

The Expansion of Shanghai Cooperation Organization: How can it Improve India-Pakistan Relations?

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Headings

- [Introduction](#)
- [Research Methodology](#)
- [India-Pakistan in SCO](#)
- [Pakistan's Membership](#)
- [India's Membership](#)
- [India-Pakistan Relations](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [References](#)

Abstract South Asia is one and only of the tiniest unified region in the world, with a consistent competition among India and Pakistan acting as a tentative wedge to regional cooperation through the SAARC. Nevertheless, India and Pakistan join the multilateral agreement; then both became permanent members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2017. Although, it is very initial to envisage that the rival relations of both countries influenced by the forum. This paper tries to explain alternative and possible openings for partnership in several ranges, especially in counterterrorism and security, which may be turning a positive influence on Indo-Pak relations. Further, the negative impression of India & Pakistan contentions on the SCO forum is very low, unlike SAARC. This research also seeks to explore the implications of SCO's engagements on the bilateral relations of India and Pakistan. These engagements may be about to resolve issues about the peace and stability in the nuclearized South Asia.

Key Words: Indo-Pak Relations, Kashmir Conflict, Regional Organization, CPEC, SCO, Regional Integration, Conflict Management

Introduction

By the termination of the cold-war period and the emergence of the hegemony of the United States, the demand for multi-polarity has been raised subsequently. The prominent actors at that time were China, Russia, and India notably [\(Deng 2007\)](#). China & Russia are opponents of the western command ideologically & favor the revolution against the status quo [\(Krickovic 2017\)](#). In 1997, enunciating their agenda, they had delivered a brief and shared announcement that demanded multi-polarity in world politics. In 2005, this followed the two states' vision on a paper on a "New World Order". In this regard, China & Russia have reinforced their monetary and strategic collaboration to pledge the supremacy of the United States (US) in global politics effectively [\(Krickovic 2017\)](#). Their common menace insight took them jointly in a multi-stages premeditated collaboration, in which Russia seeks to reserve its impact after the cold war era while China is looking to sustain its authority over the borderline island by increasing its marine influence [\(Wilson 2015\)](#). The establishment of SCO is a realization of this vision and to perceive the dominant role in world politics [\(Deng 2007\)](#). It is worth mentioning here that over the SCO platform. The two countries favored the drawing of the United States military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan [\(Deng 2007\)](#). According to the SCO's charter article 13, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a Global

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organization that is sweeping to states concerned in conglomerate and has reverence to objectives and ideologies of the charter as well as other SCO worldwide covenants. Similarly, the organization is open to all and collaborating with additional global and regional organizations_(Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2001). The SCO has improved its impact by growing its affiliation to assign permanent member status to Pakistan & India. This study will explore the outcomes by expanding its membership, which takes distant persisted un-explored yet. It conduits the gaps in the leading view concluded the pragmatist and optimist elucidations of India & Pakistan's membership in the organization with the objectives for fruitful attachments with the forum. The SCO platform, now having major players on the table, including Afghanistan (as observer state), can provide a full spectrum opportunity to draw upon a strategy for achieving common interests of member states_(Hasnat and Awan 2016). Despite the divergent interests of India-Pakistan under the SCO, they are expected to share mutual benefits; however, the mutual benefits are not too much. But they may be gain admittance to the important region of Asia. The inclusion of both states was derived the motives of possible impacts of SCO's expansion are from Indian perspective foreign policy benefits_(Stobdan 2015), increasing trade_(Bakshi 2002), peace & stability in Afghanistan _(R. M. Khan 2012) and peace and security in South Asian region as well_(Qadir and Rehman 2016).

Research Methodology

This article is based on available primary as well as secondary data, which are collected from different available sources in the form of government reports, charters, fact sheets, think tank reports, Journals, books & interviews as well. The article conceptualized different dimensions, including conflict resolution, maintenance of peace and security, and bilateral relations through the SCO. A geopolitical method definite, tangible geographical condition as a feature which describes outlines of international relations progress characterizes the essential study of organization's regional perception and its topographical agenda.

India-Pakistan in SCO: Motives behind Association

The SCO, one of the important and speedily rising multidimensional organizations in Asia, appeared as the descendant to the "Shanghai-Five", a partisan connotation established by China, Russia, & three previous Soviet republics are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, & Tajikistan. Founding member of "Shanghai-Five" concluded the creation of SCO in 2001 through the presence of Uzbekistan as its new member. The initial focus of SCO was the demilitarization of the borders and arms reduction, but its agenda has extended over time. In 2017, India-Pakistan was accompanied by the full status of membership. In addition, the SCO's main concerns, as mentioned in its charter to the non-traditional security concerns_(Safiullin 2014). The forum is perceived to be evolving as a prevailing multifaceted diplomatic stage. The inclusion of South Asian countries now represents 45% of the total global population and 1/4th of the Worldwide Gross Domestic Product (GDP)_(Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). The relevance of SCO in a broader view, in addition to including the geopolitical and geo-economics concerns, has turned India- Pakistan's keen interest to join the SCO. In 2005, from observer status to premium membership in 2017, while India & Pakistan is showing the commitment to engage with regional players on the front foot.

Pakistan's Membership

The SCO's membership in Pakistan is considering a foreign policy achievement. It will explore multiple opportunities for Pakistan to cooperate with the SCO society both of bilateral level as well as regional. The Chinese support for Pakistan for this development taken the direct result of its unwavering strategic relations with it_(Ahmed 2016). Pakistan is observed as an important player in regional politics due to its geostrategic location and its engrossment in the Soviet-Afghan Confrontations, as well as its contribution to the global war on terror (GWOT) as a non-NATO ally of the United States_(Naseer 2008). Pakistan's consent to forum happened throughout the era of Chinese ambitious Belt & Road Initiatives (BRI), and economy

boosts. In strategic terms, China needs the organization not only to endorse its commercial ties as well as affirms influence around the wider extent of central Asia & South Asia. The Chinese impacts in the region present-day exceed the United States [\(Brandt, Rawski and Zhu 2007\)](#), while Beijing intended to bring the change hooked on a commercial centre by fetching bordering states at the bi-lateral & multilateral forum [\(Wagner 2016\)](#). The inclusion of Pakistan in this forum branded it as an imperative regional actor, and the association makes much stronger ties with China which never was before [\(Ahmed 2016\)](#). It was natural; thus, the membership of Pakistan was heavily supported by China. From Pakistan's perspective, participation in the SCO accomplishes its craving to promote strong ties with Central Asian Republics (CARs) [\(Blank 2013\)](#). The "Economic Cooperation Organization" (ECO) also provides a plan for collaboration among Pakistan and CARs. This cooperation also strategically significant due to the Wakhan-Corridor in the north-east of Afghanistan; Pak-Afghan relations have significance for their strong relations with former Soviet republics. Stability in Afghanistan is directly in favor of Pakistan as it drives the CPEC project with Chinese collaboration. Pakistan made a transit agreement with Afghanistan, according to which Afghanistan can use the route towards Karachi port in return Afghanistan, enables the Pakistani trade with CARs [\(Yusufzai 2011\)](#). Though, this deal necessitates some additional demands made by Afghanistan, which includes Afghan-India trade through this transit route. The purpose of joining the forum also indicates that changing Pakistan's foreign policy direction demonstrated its understanding of Russia and distances it from the United States. This might be the new chapter of Pak-Russia relations. The bilateral agreements between both countries also showcased new dimensions of their relations. Further, the CPEC is in full swing, which also led the relations of Pakistan with Beijing & Moscow to the new heights of cooperation. Pakistan's membership is consequently determined by the economic and strategic objectives of the collaboration. Noticeable, the Russian political professional, Andrew Korybko, has acknowledged Pakistan's geopolitical reputation in Eurasia, describing it as "Zipper" of Pan-Eurasian Incorporation [\(Korybko 2015\)](#).

India's Membership

From the Indian perspective, the membership was derived from the desire to build regional strategic partnerships with key players of SCO. From the border view of Indian foreign policy led by prime minister Manmohan Singh, sought to use its new agenda of economic development with new international partner [\(Narlikar 2007\)](#) s. Just like India doing in BRICS and IBSA forum. Indian interest has also been driven by a factor that to connected with Central Asian states and with Iran. By reaching energy resources in central Asian states is a major Indian quest for its energy security [\(Mohan 2003\)](#). The process of Indian membership also reflects its broader political benefits. Indian submission remained primarily blocked by China but required Russian Sustenance [\(Roy 2011\)](#), the old friend & strategic companion. The Indian government, to get backing from Tajikistan, which collaborates on a high level, concluded the cooperatively precise military sordid in Farkhor, which was why China hesitate to Indian membership as well [\(Malik, et al. 2010\)](#). Chinese strong strategic partnership with Pakistan & his growing worries regarding American-Indian relations also remained alarmed, especially during 2008 the American-Indian Civil nuclear deal. Due to the larger economy and growing market is a prominent factor for India to access international markets through the joining of regional and international bloc's politics. However, the Sino-US rivalries must take into account as a factor of influence on geostrategic dimensions in South Asia. After the confirmation of Indian membership in SCO, the Indian government contracted a main logistic conversation deal with the United States [\(George 2016\)](#). Through a similar time, American-Chinese stiffnesses were increased over the South-China Sea issue. India stands with the American situation on the said issue [\(Sakhuja and Jha 2016\)](#) and is also concerned about the regional belt and road initiative (BRI) [\(Das 2017\)](#). The US has some security concerns regarding the Chinese expansion in the Indian Ocean since the early of this century [\(Moore 2018\)](#). The acceptance of Indian membership by Beijing shown the ambitious BRI expanding of its multilateral interests, and SCO is a fruitful tool for attaining these interests [\(Zhou and Esteban 2018\)](#). Chinese President Xi, after assuming the presidency, stated that "improving Sin-Indian relations would be his mission in future"

(Stobdan 2015). Despite this expression, Sino-Indian cooperation remained unstable; the reason is that the unresolved regional disputes. The border conflicts in June 2017 between India & China is trailed by the rivalries of politics showed the mutual trust deficit (Kellogg 2017). The cooperation among both countries, however, can be seen in BRICS at small. Indian membership is too a cross artefact of its growing part in the Central-Asian region, which is a key goal of all major regional and international players (Blank 2013). Pakistan and India both are looking to increase their role in the region (Sahgal and Anand 2010). Russia and CARs want to make this forum (SCO) an energy club (Trivedi 2015). The CARs commanded India-Pakistan to emblem the deal with Turkmenistan and Afghanistan joint project of energy (TAPI) for an 1800 km Gas-pipeline worth Rs. 8 billion \$ (Gurt 2018). The inclusion of India in SCO is boosting factor for energy resources and integration with Eurasia. New Delhi established its associations with Eurasia, concluded its inclusion in Asian Development Bank (ADB) & anticipates marking a free trade agreement (FTA) with Russian controlled ECO (Stobdan 2016). India also emphasized using the forum, its association to place a strong influence on Pakistan on the question of alleged terrorism. However, the security cooperation is still in queue (Indian Express 2016). Alongside the several advantages, India's presence in SCO is complex in numerous aspects. The organizational association implicates on Indian administration of its many coalition allies, especially its contradictory relations with Washington, Moscow and Beijing; it reunites these countries' incompatible benefits with their foreign policy objectives. The supplementary emergent contest for India is to outlook its waged relationship with its neighbour Pakistan through the SCO forum. The rival relations among India Pakistan are the key motive for the not working of South Asian Association of Regional Countries (SAARC), and following the noteworthy weakening of India Pakistan cooperation since 2014, the two countries' commitment to the organization might demonstrate a foremost contest. Additionally, India endures being anxious about China's backing to Pakistan (Scott 2008) Inspired additional done the BRI. In specific, the China & Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) forages hooked on India's view of China's hold (Patil 2015), collected by unsettled regional skirmishes, imitates the ongoing suspicion among the two nations (Cai 2016).

India-Pakistan Relations and Implications for SCO

The promising membership of India and Pakistan of the SCO would have not only an important outcome on the finances and security plan in the establishment but also upsurge the SCO's latent to be a vehicle for alteration in the region. Hostile neighbours, as well as regional rivals since their independence, were at centre stage after the 9/11 and global war on terror taken remained main players pouring changing regional aspects, noteworthy for the forthcoming of Afghanistan. Despite the common interests in SCO, Indo-Pak relations remain problematic in multilateral diplomatic forums; it is noteworthy the SAARC did not gain the confidence. The agenda regarding the regional cooperation of SAARC overshadow by the continuously growing rivalry between India and Pakistan (Ahmed 2013), the lack of bilateral negotiations spirit may turn the frustration in SCO (Ahmed and Bhatnagar 2008). Furthermore, the dispute of Kashmir, especially philosophical and partisan difference, split both countries (Ganguly 2016), more complications ahead. The changes in thought are demonstrated in a tactic to associations with local and global players; therefore, though Pakistan's primarily allied the aforementioned with the America and now with China and gradually Russian-Indian has preferred to endure non-align and has chased multidimensional arrangements (Schaffer and Schaffer 2016). India-Pakistan partakes nowadays new relations with global and dominant powers like the United States, Russia as well as China to talk about their security concerns (Purushothaman 2015), and both have used different forums regionally and globally for handling their bilateral disputes. Being the two utmost influential members of SAARC, they endure hesitation for taking steps for regional cooperation. Local individuality in South Asia, thus remnants embarrassed (Hussain 2014) as shows low bilateral trade among them (Chaturvedi, Hussain and Nag 2015) as well as limited collaboration in security-related matters in contradiction of violence and narcotics trafficking concluded the concerning authorities under the SAARC (Ahmed 2013).

There is a perceptible race inside states contending frugally, systematically in expressions of status. Although the SCO might not be capable of proposal Chinese-Russian financial & armed improvements, it seems a staple of status for the two-advance fame in the global political affairs, for which countless years taken remained subjugated by Washington. In this environment, spreading association of the organization to South Asian nuclear-capable states brands a lot of intelligence for consolidating China's and Russia's worldwide points for combining their two-sided collaboration with India-Pakistan.

Though quiet first, conjectures can be complete on in what way India and Pakistan communications remain probable to actively play in the organization, in forthcoming idealistic outlook that India-Pakistan relations are probable to improve as an outcome of collaboration in the field of trade & security auspice of the SCO, and instead of remaining to pragmatist national security fears, the India Pakistan opposition might aggravate the accomplishment of broader SCO's objectives as in SAARC. From an idealistic viewpoint, we can debate that the associations of India-Pakistan are possible to expand collaboration among both inadequate programs reason behind that the vigorous involvement of Chinese & Russian. Additionally, offering superior openings for energy, trade & economic collaboration amongst SCO associates, the presence of India-Pakistan is correspondingly expected to distress counterterrorism actions add to constancy in Afghanistan. The country was approved as a spectator position in the SCO during 2012. Its dogmatic firmness is specific worth to the organizational plan. In the situation out of common purposes and approaches for attaining these aims in the 2010 "*Concept of SCO Cooperation against Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism*," associates stressed the safekeeping of affiliated states & adjacent areas (Wu 2005). The association has been established the "*Afghanistan Contact Group (ACG)*," which periodically held to consider supportive Afghanistan on a series of questions, particularly violence and narcotics (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017).

Since 2002, vastly invested in Afghanistan, and it is very imperative to observe how the organization can reconcile the different objectives of India-Pakistan. If not too much, but slightly SCO can be a significant forum of bilateral negotiations that will be conducted peacefully. Another expected development using the SCO forum is "Peace Missions" exercises among the member states of SCO intentions to strengthened security collaboration through combined military drills. By, the first joint exercise was conducted in Russia in 2005, and the second is in August 2018. The SCO has prepared ten concord missions related drills (Banerjee 2018). Mutually India-Pakistan partook in the deliberate workout in Russia in 2018 (Press Information Bureau, 2018). Therefore, the SCO might be a bargain and chance for collaboration in security ranges in adding to the extended history of association as part of United Nations pacification assignments.

The India-Pakistan allegedly criticize individually for alleged cross-border terrorism damagingly affected SAARC collaboration on terrorism (Ahmed and Zahoor 2018). In view of this role of SCO regarding counterterrorism can be asked. According to the agreement of SCO, highlights associates collaboration in politics, trade, economic & support in technical and systematic fields as well as regional stability (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation 2002). Notwithstanding their dissimilarities concerning the Global War on Terror (GWOT), collaboration in counterterrorism was specified extraordinary precedence prominence by China as well as Russia respectively, who aspect noteworthy inside contests in Chechnya and Xinjiang, in that order (Ziegler 2010). This affects the SCO's counter-terror group, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), which emphasizes come again it tags "three sins" extremism, autonomy, and radicalism (Aris 2009). SCO members partake to increase profound political and military collaboration to address terrorism, enhanced added meanwhile the Global War on Terror (GWOT) remained proclaimed.

The presence of India-Pakistan in SCO, by its description of violence, has further another aspect to the SCO counterterrorism outline. Pakistan is favouring in eradicating terrorism, radicalism & belligerency, together with its noteworthy involvement in fighting terrorism, resemble the organization's position powerfully, and it's possible to cooperate with RATS in opposing joint encounters, especially in Afghanistan, which extensively documented (Bakshi and Zeb 2006). The RATS developed a probable opportunity for commitment among India-Pakistan. In May 2018, Pakistan accommodated a three-day conference of RATS

in Islamabad, to which India also contributed. In the conference, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Tehmina Janjua echoed the republic's pledge to the forum counterterrorism program. She detailed that we nowadays express onward to working with regional countries underneath the parasol of the organization to efficiently eradicate this danger from the region. In this respect, Pakistan completely provisions & welcomed the exertions of SCO's RATS program for the counter to "three evils" [\(Dawn 2018\)](#).

Economic cooperation is also an integral objective of SC's charter. The said article provides the provisions, "Regional economic cooperation a favourable environment for trade and investments with a free flow of goods, capitals, services, and technologies, effective use of available transportation and communication infrastructure, improvement of transit capabilities of member states and development of energy systems" [\(Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2002\)](#). Pakistan's due part in trade via Afghanistan is also significant. Additionally, the possible seaports also shared a 2560 Km long terrain border called the "Durand Line" with Afghanistan [\(Ahmed and Bhatnaga 2008\)](#). Pakistan's role is also a countable effort for peace reconciliation in Afghanistan, known as the Afghan peace process or Afghanistan peace talks between the government and the Taliban [\(Aziz 2015\)](#). With regard to the growing engagements of India in Afghanistan and leaving the international troops from the country, Pakistan is interested in expanding the participation in Afghanistan's peace process. For this motive, Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif invited Russia to participate in the talks in 2014 [\(Haider 2014\)](#). As discussed above, the triplet dialogue forum, Russia-China-Pakistan, also exists and furthering the same goals as possessed by Pakistan. The analysis above mentioned identifying the multidimensional cooperation opportunities for both India and Pakistan significantly in counterterrorism and energy trade. Though, several important factors occur that may bar full cooperation on the above-mentioned matters. Whereas the unpredictable security condition in Afghanistan might require to postpone energy and trade developments. The India-Pakistan's full-scale collaboration on counterterrorism through the SCO platform can't remain supposed, specifically in the well-lit of their sustained mutual tussles on this matter and their incapability to usage further accessible opportunities, such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and SAARC, to resolve it.

The Indian-Pakistan Rivalry inhibits the SCO's goal attainment, the question is. The provision of full membership to both countries also introduced a long history of conflicts to the forum, the concerns from the other members were also speculated in the beginning due to the territorial disputes as well [\(Malashenko 2013\)](#). The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov said that "the admittance of India-Pakistan nuclear powers to the SCO might be alteration the balance of power inside the organization and internationally. There are many unsettled matters between India and Pakistan, and how this will genuine with the SCO's acknowledged essence of cooperation is uncertain [\(Ibragimova 2015\)](#). Indian economic interests from SCO may be affected because it lacks direct connectivity with Afghanistan and the Central Asian region. The other impacted factor is geo-economic competition, which is the Chabhar port and the Gwadar port, which was developed by China. Despite the assurance by Iran [\(Yousaf 2016\)](#) & Pakistan's [\(Ali 2016\)](#) sides that the two ports are not in competition, but it is a fact that they could potentially complicate the regional dynamics because they focused on the same market likely in Central Asia and the ports are away from 100 nautical miles from each other in the Indian Ocean. Despite the competition among India and Pakistan, there so many reasons that the SCO may relevant immune to Indo-Pak rivalry. Particularly, both nations are important to China's efforts in chasing the BRI, and it is improbable that China would permit the attainment of its own goals to be unsatisfied by Indo-Pak contention. This might be a motive that, notwithstanding New Delhi's hostility, Beijing endures to offer India to join the BRI [\(Naqvi, 2017\)](#).

Conclusion

The expansion of SCO regarding the full membership of India and Pakistan added a new chapter to regionalism and brought it to new opportunities and challenges. Pakistan considers this membership to enhance its political, strategically and economic influence on CARs, and Afghanistan is desired to access Pakistan's seaport. On the other side India also eager to counter the interests of Pakistan by boosting its

economic interests in the Central Asian region by joining the same forum. The SCO may implicate its objectives mentioned in its charter to both countries to minimize their rivalries, but it is the fact that until the resolution of territorial disputes such as the Kashmir issue, this dream never comes true. It is also indicated in our discussion that this could be impacted in the SCO forum also. Russia and China may be playing their role to remove hurdles towards solutions of long-standing issues between India and Pakistan. Additionally, India and Pakistan both are looking for energy trade by using SCO; both are hopeful of attaining their energy requirements by the CARs and opening a gateway to Eurasia. SCO may be able to establish interdependence between India and Pakistan towards the normalization of their bilateral relations. The SAARC was also hit by mutual mistrust and antagonism as well. Their active involvement in SCO maybe enhance the scope of SCO's counterterrorism strategy via RATS; however, it is difficult to handle both countries on the issue of allegedly cross-border terrorism for Russia and China. Though outstanding to their continued bilateral relations with both India and Pakistan, China and Russia are fit positioned to restrain the prospective for Indo-Pak contentions to oblige the SCO. In shaping multi-polarity and an end to Western supremacy, the SCO is a matter of status for the two states to addition distinction in world politics. Although hardly definite state benefits will continue, due to the lack of bilateral negotiations, the SCO, reinforced vigorously by China and Russia, can offer a likely forum for India and Pakistan cooperation, even nevertheless the collaboration will be provisional and unpredictable.

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