

Security Mechanisms of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

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Abstract

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has adopted a comprehensive strategy to counter terrorism in the region. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is a permanent institutional arrangement to enhance coordination and cooperation of special services of the SCO member states to fight terrorism. Unlike the United States and NATO, whose perception on security remain confined only to terrorism and 'terror-sponsored states', the SCO has broadened the definition of security. The approaches of SCO member states to combating terrorism are based on multilateral and international cooperation, rather than unilateralism.

Keywords: SCO, RATS, Security, Counterterrorism

1. Introduction

International terrorism and Islamic extremism still remains serious threats to the South and Central Asian region. The main objectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is to counter these threats and challenges in the region. The SCO highlights the “three evil forces” as the main security challenges facing the region – terrorism, separatism and extremism – but the scope of cooperation also extend to organised criminal activity and illegal narcotics trafficking. In addition to regional stability, economic prosperity and development has also been incorporated as the main goal for the SCO. Currently, the SCO comprises of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, India and Pakistan, as member states. India along with Pakistan have become full-fledged members of the SCO at the Astana Summit on June 8-9, 2017. More than sixty per cent of Eurasian landmass is represented by the SCO, encompassing over three billion people, which is nearly half of world population. Besides these permanent members, the SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia; and the SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Along with Russia, China and Central Asian Republics (CARs), India also recognises the struggle of the SCO against terrorism even before the events of September 11, 2001. This will enable India to closely interact with the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) based in the Tashkent.

The end of Cold War and the emergence of the non-traditional security threats in the form of terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug-trafficking and environmental

degradation have led to rethinking about the concept of security. The challenges posed by non-traditional threats are also greater than traditional ones in the twenty-first century. This study will analyse the process of cooperation among SCO members to counter these threats in Eurasia and specifically the role of Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS). It would also highlight various methods employed by the United States and its allies in contrast to SCO member-states to counter the “three evils” in Eurasia.

2. Evolution of SCO’s Approach on Terrorism

Over the years of its existence, the SCO has gone through several stages of development and undergone significant changes. The “Shanghai Five” mechanism was born in April 1996 when the Republic of Kazakhstan, People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyzstan Republic, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Tajikistan held a summit meeting in Shanghai, China. The parties signed an agreement on strengthening mutual military confidence on border issues— “Agreement on strengthening military confidence in Border Area” and a year later, at Moscow Summit in 1997, another agreement was signed: the “Agreement of Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas”. The two inter-related agreements representing a deepening process, have laid a solid legal basis for mutual trust and common security among the five neighboring state.¹ The third summit of Shanghai Five met in Almaty in 1998. It took note of the situation prevailing in Central Asia following the takeover of power by Taliban in Kabul.

All members of the “Shanghai Five” faced forms of Islamic extremism and terrorism, in one way or another, that often have links to fundamentalist organisations and separatist movements. Both Russia and China have been waging a war against Chechen and Uyghur separatists in their respective countries for many years. Similarly, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were worried over the influx of radical Islamists who often hide among illegal immigrants that came from Chechnya, China’s border areas and from Afghanistan.² On February 16, 1999, the extremist forces exploded six bombs that were targeted at President Karimov in Tashkent. In August 25, 1999, the “Shanghai Five” held its fourth summit in Bishkek. During the summit, they signed Joint Declaration on Combating National Separatism, Religious extremism, and Trans-border Crime. The joint declaration stipulates that “to effectively crack down on international terrorism, illegal dealing in drugs and narcotics trafficking, arms smuggling, illegal immigration and other forms of cross-border crime is of significance. Therefore, the responsible departments of the five countries will adopt measures

¹ Mingshan, C. & Xiquan, H. (2000), “The “Shanghai Five” Mechanism for Regional Security”, *Contemporary International Relations (Beijing)*, 11 (8): 3-5.

² Lukin, A. (2004), “Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Problems and prospects”, *International Affairs (Moscow)*, 50(3): 34.

to launch practical cooperation including the consultation and working out a program of joint action during the period of 1999-2000”.³The fifth meeting was held in Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan on July 5, 2000. President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan was attending the summit as an observer. Subsequently, the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was announced on June 15, 2001 at a summit of the Heads of States of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

3. Defining the Concepts “three evils” by SCO

The conceptualisation of three evil forces by the SCO was not accidental. It occurred in response to the changing global reality and its objective was to meet the needs of its members. Cracking down on ethnic separatism, religious extremism and international terrorism and combating drug trafficking and other transnational crimes provided a new space, agenda and dynamics for the “Shanghai Five” and also gave a new foundation for expanding security cooperation. Anti-terrorism and anti-separatism were the key driving forces behind the establishment of SCO. Two fundamental documents were signed on June 15, 2001– the declaration and the convention. The last documents –the Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism – in fact, laid the foundation of cooperation among the parties.

The terms “terrorism” and “terrorist” are highly contested concepts, with a multiple range of academic and policy definitions. In the 2001 Convention, the SCO member states defined the notion of extremism for the first time. The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism is of special interest because it has provided definition of “the three evils”. For instance, Article 1 of the Convention⁴ read:

1. For the purposes of this convention, the terms used in it shall have the following meaning:
 - 1) “Terrorism” means:
 - a) Any act recognised as an offence in one of the treaties listed in the Annex to this Convention (hereinafter referred to as “the Annex” and as defined in this treaty;
 - b) Other act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict or to cause major damage to any material facility, as well as to organise, plan, aid, and abet such act, when the purpose of such act, by

³ Tao, Xu (2002), “On the SCO under New Situation”, *Contemporary International Relations (Beijing)*, 12(6):11.

⁴ The Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, 15th June 2001, URL:<http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=68>

its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, violate public security or to compel public authorities or an international organisation to do or to abstain from doing any act, and prosecuted in accordance with the national laws of the Parties;

- 2) “separatism” means any act intended to violate territorial integrity of a State including by annexation of any part of its territory or to disintegrate a State, committed in a violent manner, as well as planning and preparing, and abetting such act, and subject to criminal prosecuting in accordance with the national laws of the Parties;
 - 3) “Extremism” is an act aimed at seizing or keeping power through the use of violence or changing violently the constitutional regime of a State, as well as a violent encroachment upon public security, including organisation, for the above purpose, of illegal armed formations and participation in them, criminally prosecuted in conformity with the national laws of the Parties.
2. This Article shall not affect any international treaty or any national law of the parties, provides or any may provide for a broader application of the term used in this Article

The international community has not yet coined a commonly accepted definition of terrorism despite of its several attempts on defining the term “terrorism.” In this case, the SCO convention has taken a step forward. Indian scholar L. C Kumar argued that the joint declaration of war on Terrorism and Religious Extremism by the SCO member states has undoubtedly made its contribution to the development of an atmosphere necessary to ensure success of the fight against international terrorism in Afghanistan and Central Asia.⁵ Adopted less than two months before the events of September 11, 2001, this convention was really a document of historic importance. Rejecting all hypocrisy and double standards, the convention categorically declared “Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism” as a “Threat to international peace and security”. Moreover, less than three months after the establishment of the organisation, the practicability of SCO was put to serious test after terrorist attack on World Trade Centre. Subsequently, on September 14, 2001, prime ministers who were attending the Prime Ministers’ Conference of the SCO at Alma Ata, Kazakhstan, issued a joint communiqué in which they denounced the terrorist attack while expressing condolences and sympathy for the American people.⁶

⁵ Kumar, L.C. (2010), *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Eurasian Security through cooperation*, Delhi: Shipra., pp.38-39

⁶ Wang, J. (2008), “China and SCO: Towards a New Type of Interstate Relations”, in Guoguang Wu & Helen Lansdowne (eds.) *China Turns to Multilateralism: Foreign Policy and Regional Security*, London & New York: Routledge., pp.104-105

4. Establishment of the RATS

In order to provide institutional and legal support for its counterterrorist activities and to implement the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism (signed in 2001), the SCO established the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in 2002. The SCO Charter signed in 2002 also outlined the basic aims and tasks of the organisation and determined the mechanisms allowing the concerned ministries and departments to effectively coordinate their work. The Article 10 of the Charter⁷ states:

The regional Counter-terrorist Structure established by the member States of Shanghai Convention to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism of 15 June, 2001, located in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic, shall be a standing SCO body.

Its main objectives and functions, principles of its constitution and financing, as well as its rule of procedure shall be governed by a separate international treaty concluded by the member states, and other necessary instrument adopted by them.

Simultaneously, an “Agreement on Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”, was also signed on June 7, 2002 at St. Petersburg (Russia). This document offers concrete guidelines about its structures and functions. For example, Articles 6 of this Agreement on RATS⁸ specify the key objectives and functions of RATS which states:

- 1) Developing proposals and recommendations on strengthening cooperation in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism for relevant SCO bodies and at the request of the Parties;
- 2) At the request of one of the Parties assisting the competent agencies of the Parties in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism, particularly, in line with the provisions of the Convention;
- 3) Collecting and analyzing information provided to RATS by the Parties on issues of combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism;
- 4) Creating and maintaining the RATS databank, specifically regarding: - International terrorist, separatist, and other extremist organizations, their structure, leaders, members, and other individuals involved with these organizations, as well as their financing sources and channels; - Status, dynamics, and trends of the spread of terrorism, separatism, and extremism that affect the interests of the Parties; - Non-governmental

⁷ Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, June 7, 2002, <http://eng.sectsc.org/documents/>

⁸ Agreement on Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, June 7, 2002, <http://eng.sectsc.org/documents/>

organizations and individuals providing support to terrorism, separatism, and extremism;

- 5) Providing information upon the request by the competent authorities of the Parties;
- 6) Assisting in preparing and conducting anti-terrorist, staff and command, and operational and tactical exercises upon the request by the interested Parties;
- 7) Assisting in the preparation and execution of operational search and other activities on combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism at the request of the Parties;
- 8) Assisting in the international search of individuals alleged to have committed actions set forth in paragraph 1 of Article I of the Convention for the purpose of their prosecution;
- 9) Participating in the development of international legal instruments related to issues of combating terrorism, separatism and extremism;
- 10) Assisting in training specialists and instructors for anti-terrorist units;
- 11) Participating in the preparation and conducting of academic and practical conferences and seminars, and assisting in sharing experience in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism;
- 12) Establishing and maintaining contacts with international organizations dealing with issues of combating terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Thereafter, during the Tashkent summit in June 2004, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) started functioning based in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. It is a permanent institutional arrangement to enhance coordination and cooperation of special services of the SCO member countries to fight terrorism. The staff of the centre comprised 30 officials from the member-states. Funding was pulled on a shared basis as follows: Russia and China 25 percent respectively, Kazakhstan 21 percent and all others together made up the rest 29 percent contribution.⁹ The RATS is led by a council composed of officials from anti-terrorist organisations of the member states.

5. Counter-terrorism and Peace Mission of SCO

The legal framework for the cooperation of the SCO Member States in counteracting extremism was based on two documents: the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism of June 15,

⁹ Rakhimov, M. (2014), "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Looking Beyond Central Asia for a Positive Role", in P.L. Dash, Anita Sengupta & Murat M. Bakhadirov (eds.) *Central Asia and Regional Security*, New Delhi: KW Publishers, pp. 317

2001, and the Concept of Cooperation between SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism of July 5, 2005. The latter stipulated the main goals, objectives, guidelines, areas and forms of cooperation in combating the "three evils." Many years have passed since the adoption of the aforementioned conventions, and in the meanwhile, the nature and scope of extremism have changed. Therefore, the 2017 convention, signed during the Astana Summit, maintains the continuity of the two previous documents, aims at improving the mechanism to counteract extremism in the SCO space, expands the provisions of the SCO Development Strategy until 2025, and coincides with the main themes and issues solved under the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Moreover, Chinese scholar Col. Zhao Xiaodong¹⁰ has listed the following treaties and documents dealing with counter-terrorism cooperation:

1. Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, June 15, 2002,
2. Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, June 15, 2001,
3. The Concept of Cooperation Between SCO Member States on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, June 5, 2005,
4. Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, August 16, 2007,
5. The Convention Against Terrorism of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, June 16, 2009,
6. The process of practical implementation of the Cooperation Plan on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism for 2007–2009, June 15, 2006,
7. The agreement among the SCO member states on conducting joint military exercises, June 27, 2007, which laid long-term organizational and legal foundations for conducting joint exercises aimed at countering terrorism,
8. The agreement on cooperation among the governments of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on combating illegal circulation of weapons, ammunition and explosives, August 28, 2008,
9. Programme of Cooperation among the SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism 2010–2012, June 16, 2009,
10. Agreement on the Training of Personnel for Antiterrorist Units of SCO Member States, June 16, 2009,

¹⁰ Xiaodong, Zhao (2012), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, Institute for Security and Development Policy, Stockholm-Nacka, Sweden, pp. 11-12.

11. Programme of Cooperation among the SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism 2013–2015, June 8, 2012,
12. The 2017 Convention on Countering Extremism, on June 8-9, 2017 in Astana.

It is interesting to mention here that SCO countries have established the practice of conducting Joint Anti-Terrorist Exercises. In October 2002, the first bilateral anti-terrorist exercises were held with the participation of China and Kyrgyzstan, within the framework of the SCO, in the Chinese-Kyrgyz border area. Subsequently, it regularly held its military exercises every year. The exercise rehearsed an SCO operation to intervene in a state that was either besieged by terrorist or in political turmoil, using combined land, sea and air elements. The last joint anti-terrorism military exercise of the Armed Forces of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member countries "Peace Mission - 2016" finished on September 20, 2016 at the mountain training center "Edelweiss" in Issyk-Kul.

Besides this, Uzbekistan's proposal on drawing up the list of banned terrorist, separatist and extremist organisations and lists of persons wanted for specified crimes was acknowledged by other member states through the concrete results of this interaction. In the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in accordance with the decisions of the RATS SCO Council, also approved and activate the Unified investigative register of persons declared by special services and law enforcement agencies of the SCO member states in international search for committing or suspected of committing crimes of a terrorist, separatist or extremist character (hereinafter – Register), which includes more than 3,000 individuals and a List of terrorist, separatist and extremist organizations, whose activities are banned on the territories of the SCO member states, comprising more than 100 organizations, including "Islamic State", "Jebhat an Nusra", "Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkestan", "Hizbut-Tahrir al Islami", "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan", "Ansarullah", etc.¹¹ The List and the Register are systematically updated on the basis of information and decisions of the judicial bodies of the SCO member states adopted in accordance with their national legislation.

Furthermore, it has been reported that between 2011 and 2015, under RATS coordination, the authorities of SCO member States managed to prevent 20 terrorist attacks while still in the planning stages, averted 650 crimes of terrorist and extremist nature, and neutralized 440 terrorist training camps and 1,700

¹¹ RATS (2017), "About Information Accounts of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", August 18, 2017, <http://www.european-times.com/about-information-accounts-regional-anti-terrorist-structure-of-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization/>.

members of international terrorist organizations.¹²

With a view to strengthening international cooperation in the sphere of struggle against terrorism, a protocol between RATS, SCO and Counter-Terrorist Centre of the CIS was signed that provided for cooperation in the sphere of ensuring a mechanism for large-scale security arrangement on the SCO territories and the CIS countries.¹³

6. Counterterrorism Policies of United States and SCO: A Comparison

The Central Asian Republics (CARS) have played a very significant and extraordinary role in the US-led 'War against Terrorism' in Afghanistan. Of the three states bordering Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan had offered base facilities for US and allied forces, while Turkmenistan due to its positive neutrality, offered access to its airspace and other humanitarian missions.¹⁴ After the events of September 11, 2001 the United States adopted a series of comprehensive legislative, institutional, law-enforcement, intelligence, border security, civil aviation safety, and other measures aimed at protecting the public from terrorist violence and prosecuting those responsible for terrorism. The establishment of a new Department of Homeland Security in July 2003 and introduction of structural changes to governmental agencies are responsible for combating terrorism in United States. It has approved two major documents, i.e. *National Strategy for combating Terrorism, February 2003* and *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, September 2006* which highlighted principles guiding US policy aimed at combating terrorism at home and abroad.¹⁵ In an attempt to define the term "terrorism", the document stated that:

"The enemy is not one person. It is not a single political regime. Certainly it is not a religion. The enemy is terrorism-premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents. Those who employ terrorism, regardless of

¹² Alimov, R.(2017), "The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Counteracting Threats to Peace and Security", UN Chronicle, Vol. LIV No. 3, <https://unchronicle.un.org/article/role-shanghai-cooperation-organization-counteracting-threats-peace-and-security>

¹³ Rakhimov, M. (2014), "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Looking Beyond Central Asia for a Positive Role", in P.L. Dash, Anita Sengupta& Murat M. Bakhadirov (eds.) *Central Asia and Regional Security*, New Delhi: KW Publishers, pp. 318.

¹⁴ Mann, P. (2004), "Role of Central Asian Republics in the US-led 'War against Terrorism'", in Mahavir Singh (ed.) *International Terrorism and Religious Extremism: Challenges to Central and South Asia*, New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, pp. 175.

¹⁵ Omelicheva, M. Y. (2011), *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia*, New York: Routledge, pp. 60-66.

their specific secular or religious objectives, strive to subvert the rule of law and effect change through violence and fear. These terrorists also share the misguided belief that killing, kidnapping, extorting, robbing and wreaking havoc to terrorise people are legitimate forms of political actions”.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the understanding of United States on “terrorism” and “terrorists” also keeps changing according to its interests and needs. Indian scholar Asopa argued that “the United States has a record of using nation and the people when it needs them and leaving them unprotected when its requirements are fulfilled.”¹⁷ For instance, United States had nurtured Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan and used him as bulwark against the Soviet Union and then fought a full scale war to eliminate him and his Al-Qaida network. On the other hand, US strategists considered Iraq, Syria, Iran, and North Korea as terrorist state at various point of time. Additionally, Russian scholar Sokolov claimed that “it cannot be denied that many actions of the United States and NATO in other countries are in no way different from terrorist acts. The only difference is that they have a state character.”¹⁸ Therefore, in order to maintain its hegemony and dominance as a sole power in 21st century, the United States has utilised these conditions to export its own model of “democracy” under the mask of “war on terror” to the rest of the world.

In contrast, the approaches of SCO member states to combat terrorism are based on a significant degree of common understanding of their own governments. Chinese scholar Guang stated that “the anti-terror policy of member states based on multilateral and international cooperation, rather than unilateralism.”¹⁹ In fact, the war on terrorism has provided an exceptional opportunity for cooperation with the various multilateral regimes involving Central Asia. Undeniably, this became one of the driving forces of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Similarly, Russian scholar Lukin also argued that “the SCO’s approach to terrorism, is much broader than that of the United States and its allies. While Washington puts more emphasis on military strikes against international terrorist centres and attacks

¹⁶ National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (February 2003) White House. Online, Available at <http://fas.org/irp/threat/nsct2003.pdf>, pp, 1.

¹⁷ Asopa, S.K. (2004). “Religious Extremism and Terrorism in Central Asia in the Aftermath of 11th September”, in Mahavir Singh (ed.) *International Terrorism and Religious Extremism: Challenges to Central and South Asia*, New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, pp.171-173.

¹⁸ Sokolov, Y. (2003), “Dangers of Unipolar World”, in Mahavir Singh & Victor Krassilichtchikov (eds.) *Eurasian Vision: Felicitation Volume on the 70th Birthday of Prof. Devendra Kaushik*, New Delhi: Anamika Publishers, pp. 82-87.

¹⁹ Guang, P. (2012), “The Role of Multilateral Anti-Terror Mechanism in Central Asia”, in Charles Hawkings & Robert Love (eds.) *Chinese Strategies on Central Asia: The New Great Game*, New Delhi: Manas Publications, pp. 135.

against state supporting terrorism, the SCO nations see direct links between international terrorism, on the one hand, and separatism and religious extremism, on the other.”²⁰Further, Chinese scholar, Liu Xin argued that “Unlike NATO members, who share great commonality in political systems, religious beliefs, values, and high threshold requirements, SCO member’s are diverse. And that diversity is an asset, not a liability.”²¹Hence, in various aspects the SCO differs from United States and its allies in combating terrorism.

7. The Issue of Human Rights and Struggle against Terrorism

Human Rights remain one of the most controversial issues during combating terrorism. The Dushanbe Declaration of the Heads of Member States of the SCO during their summit in 2008 placed at the top Human Rights and its protection during counter- terrorism policies²². Article 10 of the declaration reads:

The member states of the SCO reaffirming their commitment to basic documents and standards in the field of protection and encouragement of human rights:

- i. Promote the observance of basic human rights and civil liberties in accordance with international obligations and national legislation;
- ii. Share experiences in enforcing international treaties on human rights;
- iii. Implement existing agreement in the framework of multilateral and bilateral treaties in the field of social and cultural cooperation;
- iv. Launch active consultations and cooperation at the UN on human rights issues;
- v. Maintain interaction of the SCO with other regional organisations and integration-oriented associations on issues of social and cultural cooperation and human rights encouragement.

However, western scholars perceived divergence between words and deeds of the SCO member states concerning human rights. For instance, Ambrosio argued the SCO nominally supports the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but has taken a firm stance against the notion of universal human rights. He further noted that, the colour revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan which raised the spectre of further challenges to the autocratic regimes of former Soviet Union and therefore gave a strong impetus to regional, autocratic

²⁰ Lukin, A. (2007), “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: What Next?” *Russia in Global Affairs (Moscow)*, 5 (3): 142-143.

²¹ Xin, Liu (2018), “SCO Trilogy: Is the SCO the NATO of the East?”, July06, 2018, https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414e334d544f77457a6333566d54/share_p.html

²² Dushanbe Declaration of the Heads of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, August 28, 2008, URL:<http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=90>

cooperation.²³ Similarly, Omelicheva claimed that the Russian, Chinese and Central Asian states' counter-terrorism program lacks a balanced approach to the problem of terrorism. The legislative and institutional frameworks of these states fortify a system of counterterrorism that prioritizes force and allows for the suspension of individual liberties and certain political freedoms in the name of combating terrorism. She further argued that, the United States has adopted a comprehensive and balanced approach combining preventive responses, extraordinary and punitive responses, activities aimed at mitigating the detrimental consequences of terrorist attack.²⁴ By contrast, Blakely contended that "the proponents of the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have repeatedly justified those wars in human rights terms. The use of torture and extraordinary rendition by the US against terror suspect in the 'War on Terror' are part of a broader imperial project to assert its position as the world's most powerful state, at a time of emerging competition from other players."²⁵ Unlike NATO, a military alliance that is still in effect, to contain the spread of communism then and now directed against Russia, whereas the SCO, is not designed to address an external threat, so it is not directed at the West. For instance, the SCO even allowed Turkey to become its dialogue partner. Therefore, it focus more to address the problems of its member states.

Under the chairmanship of Kazakhstan on November 22-23, 2016 in Beijing, the SCO Foreign Ministries held consultations on the matters of interaction among international organizations in human rights. During the interview to Kazin form News Agency, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan in SCO Secretariat, Advisor Yerik Ashimov stated that the participants exchanged opinions and proposals of further consolidation of cooperation and interaction of the UN human rights institutions, prevention of dilution of the intergovernmental nature of the UN work, and broad interpretation of international human rights commitments. These includes creation of special protection for certain groups such as sexual minority, human rights defenders, bloggers and others, and also similar tendencies in the activity of treaty bodies.²⁶

8. The Role of United Nations in the fight against Terrorism

²³ Ambrosia, T. (2008), "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60(8): 1330, 1338.

²⁴ Omelicheva, M. Y. (2011), *Counterterrorism Policies in Central Asia*, New York: Routledge, pp. 111-113.

²⁵ Blakeley, R. (2013), "Human Rights, State Wrongs, and Social Change: The Theory and Practice of Emancipation", *Review of International Studies*, 39(3): 605-606; 618; 611-612.

²⁶ "First human rights consultations in SCO history", November 24, 2016, http://lenta.inform.kz/kz/first-human-rights-consultations-in-sco-history_a2972798

The SCO has broadened the definition of security in the 21st century. In order to resolve the problems related to security, it has placed the role of UN and its Charter on a priority basis. Continuing the legacy of Bishkek summit in 2007, one year later at the Dushanbe summit in August 2008, the SCO again expanded the concept of security where it included the dialogue mechanism and sustainable development. Article 1 and Article 5 of Dushanbe Declaration²⁷ read as:

Article 1: In the 21st century interdependence of states has grown sharply, security and development are becoming inseparable. None of the modern international problems can be settled by force, the role force factor in global and regional political is diminishing objectively.

Reliance on a solution based solely on the use of force faces no prospects, it hinders comprehensive settlement of local conflicts; effective resolution of existing problems can be possible only with due regard for the interests of all parties, through their involvement in a process of negotiations, not through isolation. Attempts to strengthen one's own security to the prejudice of security of others do not assist the maintenance of global security and stability.

Article 5: The member states of the Organisation stand up for broad international collaboration in resolving the problem of resources supply to satisfy the needs of mankind without damaging the environment, in achieving the goals of global development, e.g., closing the technological gap among states and elimination of poverty by providing all states equal access to the advantages of globalization.

The United States and its allies believe that the pursuit of terrorist requires pre-emptive strikes, dispersing their cells and capturing its members even before they act. Hence using force as one of the priority basis. In contrast, the SCO member states rejects the use of force in resolving the global and regional conflicts rather they wished to involve all the parties through the process of negotiation. Simultaneously, they argue for democratic globalization where all nations would have equal benefits from it. In this regard, SCO continues its support for an even more prominent coordinating role for the United Nations in international relations, with an emphasis upon the further development of close cooperation with the world Organization.²⁸ Chinese scholar Guang argued that any war on terrorism should not be waged by military means alone. Military means, while indispensable in quite a few cases, can never be a cure-all. He further stressed that focus should

²⁷ Dushanbe Declaration of the Heads of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, August 2008, <http://www.sectsc.org/EN/show.asp?id=90>

²⁸ Alimov, R.(2017), "The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Counteracting Threats to Peace and Security", UN Chronicle, Vol. LIV No. 3, <https://unchronicle.un.org/article/role-shanghai-cooperation-organization-counteracting-threats-peace-and-security>

be on political, economic and social roots that have given rise to terrorism in the first place, and the necessary social measures must be taken for long term solutions.²⁹ Likewise, while criticizing US approach, Chinese scholar Jian suggested the larger role for international society in tackling unconventional security threats. According to him, the role of the United Nations in international affairs still cannot be replaced. The authority of the UN and other global institutions in the international security must be respected and maintained.³⁰

9. Conclusion

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is the world's first organisation dedicated to security and safety against terrorism. The SCO has effectively conducted several large-scale bilateral and multilateral anti-terror military exercises, which helped safety measure of its member states' security and stability. The influence of the SCO on international stage continue to rise and the expanding membership has injected fresh impetus into the organisation. In order to resolve the problems related to security, the SCO has placed the role of UN and its Charter on a priority basis. Despite its focus on security cooperation, the SCO is not intended to be a military bloc nor an alliance. The SCO agenda has broadened over the years, potentially opening cooperation in new fields.

The nature of strategic partnership between Russia and China, two biggest countries neighbouring of Central Asia, will determine the geo-strategy of the entire region in general and SCO in particular. Russia and China have increasingly diverging views on the future directions of SCO development. At one hand, Russia is keen to keep the SCO as a primarily security organization, with only a limited economic role focusing on joint infrastructure projects. On the other, China wants SCO to evolve decisively into an economic grouping which makes it easier for it to implement its business projects, including those in energy space and trade in the region. These divergent interests of China and Russia have hindered the further development of the SCO. Until today, cooperation on microeconomic projects has been insignificant. This is mainly because of the concerns among the Russia and Central Asian Republics that their economies will not be able to compete with the strength of the Chinese economy. Moreover, the existence of Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) as well as Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in former Soviet space which includes most of SCO member states focusing specifically on security and economic issues respectively obviously weaken the basic parameter of cooperation in the SCO. As

²⁹ Guang, P. (2012), "The Role of Multilateral Anti-Terror Mechanism in Central Asia", in Charles Hawkings & Robert Love (eds.) *Chinese Strategies on Central Asia: The New Great Game*, New Delhi: Manas Publications, pp. 135.

³⁰ Jian, X. (2004), "New Challenges, New Approaches: Unconventional Security and International Security Cooperation", in K. Santhanam & S. Kondapolli (eds.) *Asian Security and China, 2000-2010*, Delhi: Shipra, pp. 28-33.

compared to China's the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the SCO possesses definitely multilateral character with a defined member base and institutional structures that evolved during the course of time. The SCO is still a relatively young organization as compared to European Union and the problems as noted above are complex and will take some more time to be resolved.

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