

India-Russia Coop eration in The SCO and Central Asia

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ABSTRACT

This paper Focus on India - Russia has been traditionnel friends and India looking for world for reveal and rejoinders and also maintain those stable traditional relations between both countries but the corporative tendencies and power-centric polity. The prime importance in the discussion and also in an endeavour it could be seen whether rapidly changing Russian political milieu would consider those values and allow to grow Indo-Russian relations in the traditional mood. This paper seeks to explore the implications of Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) engagement with India and Pakistan. But what practical problems such an expanded this organization could help solves, what opportunities it could realize, and how SCO's engagement in trade is a function of favourable political and bilateral developments in the region. What is the motivation behind the SCO's engagement with India and Pakistan? Central Asia had been historically a zone of India's civilizational influence. Historically, India has had close contacts with five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Intense contacts took place through Indian traders who visited Fergana Valley to trade along the Silk Route. Central Asia in return received a stream of philosophical ideas, especially the influence of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and beyond.

Key words: Co-operation, Policy, Strategic, Central Asia

Introduction

The consolidation of new global political and economic centers cannot be reduced to the basic mechanisms of transferring global power from one region or country to another. Multi-polarity should be viewed as the emergence of new ideas, for instance, the elaboration of a new security concept or the appearance and development of new trends in the world's socio-economic development. The 21st century began with large projects on establishing new partnerships, communities and integrations. These international "agr gations" are no longer regional organizations, and their formation can be hardly described as "regionalization," according to the logic that determined the world's development in previous years. It's clear that the operating international associations, many of which are

in crisis, are most likely to reshape their own concepts and modes of operation. For the most part, they will become instruments of such associations. Or else they will join new associations or stop their activities altogether.

Naturally, this "moment of truth" will also come for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In the 15 years of its existence, the SCO largely implemented many of the goals formulated in its charter documents, such as ensuring security and combating terrorism, separatism, extremism and other global challenges. It also managed to achieve tangible progress in economic and humanitarian cooperation of its member-countries. The SCO is a recognized international agency and a serious factor in

ensuring regional security and stability. This is evident, among other things, in the growing interest in cooperation with the SCO on the part of some countries in the region and outside it, as well as interstate formations of various types and political orientations. But at the same time it must be admitted that recently, the SCO's clout regarding the practical results of its activities in various areas is slowly diminishing. It did not fully live up to the expectations.

It is necessary to emphasize in this context that the SCO should tailor its concepts, strategy and practical efforts to the rapidly changing international situation. Apparently, the absence of concrete steps in this area may lead to the emergence and spreading of the elements of stagnation and even degradation in its activities. It is already obvious that it cannot always move forward with the necessary dynamics and support. Red tape is not the only reason for this. Unfulfilled agreements are periodically receive a face-lift, and this is already becoming a tradition.

All this objectively compels us to draft a new concept for the SCO's functioning and development and new formulas for its internal institutional structure and cooperation. The SCO's development strategy adopted in 2015 may be considered the groundwork for drafting a concept on its activities in the rapidly changing world. The SCO's potential expansion, the halting movement towards which finally leveled off and was made more concrete at the Ufa summit, may create not only quantitative but, most importantly, qualitative prerequisites for the SCO's useful and profitable modernization.

The SCO's expansion is long overdue. According to its Charter and other regulatory documents, other countries may join the SCO, primarily those with observer status. This is

certainly objective process. It may seem strange and even paradoxical to some people, but this is being accelerated by a new global geopolitical alignment, which is already aggravated by various regional conflicts and confrontations, socio-economic crisis, large-scale movement of people and growing claims. Regrettably, the latter are becoming the dominant factor in the world arena. The possible accession of India and Pakistan, and later Iran and other countries, to the SCO as fully-fledged members will launch a new stage in its development.

First of all, if the accession takes place, the SCO can claim to have global influence in a number of parameters, which is most likely to get informational incentives and geopolitical resources for consolidating its positions in the United Nations. In this case the SCO may become the world's largest non-Western international organization that can exert a tangible influence on changing the system of international relations, with due account for the interests of the SCO member states, at least its main members.

Secondly, the SCO's expansion will remove apprehensions on the part of the West, primarily NATO, on its potential transformation into a military-political alliance. These apprehensions have been there from the very beginning. Fears of the SCO's anti-US orientation will probably disappear as well.

Third, the topic of the SCO's integration will be also closed. Although the SCO was not initially established as an international integration association, many politicians, scientists and experts have spoken about the need for it to switch to its new, integration quality at numerous conferences and symposiums.

Fourth, the SCO will be informally closer to BRICS and especially to the RIC format. It is possible to assume that the discussion of its activities will become more intensive and practical at RIC forums. Even if this assumption becomes a reality, it will hardly provoke the formation of the Central Asian faction in the SCO, although the positions of Central Asian states are possibly likely to change.

Fifth, India and Pakistan's accession to the SCO will somewhat consolidate their positions in Central Asia, although there are no grounds to speak about the future redistribution of their roles, or the strengthening or weakening of their Central Asian potential. Russia and China will remain the main and most influential players in Central Asia for a long time.

The main issue of India and Pakistan's entry in the SCO is what they will bring along and what they will lay claim to.

The relations of Russia and China with India and Pakistan have different shares of positive, negative and neutral elements. As many diplomats and experts predict, India is a future global giant that is gradually but steadily increasing its political, economic and military influence. For more than 15 years, Delhi has demonstrated impressive economic, scientific and technical achievements. In the last years of the past century, India, as well as Pakistan, became de facto nuclear weapons states.

For a long time Pakistan has been at the forefront of the struggle against international terrorism and extremism, but at the same time, it must be admitted that media coverage of this issue is fraught with various ambiguities, sometimes inappropriate, as is the case with many other states. Pakistan's experience in this area would be very useful for the SCO Regional Counter-Terrorism

Structure (RCTS) based in Tashkent. But the most complicated issue linked with India and Pakistan's accession to the SCO is whether they will carry along the negative burden of bilateral relations they have accumulated over many years. And furthermore, how will they build their relations with other states and international organizations, and how will this affect their SCO membership? A state's entry into an international organization is preceded by an agreement to abide by its rules and standards, to support, without any reservations, its goals, contractual documents and official positions that are often elaborated in the course of protracted talks.

The procedures and rules that govern the SCO's activities are not too complicated or burdensome. The positions of its members on different international issues, formulated in its declarations, are also understandable and should not bring on any allergic reactions. In making their final decision, Russia and China will proceed based on their national goals and SCO interests, taking into account the complex of problems in the context of their bilateral relations with India and Pakistan.

Central Asian countries will also strive to protect their interests when new countries join the SCO. In this context, they will be interested to know the attitude of India and Pakistan toward the following idea:

The SCO Member States consistently advocate strict observance of the provisions of Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, aimed at removing the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promoting the process of nuclear disarmament in the context of strengthening strategic stability, equal and indivisible security for all and to promote international cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy.

Member States welcome the joint signing of the Protocol on Security Guaranteed annexed

to Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia by Britain, China, Russia, France, and the United States in New York on 6 May 2014 as an important milestone in the initiative of the countries of the region, which makes a considerable contribution to strengthening regional and international security, strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.(From the 2014 SCO Dushanbe Declaration.)

The Treaty on a Central Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone is the first and only regional achievement made by the five countries. The preparation, coordination and signing of this document has a complicated history. Understandably, the Central Asian countries value this treaty. Consultations and talks on India and Pakistan's accession to the SCO have started. Obviously, this won't be easy, but the process is underway.

SCO and Geopolitics

The SCO is notable for including security cooperation and anti-terrorism among its objectives, but it does not intend to be a military bloc, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization is supposed to serve that function in Central Asia in any case. Members talk often about economics, but the role of two outside projects China's Belt and Road and the Eurasian Economic Union dwarfs that of the SCO itself as the primary government platforms for discussions on trade and investment. The organization certainly brings its members under one roof and encourages dialogue, but it cannot hope to solve the bitter territorial and political disputes between India and Pakistan. Not even Belt and Road is a unifying factor. India resists the program, skeptical that it will significantly expand Chinese influence in the region. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said as much during his address in Astana, implying that Belt and Road can pose a threat to national

sovereignty. What can be said of the SCO is that it reflects the complex geopolitics of the broad space its members now represent. India wants to expand its trade ties in Central Asia and with Russia, and entering the organization alongside Pakistan may well be intended to check both Pakistan and a growing Chinese presence. For Russia and China, the organization can more strongly claim to represent a non-Western pole, fuzzy though its contours may be. And for Central Asia, it never hurts to bring rival suitors for investment and trade ties closer together.

More concretely, at the summit the SCO deepened its commitment to combatting terrorism, and continued discussions of an SCO development bank. Both initiatives have potential. Perhaps the SCO powers could extend the reach of the anti-terrorism efforts by seeking cooperation on the issue with the broader international community. A global effort is needed, and the sphere is one where the SCO can make a key contribution.

India-Russia Bilateral Partnership

This visit reinforced interests of both states in maintaining their traditionally close and friendly relationship and in strengthening a multipolar world order. In recent times, both India and Russia have been pursuing a multi vector approach in their foreign policies. This visit was Indian Prime Minister Modi's second visit to Russia within a year's time; his first visit was in July 2015 to Ufa (Russian Federation) to participate in the BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) and SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Summits.

The bilateral relationship between India and Russia was revived with the declaration of a Strategic Partnership between the two countries during the visit of President Putin to India in the year 2000. Since then the Indo-

Russian relationship has diversified enormously and it is uniquely strong and also expanding in the areas of defence, nuclear energy, hydrocarbons, space research, science & technology. Prime Minister Modi's recent visit re-activated the ties between two countries. During this visit India and Russia signed number of significant agreements, including the agreement for manufacturing of Kamov 226 helicopters in India. This is going to be the first project for a major defence platform under Modi's 'Make in India' policy, and also to enhance the defence partnership between Russia and India. Cooperation on number of other significant defence projects would also boost defence cooperation.

Bilateral cooperation in nuclear energy is increasing over the years. India and Russia made progress regarding twelve Russian nuclear reactors at different sites. The agreement on nuclear cooperation will increase Indian manufacturing content for these reactors. Russia also supports Prime Minister Modi's 'Make in India' mission. Other benefits from this agreement would include research and development, construction of nuclear plants and reprocessing of spent fuel. The signing of this landmark inter-governmental agreement on the peaceful use of atomic energy between the two countries has the potential to expand the horizon of nuclear relationship between the two Nations.

Prime Minister Modi mentioned that Russia being world's largest reserves of hydrocarbons can be a critical source of energy security for India; hence, the agreements signed for Indian investments in Russian hydrocarbon sector will enhance energy cooperation between two countries. Agreement for cooperation for geologic survey, exploration and production of onshore hydrocarbons between Rosneft Oil Company, Oil India Limited and Indian Oil

Corporation Limited has been signed during this visit.

India and Russia are also moving towards expanding the economic relationships which is the weakest link in the bilateral cooperation. It has been observed that in spite of accelerated growth and immense opportunities in each other's economy, statistics show business transaction is much less than the real potential. Promises had been made by the leaders of both countries earlier, but not much has happened. However, to put these words into practice and strengthen the economic relationship, India has created a special notified zone to facilitate direct trade between the world's largest uncut diamond exporters (India and Russia process 90% of the world's uncut diamonds and will now cooperate in this sector successfully).

Also the work on logistics is going on to make trade and economic cooperation faster. The Green Corridor project took off and the International North South Transit Corridor (INSTC) through Iran is expected to significantly reduce transportation time and cost. Now India and Russia are also moving forward to fulfil the India-Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) Free Trade Agreement. This will also benefit to connect Central Asia easily. The agreements and the announcements made during this visit gave confidence that now India and Russia will see huge increase in investments and trade from both directions.

Prime Minister Modi and President Putin assured strong commitment to deepen the cooperation in the international arena too. Prime Minister the leaders agreed that early political settlement through dialogue in West Asia is essential for restoring stability and containing extremism in the region. There is a close synergy in Indo-Russia perspectives. The joint declaration reinforced the warmth

that exists between the two countries. Although differences arise over certain issues on certain occasions, the overall parallelism in the India-Russia relationship definitely symbolizes the trust that still exists between the two nations.

SCO: Towards regional cooperation and new world order

There are problems between Pakistan and India, and the organization will work as an effective platform to resolve disputes. Regional security and stability remain top priorities of the leadership of all participating countries, despite the existing contradictions. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was transformed from G6 into G8, covering 23 percent of the land area and 45 percent of the world's population. This year the SCO celebrates its 15th anniversary. In accordance with the spirit of Shanghai, the organization continues to create a regional community for a common future of humanity. The priority direction in the work of the SCO is to maintain stability and security in the region and to overcome new challenges and threats. During the Astana summit the main issues, among other things, were combating international terrorism, situation in Afghanistan and in the Middle East. the signing of the SCO Convention on Countering Extremism and the adoption of the Declaration of the SCO Heads of States on joint counteraction to international terrorism. SCO leaders consider it important to strengthen the SCO as an effective full format regional organization aimed to create effective global and regional security architecture.

Within the framework of the SCO, China continues to promote the One Belt, One Road initiative to develop business cooperation with interested countries and cooperation in the Eurasian economic space, which gives

good chances for development and prosperity, and at the same time it offers new ways for stability in our region. At the Belt and Road International Forum, held in Beijing last May, the problems of trade and economic cooperation were discussed. The issue of formation of the Great Eurasian partnership was also raised. The Chinese One Belt, One Road initiative will give a new impetus to the development of the SCO and will bring cooperation between the SCO member countries to a qualitatively new level.

The strength of cohesion of the SCO contributes to the creation of a more just international order. This is facilitated by the spirit of Shanghai, which, in particular, ensures the successful development of the organization. During the summit, President Xi Jinping formulated five proposals for the development of further relations: strengthening of cooperation, joint opposition to challenges, deepening of the business cooperation, establishing humanitarian ties, openness and tolerance. And they can be called the directions of development of the SCO, which is becoming one of the key organizations of Eurasia, which contributes to the formation of regional integration.

India-Pakistan in SCO

These countries are in a position of strong hostility. Their accession to this established regional organization demonstrates its diplomatic potential. Since both sides have agreed to join the SCO, some hopes have appeared that dialogue between them can take a more systemic form. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, New Delhi's accession to the organization helps shift relations with other countries to a new level. Bordachev said that India's accession should primarily contribute to further integration in the Eurasian space. "Relations between India

and China are uneasy. I think it is important to take these participants to a negotiating table to discuss positive and prospective agenda rather than hurdles to bilateral interaction. This is of great importance”, Bordachev said. The SCO is a platform for India and Pakistan to establish dialogue. “This is the most important thing that the SCO can do for them. They are unlikely to be limited by bilateral agenda; they will jointly participate in the discussion of wider questions,” the expert stressed. According to him, the SCO was founded to cooperate on security issues and alleviate potential conflicts between its member-states. This goal has been accomplished more or less successfully.

India and Central Asia

Central Asia had been historically a zone of India’s civilizational influence. Historically, India has had close contacts with five Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Interactions between India and Central Asian states had begun since the time of the Sakas or the Scythians. The Sakas had originally inhabited around Issyk-Kul Lake in Kyrgyzstan and later expanded southward to establish the Indo-Scythian kingdom in the second century BC. Intense contacts took place through Indian traders who visited Fergana Valley to trade along the Silk Route. Central Asia in return received a stream of philosophical ideas, especially the influence of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and beyond.

History is full of friendly interactions among Indians and the Central Asians through movement of people, goods and ideas, including spiritual interface that were not without advantage to our common heritage. Since the independence of five Central Asian states in 1991, India was among the first to establish diplomatic relations with them in

1992. The resident Mission of India was set up in all the five states. Political ties with the Central Asian republics have been traditionally warm and friendly.

The developments in Central Asia potentially engage India’s security concerns. The struggle against terrorism and attempts to stabilize Afghanistan will always remain a challenge. All the Central Asian states and India share common concerns on threat of terrorism, extremism and drugtrafficking. The stabilization process in Afghanistan may have unexpected consequences for the Central Asian states too. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations India and Central Asian countries have signed several framework agreements on culture, trade and economic cooperation, civil aviation, investment promotion and protection etc. At the institutional level, foreign office consultations have provided a useful forum for exchange of views on bilateral and international issues.

Nevertheless, India’s trade with Central Asia is very low and remained stagnant over the years. Indian investments to Central Asia have not been forthcoming for various reasons. Firstly, Central Asian states lack the necessary investment climate. Secondly, the banking system and financial institutions are not developed for attracting FDI and repatriation of profits. Thirdly, the present visa regime of Central Asia also puts up numerous obstacles for travelling Indian businessmen. Fourthly, frequent changes in the government formation are yet another problem for the investors.

Though few Indian companies have entered the manufacturing sectors, their success is yet to be seen. However, the initiation of Green Corridor by India, Russia and Iran known as International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a significant regional transport project trying to revive the Silk Road connectivity linking the Central Asian

countries by rail, ship and by road ways for moving freight from South Asia through Central Asia, Russia to Europe. INSTC is expected to improve the linkages and increase the regional cooperation. INSTC will help in connecting India-Central Asia through transport corridors focusing on the possible regional integration. Technical assistance under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, particularly, in terms of Human Resources Development (HRD), is the cornerstone of India's economic involvement in Central Asia.

Since independence, Central Asia has been in a state of inevitable dilemma of nation-building. The countries had been trying to follow what it termed as a "multi vector" foreign policy, but in reality it had to pursue a conventional approach to go along with Russian choice of policy direction. It had been proved more than once that for Central Asian States the so called multi vector foreign policy, which essentially entailed manipulation of ties with Russia, USA, China, and other key countries in the region became unsustainable.

Conclusion

The SCO is entering a new stage of development, which requires a qualitative transformation of its agenda. It faces several challenges, both immediate and longer term, stemming from both regional problems (Afghanistan's future) and macro-regional changes (the rise of China, growing international competition in Central Asia, the asymmetry of interests within the SCO, internal changes in SCO member states, etc.). SCO is not the only mechanism of Russia foreign policy in Central Asia, but it is an important one. Russia should seek to advance practical cooperation within the organization as well as its general presence in the region, which is a prerequisite for such cooperation.

Needless to say, Russia's progress in Central Asia should not endanger Russian-Chinese relations, which structurally have global significance for Russia (Trenin, 2012; Voskressenski, 2012). Central Asian dimension of Russian-Chinese relations should reflect China's status as a global actor, which it surely is by any measure. While Russian and Chinese interests will not always coincide, stable regional development will require that the dynamics of the bilateral relationship remain positive. And in relations with Central Asian SCO member states, Russia must find political and economic mechanisms that promise to benefit both parties and challenge perceptions of Russia as a hegemonic power.

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If you really want to be happy, always try to do what's right.

~ Bill Blackman