hydropower generation.¹²⁶ In the aegis of CPEC, China is massively investing in Pakistan's infrastructure to improve the rails and road linkages, giving Pakistan a huge boost for its economic growth, and manifesting a soft image throughout the world. Interestingly, it connects Kashgar to Gwadar, the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, and Central Asia, making it one of the most attractive epic-center for other states.¹²⁷ CPEC is an integral part of the BRI, which is linked to the SCO vision of a regional integration policy and economic integration policy under Chinese investment; therefore, the successful construction of the CPEC is very important for the Chinese regional connectivity plan.

¹²⁵ Maryam Nazir, "Analysis of determinants for CPEC's success and failure: emerging challenges and lessons for Pakistan." *Development* 6, no. 24 (2015):52-53.

¹²⁶ Umbreen Javaid, "Assessing CPEC: Potential threats and Prospects." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 53, no. 2 (2016):257-261.

¹²⁷ Massarrat Abid and Ayesha Ashfaq, "CPEC: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan." *Journal of Pakistan Vision* 16, no. 2 (2015):145.

Pakistan is in search of energy reserves and infrastructural improvement, while China needs shortened trade routes that connect the whole world, and Pakistan is a hub of regional connectivity that connects all regions through trade. It is a great opportunity for Pakistan to establish its infrastructure development and overcome its energy crisis which badly affects the country. The progress of Gwadar port in Baluchistan has raised the living standards of the local people and removed the employment requirements in the less developed areas.¹²⁸ The Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will facilitate Pakistan to generate employment services, improve exports and alleviate poverty. The government currently focuses on Research and development activities, higher education, and science and technology. The construction of CPEC will increase employment opportunities, develop industrial and agricultural sectors, and strengthen socio-economic development. Also, China and Pakistan have promoted technical education and training to the local people, contributing to human resources for future CPEC projects.

Nevertheless, where there are benefits to things, there are also disadvantages. In Pakistan, the CPEC project faces many new challenges and risks that interrupt the construction of the project. Since the ‘War on Terror, Pakistan has faced a huge intensity of security threats of extremism and terrorism inside Pakistan. The terrorist organizations run in Pakistan and weak governance makes the situation more difficult for the country to overcome these security risks. The Gwadar port in Pakistan and Xinjiang region in China has been suffered insurgency as the terrorist groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), ISIS, Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) etc, set up stronghold there and tried to stretch difficulties for the project.¹²⁹ Both the countries China and Pakistan are trying to handle these extremist, separatist and terrorist movements in that areas; therefore, the development and construction started rapidly intending to develop these areas and stop terrorist activities there. To overcome these challenges, Pakistan is shaping a special security division to monitor illegal activities and the SCO-RATS body to share security information to curb terrorism.

¹²⁸ Hanan Zaffar, “CPEC: Boon or Bane for Pakistan?” *The Diplomat*, November 16, 2016.

<https://thediplomat.com/2016/11/cpec-boon-or-bane-for-pakistan/>

¹²⁹ Massarrat Abid, and Ayesha Ashfaq, "CPEC: Challenges and opportunities for Pakistan." *Journal of Pakistan Vision* 16, no. 2 (2015):265.

3.3.2 India

In the past, there were complex bilateral relations between China and India, but now their status has shifted to cooperation and competition. Since 2013 the two countries, China and India, have had many economic projects, and the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India has changed their relationship status. As far as, China is the most important member of the SCO, which started its long-term land and maritime project BRI in 2013, which all the organization members have supported. China has desired India to participate in this project; however, India has a different approach toward BRI.¹³⁰ Indian officials showed some fears and challenging factors for the country.

It is discussed that India has three different opinions on the BRI project. One opinion is that the BRI project is a Chinese economic project that will help India expand its economic market and economic development in the world, while another opinion is that Chinese has a strong influence in the South Asian region. It wants to establish its supremacy in order to maintain its influence in region through CPEC.¹³¹ Therefore, still, India is not actively participated in BRI and CPEC projects. Apart from that, India is not happy and strongly opposed the CPEC project. Indian officials believed that CPEC was developed in Gilgit-Baltistan, a disputed area of Jammu and Kashmir which is a big challenge to Indian sovereignty, so India is not part of it.¹³² As a result, a Chinese official responded, "China is using soft power strategy to build a less developed area to enhance economic cooperation and reduce security risks that undermine ones sovereignty. From the beginning it is not Chinese strategy to control the sovereignty of any state."¹³³ Thirdly, India considers the CPEC project a unilateral approach. China and Pakistan build a military base on Gwadar port to prevail over Indian influence in the region and the Indian Ocean.

¹³⁰ Mala Sharma, "India's Approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Concerns," *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance* 5, no. 2 (2019):138.

¹³¹ Mala Sharma, "India's Approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Concerns," *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance* 5, no. 2 (2019):141-145.

¹³² Nazim Rahim, Assad Mehmmod Khan, and Muhammad Muzaffar, "Problems and Prospects of CPEC for Economic Development and Regional Integration," *Global Economic Review* 3, no. I (2018):26.

¹³³ Mala Sharma, "India's Approach to China's Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Concerns," *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance* 5, no. 2 (2019):146.

Meanwhile, India tried to overwhelm its relationship with the CARs to get access to energy reserves to improve its energy problems; however, Pakistan is the only direct route that connects to Central Asia states. The deep-rooted rivalry between Pakistan and India prevents the two countries from cooperating with each other. Therefore, India found its alternative route in Chahbhar (Iran) port near Gwadar port to sustain its influence in the region and prolong its access to CARs and Afghanistan.¹³⁴

According to Chinese officials, CPEC is an economic corridor that connects Central and South Asia and the rest of the regions. The success of this economic corridor will benefit China and the remaining regional countries, especially Pakistan and India.¹³⁵ The addition of India to the CPEC economic corridor improved the local area and grew businesses and economic development in India's regional countries. Besides this, India got access to prodigious markets of CARs. Pakistan does not allow India to use its route for trade to Afghanistan, but the inclusion of India in CPEC will give direct access to Afghanistan for trading. Nevertheless, regional economic integration can increase through this economic corridor, which links the South and Central Asian countries. It could reduce the tensions between the two arch-rivals, India and Pakistan.

3.3.3 Central Asian Republic States (CARs)

Central Asian Countries are located at Eurasia's heart and share borders with Russia, China and Pakistan, the three important members of SCO. It is a significant region in global politics in geography as the five CARs are rich in natural resources such as oil and gas.¹³⁶ Precisely, the geostrategic location of the Central Asian region and rich-energy reserves make this region more attractive to all regional and extra-regional states to connect closer to the Central Asian region, especially Pakistan and China.¹³⁷ Since CARs are landlocked countries and procured to triumph over security menace to gain access to the Indian Ocean

¹³⁴ Manish, and Prashant Kaushik, "CPEC, Afghanistan and India's Concerns," *India Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2019):257-259.

¹³⁵ Sohail Ahmad, Areeja Syed, and Muhammad Bhutta, "Indian Inclusion in CPEC: A Path to Indo-Pak Threat Reduction via Complex Interdependence," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 3, no. 2 (2019):15.

¹³⁶ Mir Sher Baz Khetran, and Muhammad Humayun Khalid, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Gateway to Central Asia." *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 5, no. 03 (2019):467-468.

¹³⁷ Khalid Manzoor Butt, and Anam Abid Butt, "Impact of CPEC on Regional and Extra-Regional Actors." *The Journal of Political Science* 33 (2015):33-34.

that acquire from CPEC economic corridor.¹³⁸ The CPEC initiative opens many new markets for Central Asian states to link beyond the region and access the Indian Ocean.

In this context, China and Pakistan are both interested in the Central Asian region and its rich-energy reserves because the two states have to meet their energy demands. China has a massive investment in developing infrastructure of roads and rails, and pipelines in the Central Asian region to ameliorate the transport connection. CPEC brought many new avenues of regional connectivity between the Central and South Asian regions, while CARs expect CPEC to prosper in their economic developments.¹³⁹ It is observed that Central Asian states approved the CPEC initiative and ultimately participated in it. Admittedly, Turkmenistan has allowed the development of the Gwadar deep-sea port that gives access to the Indian Ocean, while Tajikistan connected with Pakistan through a land route via Murghab province, and both the states signed an agreement to develop a new highway linkage to other states whereas Uzbekistan also showed its desire to connect with CPEC project and lastly Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are in favor of CPEC to grow economic growth and obtain Indian Ocean access via Gwadar port.¹⁴⁰

Despite all this, the only problem is Afghanistan which is the only way to connect the two regions of South and Central Asia. The country is not safe for the trading routes because of security risks and terrorist activities that cause hurdles in communication. In this background, the only way to deal with these security woes has to increase regional connectivity and economic development in the two regions of Central and South Asia, reducing the security threats and making both regions economically prosper.

¹³⁸ Muhammad Rizwanullah, Liang Li Zhi, Muhammad Uzair Ali, Yu Xiu Yuan, and Dandan Hou, "Role of CPEC in Enhancing Mutual Trust and Regional Integration: Across OBOR Countries," *International Journal of Business and Social Research* 10, no. 02 (2020):24.

¹³⁹ Mir Sherbaz Khetrani, "Economic Connectivity: Pakistan, China, West Asia and Central Asia," *Institute of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 4 (2016):65.

¹⁴⁰ A. Z. Hilali, "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Dynamics of Regional Connectivity: Prospects and Challenges," *Strategic Studies* 39, no. 4 (2019):99.

3.3.4 Russia

Russia and Pakistan are SCO members, but since its inception, Russia and Pakistan have not shared warm relations because of the Afghan war and the US ‘War on Terror’ operation in Afghanistan. However, in 2014 the US withdrawal of their forces from Afghanistan left a huge power vacuum. Due to this void, terrorist groups have made their place in the country a security concern for China, Central Asia, Pakistan and Russia.¹⁴¹ To overcome the terrorist activities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia came near and enhanced a healthy relationship between them. Furthermore, the two countries, Pakistan and Russia, expanded their relationship in 2017 after Pakistan's inclusion in SCO and received full membership.¹⁴² Due to the Crimean crisis, the West imposed sanctions on Russia, which was once Russia’s largest military export market; therefore, Russia is in search of another big market to export its weapons, and the Asia region is best for it.¹⁴³

The post-cold war period builds warm relations between Russia and China, and China is the main facilitator of Russia and Pakistan's rapprochement. Within this context, China began developing the CPEC project in Gwadar (Pakistan), which gives access to land and maritime route for trade, which is another important factor in Russia’s outlook toward the Asian region.¹⁴⁴ Interestingly, Pakistan’s geographic location has always been a focal point for Russia because of the Indian Ocean (warm water). Russia has desired to acquire access to warm water, which is possible through China’s CPEC program. According to an interview with Russia Ambassador Alexey.Y.Dedov, “CPEC is a component of China’s Silk Road initiative. Russia strongly supports CPEC as it is the best way for regional connectivity. He added that Russia and Pakistan are closely cooperative in restoring peace in Afghanistan because Afghanistan is a bridge for regional connectivity.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Tasneem Sultana, Sahar Afshan, and Zobi Fatima, "Pak-Russia Relations in the Emerging Geo-Strategic Environment," *Journal of European Studies (JES)* 35, no. 1 (2019):38.

¹⁴² Rashid Siddiqi, "Prospects for Russia-Pakistan Rapprochement," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2017):61-63.

¹⁴³ Hafeez Ullah Khan, "Reviving Pak-Russia Relations: Implications for CPEC," *South Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2021):65.

¹⁴⁴ Hafeez Ullah Khan, "Reviving Pak-Russia Relations: Implications for CPEC," *South Asian Studies* 36, no. 1 (2021):68.

¹⁴⁵ "Russia Supports China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Project: Envoy," *Dawn*, December 17, 2016.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1302890>

In addition, Moscow and Islamabad have signed an agreement for the development of the North-South gas pipeline under Russia's Gasprom with an investment of US\$2 billion, despite the fact that Russia has also participated in other regional economic projects like the Russia-Pakistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan Quadrilateral forum which connect many regional projects of the land route which connect Pakistan and Tajikistan through Wakhan (Afghanistan) area, meanwhile, Russia is also investing in Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and Central Asia-South Asia (CASA 1000) an electricity project which also passes through this route, Moscow offered a US\$500 million investment to complete these projects.¹⁴⁶

It is evident that CPEC provides many economic benefits for China, Pakistan, Russia, and CARs in terms of trade, people-to-person contact, and investment. It also connects the two regions of Central and South Asia for regional economic integration via Afghanistan. Therefore, the SCO members need to ingress peace and stability in Afghanistan to do this project toward succession. Also, the two South Asian rivals, Pakistan and India, work together to solve their territorial dispute (Kashmir), the central hub of CPEC and give South Asian regional states a peaceful environment that reduces security risks.

3.4 Changing Geostrategic Dynamics in Afghanistan

It is known that Afghanistan possesses great importance in South and Central Asia. Due to its location, it is a crossway between the subcontinent and the Central Asian States. The land where Afghanistan is located is known as a region at the crossroad of history. Another fact is that Afghanistan was of keen interest to the great powers due to this very location. Being multi-ethnic with the highest proportion of Pashtun 42%, Tajiks 25%, Hazaras 10% and Uzbek 10%, ethnic tensions from the 90s between majority and other minority ethnic groups the structure of national government.¹⁴⁷ Different countries supported different ethnic groups at times.

¹⁴⁶ Rashid Siddiqi, "Prospects for Russia-Pakistan Rapprochement," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2017):69.

¹⁴⁷ Muhammad Imran, Dr Ghulam Mustafa, and Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti, "Geopolitical Dynamics of Afghanistan and Concerns of Regional and Global Actors vis a vis Pakistan," (2020):793.

Afghanistan has also remained a buffer state between the great game of the USSR and British India. Then USSR invaded Afghanistan, and the USA, with the help of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, defeated USSR and made them leave Afghanistan. After the attack of 9/11, the outbreak of war against terror and then the US attack on Afghanistan made it more vulnerable to terrorists and other states as well.

The regional states tried hard to maintain peace and stability in the war-torn country, which began with Urumqi talks initiated by China and Pakistan between the Afghan Government and the Taliban.¹⁴⁸ Then again, in another effort, negotiations were held at the Asia conference 2015 in Islamabad.¹⁴⁹ However, the news of the death of Mullah Umar halted the talks. Afterwards, China, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan again tried to recommence the peace talks in 2016.¹⁵⁰ The Afghan war saw a major shift when in August 2017, President Trump announced the pullout of the forces from the country in his Afghanistan policy. The NATO and US withdrawal from Afghanistan has lifted severe worries among the territorial and worldwide local areas. Global competition between the perilous neighborhood of Afghanistan and the interest of international powers makes the security of Afghanistan more convoluted. Similarly, the present circumstance is likewise a subject of worry for Pakistan and India.

The USA always needed to make a solid and strategic situation in Afghanistan to counter its strong enemies like China, Russia and Iran. This contest causes security and instability dangers in Afghanistan, thus disturbing the harmony and strength of its adjoining South Asian countries, particularly Pakistan. Joined State account over Afghan issue is complex. The fundamental goal of the US was to accomplish a supportable, serene and internally safe Afghanistan with the absence of its capability to become safe havens for extremist congregations once more. The US was so late to concede that the utilization of armed power was not the elucidation for the Afghan war. The USA has understood the powerful strength

¹⁴⁸ Edward Wong and Mujib Mashal, "Taliban and Afghan Peace Officials Have Secret Talks in China," *The New York Times*, May 25, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/26/world/asia/taliban-and-afghan-peace-officials-have-secret-talks-in-china.html>

¹⁴⁹ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Heart of Asia' aims to promote amity among neighbors," *Dawn*, December 08, 2015. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1224910>

¹⁵⁰ "Afghanistan peace talks held in Pakistan," *Aljazeera*, January 11, 2016. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/1/11/afghanistan-peace-talks-held-in-pakistan>

of the Taliban in working on the law and request circumstances of Afghanistan and, in this way, persuaded the Taliban to acknowledge the 'power-sharing formula' in Afghanistan.¹⁵¹ The US has helped Pakistan see a possible arrangement of the Afghan problem by working with the Taliban to arrange.

America got trapped in Afghanistan and flopped in eradicating terrorism. After participating in Afghanistan for over 16 years, analysts believed that the US had been caught in triple adversity as it was unable to succeed in the fighting. It could not stop fighting and leave Afghanistan.¹⁵² The US customary fighting strategies fizzled in vanquishing psychological warfare and Taliban denial of peace talks until the complete evacuation of the US troops, and it again put a mark on American judgments to end the conflict or depart Afghanistan. The US has burned through one trillion dollars at this don't conflict and acquired nothing but more hostility in Afghanistan and its adjoining nations.¹⁵³ It is an inevitable reality that the Taliban turned out to be more grounded than their past position prompting later their removal from Kabul.

On February 29, 2020, US Z. Khalilzad and the Taliban's Baradar representatives approved an arrangement that ensured a momentous withdrawal of the US forces in Afghanistan and included a guarantee from the Taliban that they won't utilize the state for terror actions or exercises.¹⁵⁴ The agreement said intra-Afghan dealings should start the next month. Yet, Afghan President Ghani says the Taliban should meet his administration's conditions before entering talks, while the Taliban and the US agreement doesn't need a timely peace. The days later it is marking, Taliban contenders do many assaults on Afghan security powers, whereas the U.S. powers reacted with an airstrike against the Taliban in the southern area of Helmand.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Muhammad Imran, Dr. Ghulam Mustafa, and Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti, "Geopolitical Dynamics of Afghanistan and Concerns of Regional and Global Actors vis a vis Pakistan," (2020):793-795.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Muhammad Imran, Dr. Ghulam Mustafa, and Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti, "Geopolitical Dynamics of Afghanistan and Concerns of Regional and Global Actors vis a vis Pakistan," (2020):798-800.

¹⁵⁴ Maryam Raashed, "Don't Assume a Taliban-Ruled Afghanistan Means Smooth Sailing for Pakistan," *The Diplomat*, September 03, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/dont-assume-a-taliban-ruled-afghanistan-means-smooth-sailing-for-pakistan/>

¹⁵⁵ Harsh V. Pant, "Amid Shifting Geopolitical Dynamics, India Plays Hard Ball in Afghanistan," *The Diplomat*, September 10, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/amid-shifting-geopolitical-dynamics-india-plays-hard-ball-in-afghanistan/>

Then, on September 12, 2020, Intra-Afghan Peace Talks began, and delegates of the Taliban and the Afghan government and civil society met in Doha, Qatar, later almost 20 years of war.¹⁵⁶ The immediate exchanges, which were postponed for a long time over a detainee trade proposed in the prior Taliban and the US deal, start later after the Afghan government finishes the arrival of 5,000 Taliban detainees.¹⁵⁷ During introductory statements, the two sides express enthusiasm to carry harmony to Afghanistan and build up a system for Afghan culture; later, the US forces pull out. The government pushed for a ceasefire, while the Taliban repeated its condition that the state should be represented in the framework of Islam.

On April 14, 2021, Biden decided an inclusive the US evacuation by 9/11 and proclaimed that the US wouldn't fulfil the time constraint set under the Taliban and the US agreement to pull out all soldiers by May 1 and, on second thought, delivered an arrangement for a full withdrawal by September 11, 2021.¹⁵⁸ Biden says Washington will keep on helping Afghan security forces and backing the harmonious interaction. The Taliban says it will avoid "any meeting" on Afghanistan's future until all US and allied soldiers leave.

Meanwhile, in August, the United States conveys 6,000 soldiers to clear U.S. soldiers and secure Kabul's International airport, where tumult ejects as large numbers of Afghans endeavor to escape.¹⁵⁹ Biden declared the forces would assist with evacuating Afghans who worked with the United States, and he affirmed that displaced person status access for weak Afghans.

The exit of the US forces from Afghanistan on August 30, 2021, leaving the country under Taliban control, followed a turbulent, fourteen-day evacuation process during which more than 120,000 individuals were withdrawn. President Biden said the US ought to gain from its slip-ups, and this extraction denotes the finish of "a period of significant military

¹⁵⁶ Mujib Mashal, "Afghanistan Peace Talks Open in Qatar, Seeking End to Decades of War," *The New York Times*, September 12, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/12/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban.html>

¹⁵⁷ "Taliban talks: US peace envoy 'not happy about' release of prisoners," *BBC News*, September 14, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-54155768>

¹⁵⁸ Max Boot, "Biden's 9/11 Withdrawal From Afghanistan: What to Know," *Council Foreign Relations (CFR)*, April 14, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/biden-afghanistan-troop-withdrawal-september-11>

¹⁵⁹ Steve Holland and Idrees Ali, "US on pace to complete Afghan pullout by Aug 31, Biden told G7," *Reuters*, August 25, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pentagon-says-no-change-plan-complete-afghan-evacuation-by-aug-31-2021-08-24/>

activities to revamp different countries."¹⁶⁰ Thousands of Afghans who helped the US and its partners stay in Afghanistan, just as up to 200 Americans. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington would attempt to get them out and that future U.S. commitment in Afghanistan will zero in on discretion.¹⁶¹

Whether convenient or precipitant, US troop withdrawal will deliver ramifications for worldwide commitment in Afghanistan. Through a restricted, all-around planned understanding, Harmony in Afghanistan will neither naturally end debasement nor the supporter customer framework. These will thus require various methodologies from the worldwide local area in its future relations with Afghanistan and shielding its inclinations, particularly the additions that have been accomplished throughout the long term.

3.5 Paradoxical Aspects between Pakistan and India

It is evident that India and Pakistan's rivalry has had many shades since its inception. The two South Asian states have many conflicted attitudes regarding each other in which Kashmir is the main hub and the other contradictory interests around it.

Firstly, to highlight the term terrorism, it is important to address the problem of Kashmir between the two nuclear actors, Pakistan and India. Recently, India revoked article 370 of the constitution and segregated the status of Jammu and Kashmir into two different bodies prompting the reaction of regional and international actors, especially Pakistan.¹⁶² In response, Pakistan criticized BJP leader Modi's government for using aggression in the Kashmir region to suppress the Kashmiri people who fought for the last seventy years for freedom. India imposed a lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir and deployed tens of thousands of military forces there.¹⁶³ The human rights violation and demographic and cultural changes in Kashmir clearly showed the aggressive policy of the Modi government toward

¹⁶⁰ "Remarks by President Biden on the End of the War in Afghanistan," *The White House*, August 31, 2021. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/08/31/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-end-of-the-war-in-afghanistan/>

¹⁶¹ "Secretary Antony J. Blinken's Remarks on Afghanistan," *US Department of State*, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-antony-j-blinken-remarks-on-afghanistan/>

¹⁶² Kriti M. Shah and Khalid Shah, "Kashmir after Article 370: India's Diplomatic Challenge," *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*, (2020):6-7.

¹⁶³ Ather Zia, "Kashmiris in India are still suffering," *Aljazeera*, August 05, 2021. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/8/5/kashmiris-in-india-are-still-suffering>

the Kashmiri people. With the growing influence of Hindutva ideology under the BJP and RSS, the human rights violations increase in the Kashmir region, which grows the hatred between the Kashmiri local people and the government. The government shut down the internet services, schools, markets, colleges and all the business activities and implemented a strict curfew in Jammu and Kashmir. This act of government has evidenced that BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) actions threaten Kashmir's local people and risk regional peace and stability.¹⁶⁴ Pakistan claimed that this act completely violates the bilateral agreement and international resolutions, while India claimed that Jammu and Kashmir are an integral part of India; therefore, it's a domestic matter for India, not bilateral. India has changed the status of the Kashmir issue from International to bilateral, and now it has become a domestic issue. Therefore, it could extend the conflict between India and Pakistan that multiply the security turmoil in the South Asia region.

Secondly, the deadly triangle of India-Afghanistan-Pakistan has another conflicting factor between the two nuclear states. India believed that Pakistan used Afghanistan soil for terrorist activities, which harmed regional security and peace to curb security concerns. India has three motives in Afghanistan, to overcome Pakistan's influence, promote a democratic system and diminish terrorism in the country.¹⁶⁵ Afghanistan is an important state for India because it is the only way to enter the Central Asian region with vast natural resources. On the other hand, Pakistan-Afghanistan shares deep-roots in common and the two states have been suffering terrorism, extremism and separatism for a very long time due to poor governance, it is difficult for states to curtail these evils. Apart from this, Pakistan also claimed that Indian involvement in Afghanistan caused several internal unrests in Pakistan, especially in the FATA region. The competition and mistrust of Afghanistan factor further originate repercussions for regional security and stability.

Thirdly, Pakistan and India have changed foreign policies toward regional and extra-regional actors indicating another negative aspect. The Indo-US nexus and China-Pakistan-Russia triangle in the South Asian region change the entire regional power politics.

¹⁶⁴Arif Alvi, "Why Kashmir Matters," *Dawn*, August 05, 2021.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1638896/why-kashmir-matters>

¹⁶⁵ Zachary Constantino, "The India-Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan," *United States Institute of Peace (USIP)*, (2020):3-4.

Keeping in mind that China has massive investments in its BRI-CPEC project in Pakistan and Russia-Pakistan, improving relations raises concerns for India and the US; therefore, India tilted toward the US. The US sees India as an important state in the South Asia region which helps counterbalance China and Russia's strong emerging influence. India is an emerging new market for the US to export its military weapons, and India is seeking a strong ally to balance China and Russia in the region. The two states, the US and India, signed military agreements for sharing intelligence and information regarding security cooperation.¹⁶⁶ The US and India are also concerned about Russia's Asia policy and increasing closeness with Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan became a member of SCO in 2017; its importance has increased as an important regional state in terms of geographic location. However, it is the only country in South Asia which can help China to promote its economic activity in the region and transform this region into an economic hub. Apart from this, the closeness of the US-India is trouble for Pakistan's status in the region because India is a rival state of Pakistan and the detachment of the US-Pakistan relations challenges Pakistan's position in the region. Therefore, Pakistan needs a strong ally to balance the India and US enhancing relations with each other. While on the other side, Russia is also irked at the Indo-US nexus. Growing Chinese influence in South and Central Asia pushed Russia to resume its Asia policy strategy towards Pakistan, an important factor in South Asia. Therefore, Moscow and Islamabad cooperate in the defence and energy sector to strengthen their appearance in the region. This triangle of Russia-China-Pakistan cooperates in Afghanistan dialogues held in Moscow in 2016 to make efforts and free Afghanistan from terrorism.¹⁶⁷ Keeping in mind Afghanistan plays a very significant role in the regional integration of South and Central Asia, stability in Afghanistan promotes economic cooperation in both regions.

¹⁶⁶Maham S. Gillani, "Indo-US Strategic Partnership: Pakistan's Security Dilemma," *Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS)*, May 01, 2021. <https://casstt.com/post/indo-us-strategic-partnership-pakistan-s-security-dilemma/357>

¹⁶⁷ Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Sarfraz Ahmed, and Stuti Bhatnagar, "Conflict or Cooperation: India and Pakistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)," *Pacific Focus* 34, no. 1 (2019):17.

In conclusion, CPEC is a primary part of the BRI, connected to the SCO approach to regional integration in South and Central Asia. It is observed that the development of the CPEC is beneficial not only for Pakistan but the other regional states as well. It has the potential to change the entire geopolitical dynamics of South and Central Asia and play an active role in regional and economic connectivity. Afghanistan is a bridge connecting South and Central Asia; therefore, peace and stability are imperative to promote regional economic integration in the two regions. To achieve this objective, it is important to develop security arrangements under the regional organization of the SCO, which manages the security risks and border conflicts in the region. It is observed that economic integration makes the region stable and prosper in future.

CHAPTER-4

ENLARGED SCO AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE ONGOING EFFORTS OF REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

The fourth chapter presents the impacts of expansion on the SCO members and anticipates the management of disagreements. As the previous chapters of the research cover the work of SCO importance for the region, therefore, the last chapter of the research will now cover the prospects and possible ways of cooperation among the member states in the organization. It is noted that inter-regional and intra-regional cooperation explore new avenues for economic and trade benefits. The world is currently transforming from geopolitical to geo-economics; therefore, Central and South Asian countries need to find a new impetus to enhance their economic activities. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a beneficial way to promote peace and security in the connectivity of South and Central Asia. Lastly, the member states strongly support the regional connectivity projects to boost the prosperity and security of South and Central Asia.

4.1 Expansion of the SCO

The SCO member states collectively hold a large portion of the world's land and resources. The states also govern more than half of the world's population and have significant military forces working for the regional security foundation. The role of SCO is important for the development and strategic importance of the region. The SCO faces the main challenge as an organization in the Central Asian region, including eliminating ethnic conflicts, religious extremism, and terrorism. The challenges also include improving trust and bilateral relationships among States, developing good relations with other states, and improving trade and economic ties.

Despite its geographically proximity, the diversity of members' history, interests, national interests, style of government, wealth, and culture has made the development and decision making of the SCO ineffective and delayed. In a sign of growing maturity, the organization has begun to cooperate across a spectrum of education, tourism, environmental, cultural, science, technology and economic portfolios.

With the inclusion of Pakistan and India in the SCO, the status of the organization transformed from ‘Shanghai six’ to ‘Big Shanghai eight’.¹⁶⁸ The SCO expansion has increased the importance of the organization because the four nuclear powers are now working under the same platform. This expansion raised many new questions for analysts and brought many new doors for the member states. From the beginning, the organization was focused on the security aspects. With the time, the objectives of the SCO transformed towards economic growth because CARs are rich in energy reserves but less developed. Therefore, China played as a big brother in Central Asia to fulfil its energy demands and developed the region. Furthermore, the addition of India and Pakistan has shifted the organization towards the South Asian region; the two most important regions, South and Central Asia connect with each other to boost economic activity. The question is how the SCO works with two traditional rivals, India and Pakistan, to balance the organization and accomplish its objectives without harming the aspirations of any member state.

It is clear that India has the support of Russia; with the support of SCO, India has tried to brace its healthy relations with the energy-rich Central Asian States (CAS) as India has no direct access to the CAS region, meanwhile China supports Pakistan in the SCO because Pakistan has a very important geographical location that directly connects to Central Asia. In view of all these reasons, India and Pakistan helped the SCO with economic cooperation that connected the two regions of South and Central Asia to magnify regional connectivity. With the help of China, the organization pioneered many new economic corridors in Central and South Asia, which merged the two regions through land routes. To sum up, the involvement of new members multiplies the organization’s geography and strategic agenda toward two regions which could change the regional geopolitical environment.

4.2 Regional Connectivity Developments

SCO is an important regional organization for economic integration in the current geo-economic world, actively working on regional economic and security aspects. It is vigorously working on inter and intra economic developments to aggrandize security in

¹⁶⁸ Ruslan IzimovYussupzhanovich, and Zamira Muratalieva Tulkunovna, "Role of SCO in the Eurasian Continent," *India Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2019):43-44.

both regions. The organization provides a common platform for all the member states to cooperate in economic, counterterrorism, separatism, illegal drug trafficking, illegal crimes and extremism. Furthermore, the organization is too young to handle all these matters simultaneously; therefore, SCO is working with Regional Anti-Terrorism Structures (RATS) to handle all the security and terrorism-related challenges in the region. The organization adopted many declarations and treaties for curbing the three evils (terrorism, separatism and extremism); however, very less implementation takes place because of external actors.

Focusing on the economic construction of South and Central Asia, there are many regional and international economic corridors initiated by China that connect the two regions with the entire world. China, a key player in the SCO, initiated Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. In contrast, Silk Road Economic Belt (SERB) and Maritime Silk Road are part of this big project where the entire world has connected through land and water route.¹⁶⁹ China and Russia established a joint declaration in connecting the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and SERB; this will show a clear message that China and Russia jointly promote regional cooperation along with the other member states of the organization.¹⁷⁰ From Central Asia States (CAS) perspective, the construction of the BRI gives a new propel to the CAS's updated infrastructure, rails and roads development, trade exchanges, and people-to-people connections. It is observed that the construction of SERB and EAEU will refurbish the Central Asian countries and accentuate the position of Central Asia at the international level, which will assemble it an important region.

From an Indian point of view, the regional connectivity provides a possible path to construct transport economic corridors for India on the southern side. India is already a member of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), which links Mumbai to St.Petersburg through Iran.¹⁷¹ Due to its geographical location, India cannot have direct access to Central Asia; it used Iran's Chahbhar port as an alternative to getting

¹⁶⁹Lu Na-Xi, Huang Meng-Fang, and Lu Shan-Bing, "How the Belt and Road Initiative can help strengthen the role of the SCO and deepen China's cooperation with Russia and the countries of Central Asia," *India Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2019):57.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ruslan Izimov Yussupzhanovich, and Zamira Muratalieva Tulkunovna, "Role of SCO in the Eurasian Continent," *India Quarterly* 75, no. 1 (2019):52.

access to CAS; therefore, the regional connectivity allows India to connect with CAS. While India criticizes the CPEC project at Gwadar port and believes that it would threaten the sovereignty of India but if India is included in this project, it will benefit India's economic and trade exchanges and give India direct access to CAS.

As a member of the SCO, Pakistan is also a victim of terrorist activities like other member countries; therefore, the country has actively participated in the regional security and connectivity of the region. The expansion of its Gwadar port will give Pakistan a big boost in its economic and energy sector and transform Pakistan into an important economic hub in South Asia for the other SCO member countries. Besides this, the rivalry between India and Pakistan is a huge threat to Pakistan's strong presence in the South Asian region. To strengthen its influence at the regional and international level, Pakistan should focus its economic growth and trade by supporting the Chinese CPEC initiative. It will provide Pakistan North-South connectivity through gas pipelines and land routes and a new path toward the commercial market. Keeping in mind CAS is rich in natural resources and Pakistan is facing an energy crisis; therefore, Pakistan needs to improve its connections and relations with Central Asian countries to make this project a successful one.

Within this context, the security problems and the state's internal differences are the main hurdles to accomplishing regional integration. By working with the SCO, the member states can curtail the security risks in the two regions, South and Central Asia, and make them peaceful and prosperous regions globally.

4.3 Stability in Afghanistan

Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been an important country in international politics. Afghanistan is a landlocked country connected to South, Central Asia and the West region.¹⁷² Due to its geography, the country was always a battleground for the superpowers Russia, China and the US and regional powers Iran, India and Pakistan. From the beginning, the security of Afghanistan was very complex; however, after the 9/11 incident, it became more complicated, which spilt security perils in the South and Central Asia

¹⁷² Jamshed Khan and Razia Sultana, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Afghanistan: An Overview," *FWU Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 2 (2019):1.

region. The two regions suffered security challenges that could disturb the two regions' peace and stability, which simultaneously became a serious threat to regional and international states. In such circumstances, SCO played a very important role in Afghanistan, overcoming the security menace and making Afghanistan a stable country in the international arena. It is observed that in 2005 SCO established the SCO-Afghan Contact Group (SCO-ACG) to increase the cooperation and promote common interests between SCO and Afghanistan to curb the three evils of terrorism and extremism, separatism.¹⁷³ The Afghan government actively participated in the contact group's annual meetings to discuss terrorism. Apart from this, drugs and narcotics trafficking is another serious problem in Afghanistan which supported massive aid to terrorist groups passing through Afghanistan's borders towards other regions. To reduce this problem, the SCO and United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) implemented action plans that control the country's illegal drugs and narcotics trafficking.¹⁷⁴ Within this context, RATS and the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) signed a protocol which restricted the trans-border illegal drugs, narcotics and crimes so that they could not finance terrorist groups.¹⁷⁵ China, a key member of the SCO, has launched socio-economic programs in Afghanistan with the help of the Afghan government and RATS to reconstruct the country's infrastructure to enhance the state's economic potential so that terrorist groups could not strengthen their foothold in the country.

In 2012, Afghanistan obtained the status of observer status in the SCO and in 2015, the 'Heart of Asia Conference was held in Islamabad on the matter of Afghanistan's security and stability which promote regional economic cooperation to build less developed areas in Afghanistan and increase the living standard of local people to curtail the security perils in the northern and eastern part of the country.¹⁷⁶ At the regional and international level, the states participated in the conference with international organizations such as NATO,

¹⁷³ Ahmad Bilal Khalil, "Afghanistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *The Diplomat*, July 14, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/07/afghanistan-and-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>

¹⁷⁴ "UNODC, Shanghai Cooperation Organization sign agreement to boost international health, safety and security," *United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC)*. <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/press/releases/2011/June/unodc-shanghai-cooperation-organization-sign-agreement-to-boost-international-health-safety-and-security.html>

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Heart of Asia' aims to promote amity among neighbors," *Dawn*, December 08, 2015. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1224910>

SCO, OIC, UN, and SAARC. They all agreed on one point the only solution to Afghanistan's unrest conditions in peace dialogues with the Taliban. During this meeting, another Quadrilateral Coordination Group emerged, including China, India, Afghanistan, and the US. The main objective of this group is to promote peace through dialogues between the Taliban and the Afghan government.¹⁷⁷ It is seen that SCO actively contributed to the Afghan peace process to improve regional cooperation for peace and stability in South and Central Asia.

In addition, the rise of the Islamic State (IS) is another growing aspect in Afghanistan which expanded (after the 2014 withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan left a huge power gap in the country) its roots in Afghanistan that is a big threat for the regional peace and stability, especially for Pakistan, Afghanistan and CARs. According to the RATS data, the IS has rapidly expanded its origins in the northern and eastern sides of Afghanistan, and SCO, together with RATS, has made strong efforts to manage the vast growth of IS.

China invested in energy, security and trade in Afghanistan to subjugate these circumstances, whereas China expanded its BRI-CPEC project in Afghanistan to increase cooperation with Afghanistan. Chinese companies Jiangxi Copper Company (JLC) and Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) have been signed a \$3.4 billion contract with Afghanistan for the extraction of the copper in Afghanistan. It is the 2nd largest copper deposit in the world. In 2011, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) contracted \$400 million to produce oil fields in Afghanistan which is approximately \$87 million barrels of oil in Afghanistan.¹⁷⁸

Consequently, the SCO member states need to do bilateral projects and multilateral projects for positive results. It will reduce the economic competition between China and Russia. The two key SCO members should involve the two regions of South and Central Asia in different economic activities, which will boost the regional economic cooperation between them. The SCO Development Bank, initiated by China, also promotes bilateral and

¹⁷⁷ Amina Khan, "Afghanistan-Pakistan-US-China Quadrilateral Coordination Group," *Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI)* (2016): 2-4.

¹⁷⁸ Sohrab Azad, "China's Stake in the Afghan Peace Process," *The Diplomat*, September 22, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/09/chinas-stake-in-the-afghan-peace-process/>

multilateral projects that increase the economic activity in the South and Central Asia economic activity that brings peace and prosperity to the region.

4.4 Outlook of Pakistan-India Cooperation

Pakistan and India had shared fractured relationships for seven decades. The two South Asian powers had signed 44 bilateral agreements to improve their cold relationship but found very few positive results. It is noted that when the world is moving towards geoeconomics, India and Pakistan are still embroiled in geopolitics matters. The two states need to settle their differences and continue peace cooperation. By 2017, there were very small steps that the two neighbors, Pakistan and India, took for better relations; however, the tension increased between Islamabad and New Delhi after August 2019 when India revoked the status of Jammu and Kashmir in its constitution. Since then, the crossfire strikes began between the two parties, which stretched the stress. In 2021, a ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan was signed, which showed ease towards each other.¹⁷⁹ After securing the borders, the two states move towards the core issues, i.e. Kashmir, which spread violence and difficulty in their relationship. There is no peace between the two states without solving the Kashmir issue. After that, they focused on other issues like terrorism, extremism, and separatism.

Apart from this, the addition of India and Pakistan to the SCO pushed the countries to participate in multilateral economic and security projects. On the one hand side, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an option for India and Pakistan to participate in a terror-free environment that could benefit both the states. Other regional projects like Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), India-Pakistan-Iran (IPI), and the joint India-Pakistan electricity trade initiative between New Delhi and Islamabad could engage the two states under one platform to interact on common interest. It is noted that Central Asian states could play a positive role in mitigating India and Pakistan if they accomplished these projects successfully.

¹⁷⁹Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, "Reflections on Pakistan-India peace," *Dawn*, July 30, 2021. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1637739>

It is observed that Pakistan and India should come up with projects which bound themselves together, and it would not be possible for the two states to give up on these projects; for example, in the past, they signed the Simla Accord in 1972 after the independence of East Pakistan (Bangladesh). The main objective of the treaty was to settle the dispute through peaceful means. This treaty also stated the withdrawal of forces from both sides' borders and the release of Prisoners of War (POW). After some time, both states contravene the treaty. The reason here is to restore the mutual trust and cooperation between the two states, for which they could secure their borders and reduce military troops from both borders. The two rival states, Pakistan and India, could restore these treaties, which strictly bind them together.

Nevertheless, the two states could try to take some baby steps to build mutual trust by using other areas for cooperation such as telecommunication, agriculture, people-to-people contact, education, health, sports, and culture. These steps show that the Cooperation is the only option to bring peace between the two actors, for which it is necessary to create mutual trust between the two rival states.

Consequently, the SCO brought many new opportunities and hopes for the member states. The significant problem of all the member states is non-traditional security threats which prevent the member states from economic products. Keeping in mind Afghanistan is the only way that connects South and Central Asia, however, the disturbing environment inside Afghanistan prevented the SCO member states from expanding economic activities towards each other. SCO establish the possible way to promote peace and security for which its member countries work properly. It also provides a common platform where the two rivals, India and Pakistan, collaborate on some common interests that could mitigate the tensions between them.

CONCLUSION

The study's main purpose is to explore the possible pathways where the member countries, particularly India and Pakistan, can collaborate to get rid of bitterness towards each other. The SCO was formed to promote cooperation, friendly relations, and mutual trust among the member states. With the integration of the USSR, five new states emerged near the Chinese border that changed the entire geopolitics. The organization's main objective is to combat the non-traditional security threats (terrorism, extremism, and separatism) that emerged in Central Asia. With the passage of time, the organization transformed from a security body to economic gain. Now the SCO is dealing with regional security and economic activities simultaneously. Besides this, the organization's expansion towards South Asia, including India and Pakistan, open new doors for the SCO member countries. This new development gave the organization a new way to emerge in the international world as the world is currently more focused on geo-economics.

Asia is one of the most significant regions in the global economy in the contemporary world, where Russia and China, the two emerging powers, cooperate with the same interest in security and economics. Increasing the new regional integration trends in South and Central Asia, China, a leading member, initiated many economic corridors in Central and South Asia for regional connectivity. From North to South, the SCO covers a huge area where all the member countries have a different political pattern. Keeping in mind Central Asian States are rich in natural resources but have no access to the Indian Ocean. At the same time, India and Pakistan are energy crisis states, and both are in search of energy reserves. Within this context, China started to build infrastructure under CPEC in Pakistan, which is changing the political dynamics of South Asia. The SCO is playing a significant role in the two new members, India and Pakistan, in order to analyze all the aspects of tensions that prevent the two rivals from holding peace dialogues. By giving the SCO's historical background in resolving the territorial disputes among the member states, the organization can resolve the border issues between the two countries. Furthermore, joining the SCO brought India and Pakistan two arch-rivals under one platform for economic and security interests. Many analysts believed that cooperation between India and Pakistan could ease their tension.

Overall, the findings of the study are given below:

1. Since the membership of India and Pakistan in the SCO, the Indo-Pak conflict has become worse. The animosity between Pakistan and India has been increasing under the Modi government. The nationalism and Hindutva ideology in India has given birth to the anti-Pakistan and anti-Muslim hatred among Indians.
2. The dialogue on the issue of terrorism is halted within the SCO because the organization demands India and Pakistan to share data collected by their intelligence to fight against terrorism which is unlikely that the two states would do it. Yet, SCO will promote and support dialogues between Pakistan and India on the bilateral level.
3. All the SCO members have common interests in bringing peace and stability to the region, but differences in priorities have generated clashes. SCO can offer a limited range of topics to avoid direct clashes on the platform and push states to engage in bilateral negotiations.
4. The regional dynamics vividly impact the SCO's agenda to implement Shanghai Spirit. China as a leading member of the SCO, China promotes regional integration and economic development links between South and Central Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Whereas India and the US opposed the BRI and thought that China maintained its strong influence in both the regions for its own interests. That's why India and the US have begun military ties with each other to compete with China in South and Central Asia. The US develops Indian military sectors just to maintain a balance in the region. This competition and confrontation between the two blocs create more distances between India and Pakistan.
5. Cooperation and mutual trust are important to overcome the enmity between Pakistan and India, even if it starts at a minor level. Within this context, Pakistan

and India cooperate to exchange their information on security and economic perspective, discussion on regional and international issues, development of regional peace and stability under the framework of the SCO but cut off their bilateral talks.

6. The volatile environment and security risks in Afghanistan drive many repercussions for the SCO members because Afghanistan connects South-Central Asia. It is important for the organization to manage these security threats and border disputes to accomplish the regional connectivity projects.
7. As a leading partner, China can influence regional economic projects such as TAPI and push India and Pakistan under one umbrella where both countries could cooperate with each other.
8. Every year, the two states cooperate in the summit meeting of the SCO, where they talk about security and economic agendas. As a member of the SCO, it is compulsory for India and Pakistan to participate in every peace mission operation which the organization's members hold. This shows some positive dimensions between India and Pakistan.
9. Besides this, it is important for India and Pakistan to enhance their bilateral relations by enhancing cooperation and mutual trust by taking small steps. It takes a long time for Pakistan and India to settle their border disputes. Currently, they have signed a ceasefire agreement which indicates that both states should make little effort for a better future.

The study depicts that the inclusion of Iran in the SCO and the present withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan changed the entire dynamics in South and Central Asia and beyond. This new development enlarges the SCO toward the Middle East region, while Saudi Arabia and Qatar are included as dialogue partners in the SCO. On the one side, Iran will seek SCO as a security and economic alliance, which helps overcome the west sanctions pressure. The organization will provide the country with a pathway to enter Central Asia. However, China and India are the biggest markets; therefore, the organization will provide Iran with a big new market to strengthen its economic growth and improve its

security environment. On the other side, the entrance of Iran into the SCO would be a good way to deal with the regional security threats, and China would find a way to expand its BRI and CPEC toward the Middle East region. The new dimension will give a pathway to the SCO members, especially China, to work on Gwadar and Chahabar ports at the same time.

It is important for the two regions, Central and South Asia, to manage regional stability with the help of the SCO. However, regional instability is the most serious problem for the present and future of Central and South Asia. The SCO is a regional organization. It is necessary for the organization to manage the instability crisis in both regions or lose its popularity in Central and South Asia. In order to do so, the SCO should focus on regional engagement, denying the basic principle of ‘non-interference of members in each other’s internal matters. The SCO should use the path of constructive engagement to address the crisis of regional instability and actively take steps based on international laws to overcome the regional crisis.

The SCO is actively dealing with the security issues in the two regions, South and Central Asia, while its economic progress is slower and not satisfactory for the members. In case of any impediment in economic cooperation, disappointments increase among the member states, damaging the organization’s reputation. It is necessary for the SCO to make efforts in economic areas to achieve maximum gains.

Now the priority of the SCO is to stabilize Afghanistan because without a stable environment in Afghanistan, and it is unable for the SCO to enhance its regional integration and economic connectivity policy between South and Central Asia. The SCO plays a constructive role in Afghanistan’s economic, security, and human development and has sustained stability in its political system through many large and small economic projects. The organization is developing its social system through assistance and provides a platform where it can negotiate with other countries for settlements and peace dialogues.

Overall, the study shows that SCO is a ray of hope to be an effective organization to mitigate tensions between India and Pakistan despite regional tension. Keeping in mind the SCO's main objective, the organization establishes the RATS team for India and Pakistan

to share information on their illegal cross-border activities to control and maintain a stable environment. Meanwhile, the multilateral organization revives some bilateral and multilateral economic corridors under BRI and CPEC and makes efforts to engage Islamabad and New Delhi. Furthermore, the organization is trying its best to curb the security demons of terrorism, extremism, and separatism in South and Central Asia and organized 'Peace Mission exercises' not to show any strength but to keep alive mutual trust among member states and diminish member states anti-terror threats from regions. Some analysts believe that economic cooperation is the key element to maintaining a balanced relationship between the two entities. However, to increase economic cooperation, it is compulsory first to strengthen mutual trust and friendly relations between the two rivals. After passing three years of tension, India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement at the Line of Control (LoC) on Feb 24 -25, 2021, showing a small step of peaceful cooperation would be taken by both sides to restrain their territorial dispute. India and Pakistan share a long, tense history, engaging them in cooperative manners. It is the responsibility of the SCO to overcome the rivalries and competition within the organization because of the convergence and divergence interests of the member states, especially India and Pakistan, and make this organization a better platform for cooperation.

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