

## **Reviving the Ancient Silk Road: Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Pakistan**

**Khawaja Muhammad Kaleem**

*Ph.D scholar*  
*Department of Political Science,*  
*Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan.*

**Muhammad Mudabbir Malik**

*Visiting Lecturer*  
*Department of Political Science,*  
*Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan*

**Muhammad Imran Pasha**

*Lecturer*  
*Department of Political Science*  
*Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan*

**Muqarrab Akbar**

*Chairman*  
*Department of Political Science*  
*Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan*

### **Abstract**

*This age is the age of political economy. In modern times political economy has vital importance in shaping international relations. Ancient Silk Rout is very important and econotegic (Combination of economy and strategic) rout for more than half of a world. Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the largest regional organization in the world which has impacts on many fields of life too. If we look it in conjunction with BRI, It can be said that SCO is the new economic world order launched by China. CPEC is the pilot project of BRI going on in Pakistan with the collaboration of China. This project can boost fragile economy of Pakistan. In this article discussed econotegic partnership between China and Pakistan in context of SCO. Russia and Central Asian republics (CARs) are also important factor for Pakistan as part of SCO. India is a strategic competitor of Pakistan but at the same time she is transit partner of Pakistan. American influence in the region is the mutual*

*concern for Pakistan and China. They can face this influence from the platform of SCO. India has many issues to resolve with China and Pakistan and SCO is the better platform for the reconciliation. India Pakistan rivalry can be changed into economic partnership which leads to resolve other issues between both states. Regional and international political and economic prospects for Pakistan discussed in this paper. On the other hand, same angles of challenges discussed in this study.*

**Keywords:** Shanghai Cooperation Organization, SCO, CPEC, BRI, CARs, Silk Road, Regional Politics, International Politics, Economic, Politics.

## **Introduction**

Going back to 130 B.C during the Han's dynasty of China, Silk Road was opened officially. This route left great and long-lasting impacts on the history, culture and commerce which we can see even today. Initially, this route was opened for trade between Europe and the Far East. This road connected Susa (now Iran) with Sardis (now Turkey). After that Persians extended it to the subcontinent. Alexander the Great extended his rule from Macedonia to Persia. The Roman Empire enjoyed trade activities with Kushan (now northern India). Now, there is more than one thoroughfare for the trade, cultural and educational activities as well as political connections, that's why Historians called it "Silk Routes". Now the Silk Routes has been turned out into the most important strategic locations for the connected states.

After the demise of the USSR, the Silk Routes was not being used with full zeal. Now China wants to rehabilitate and expansion of the Silk Routes to meet its need of import and export. Pakistan is the most important part of this route. Geographical position of Pakistan has immense significance as it is just like a corridor which is the connection between Gulf and Afghanistan. On the Doorstep of Pakistan, Afghanistan is the only connection between Asia and Europe. Moreover Pakistan is the shortest way for the oil trade from Gulf to China. To get on board Russia and other bordering states from Central Asia; China established Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and then launched the great project BRI. Pakistan is also an

important member of SCO where China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) the pilot project of BRI is under progress. If we see the charter of SCO, it is all about cooperation and trade for the development of the region and member states. The Charter of SCO is being materialized in the shape of BRI and CPEC projects. Now SCO countries represent almost 43 per cent of the total world population and 37 million square kilometers of land in the world.<sup>1</sup> The member states of SCO are agreed on the goals and tasks of an organization like intensification of mutual trust and friendship between the SCO countries. Additionally, the SCO charter emphasizes collective combating against Extremism, Terrorism and Separatism (Three Evils). All SCO countries are supporting CPEC except India.

### **Pakistan and International Strategic Environment**

Pakistan's geo-strategic location is of colossal significance. After the incident of 9/11, it gained the centre of gravity in world politics. Pakistan's fragile economy always welcomed foreign influence to play its designated role in the region. The US has a certain strategic interest in the region which could not be accomplished without Pakistan. The US designs offensive realist policy in pursuance of its interests, While China believes in soft power according to the defensive. Despite having trade interdependency, both states have a different policy on Taiwan and South China sea. Though the US is spending three times more defense budget than China yet it perceives it as a national security threat. Pakistan has left no choice but to execute in US interests. The rivalry between the US and China is not an ideal situation for Pakistan.

India is a key player in South Asia which makes it important for both the US and China. Pakistan has a history of tremendous relationships with China. Sino- Indian relations are good but have some unresolved issues such as DOKLAM.

### **Pakistan's Membership in SCO & Beyond**

Addressing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Shanghai in June 2006, President Pervaiz Musharraf reiterated that Pakistan, being at the crossroads of Asia, is inevitable to

rejuvenate the trade relations between Central, West and East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

While addressing the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute in summer 2005, President Hamid Karzai also acknowledged that Gwadar Port will be an economical transit way to central Asia.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Pakistan is connecting three important regions of the world and enjoying historical relations with the countries of the Middle East and the Gulf, Central Asia and South Asia. Pakistan has two big states on its border; one is the emerging superpower China and the second is India. China connects the fourth nuclear power of the world Russia. Four nuclear powers including two veto powers in the region mount the significance of the region.

Gwadar is the pearl from Jewel in the region which has the most important role in reviving the Silk Route. SCO countries will not miss this opportunity of connection. China has a keen interest to develop Gwadar port for economic activities. Due to its significance, China is investing in infrastructure to make it functional. Being a key member of SCO, other states are also following China for econotegic (economic and strategic) gain.

### **China: The Strategic Partner**

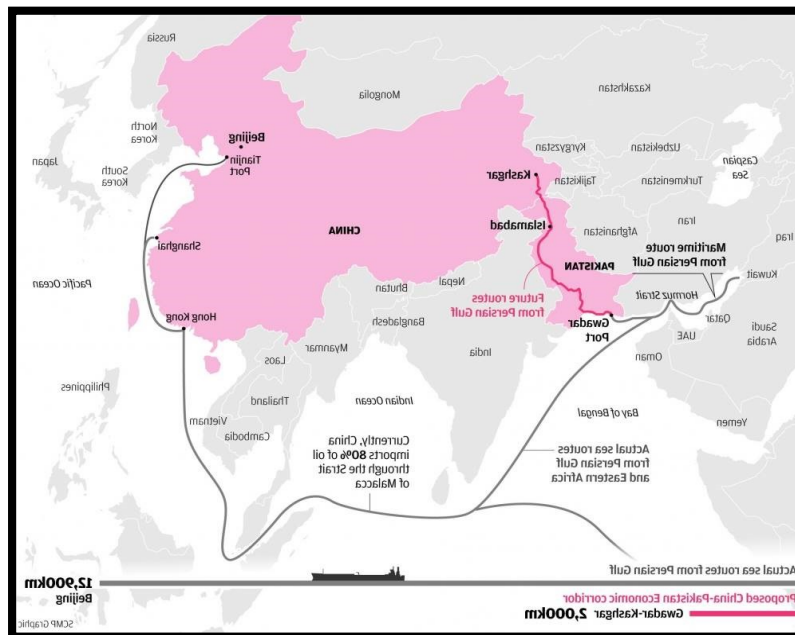
China is the most populous state of the world with 1.4 billion.<sup>4</sup> However, China converted its human power into skilled manpower via its educational policies and for this reason; it is the world's second major economy with a 12.24 trillion dollar GDP.<sup>5</sup>

China has been an all-weather friend of Pakistan. Even though, the course of history none of the incidents could peril their mutual relations. US- India Nuclear deal affirmed their alliance and China granted Pakistan technical assistance in shape JV of JF 17.

It is inevitable for China to boost its capacity to meet its fuel needs. For this purpose, China needs a reliable communication and transportation network from its territory to the CARs and Gulf. It can be accomplished by CPEC which is a part of the Belt and Road Initiative BRI.

China is the largest exporter of the world as its export to the world was 2.263 trillion US dollars in 2017.<sup>6</sup> To meet the growing need of fuel, China must make necessary arrangements in future.<sup>7</sup> Central Asian states can fulfill her energy demand with their huge energy resources. Simultaneously, China needs to import oil from the gulf. Pakistan is the best available and shortest route for oil export from the Gulf to China and Chinese goods export to Gulf. This opportunity provides Pakistan with multiple options for transit trade in the region.

**China Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC:** BRI is an approximately one trillion US dollar project. CPEC has more than 3000 km long routes including road and railways network. The Actual estimated cost of CPEC is about 75 Billion US dollars.



8

After May 2018 working on CPEC is slow due to the change of government in Pakistan but work is still in progress, on these projects of CPEC. Mr. Jiang Han the Political Counselor of China at Islamabad is optimistic about this matter, but he also illustrated the challenges of the future. Adding to it, he hoped

that, “in five years, many successes of relevant projects would be witnesses such as the Sahiwal Coal power plant, Qasim port and Gwadar port. Besides these, China is going to establish Special Economic Zones for the under-developed areas of Pakistan. CPEC is significant for the achievement of these goals”.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, fully operationalisation of CPEC, connectivity projects like Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India gas pipeline TAPI, Central-Asia South-Asia Power Project (CASA 1000) and Iran, Pakistan and India gas pipeline (IPI), SCO region will be the focus of the World for trade and investment.

### **Russia: The Contending Interests**

Russia has an old dream to access the hot waters of Pakistani Sea ports for smooth trade with the international community. After 9/11, Russia-Pakistan relations were reshaped to cooperation. In this context, Russia allowed the re-exporting of 150 engines of JF 17 thunder. Moreover, Russia also helped Pakistan to launch the communication satellite Badar 11.<sup>10</sup>

Now their bilateral relations in the defense field, such as Joint Military Consultative Committee JMCC are on a smooth track. At an inaugural meeting of JMCC on August 7, 2018, Pakistan and Russia concluded a security training agreement for defense cooperation. After the delegation Talks at military headquarter Rawalpindi led by the defense secretary of Pakistan and deputy defense minister of Russia Col. Gen. Alexander Rormin, it was announced that Russia will induct services of Pakistan in its federation.<sup>11</sup> “Pakistan and Russia held 3<sup>rd</sup> joint military training exercise ‘Druzhba’ (Friendship) from October 29, 2018, to November 4, 2018.<sup>12</sup> This is witnessed as a new horizon in their mutual relations.

### **India: Strategic Competitor and Transit Partner**

India Pakistan rivalry is the most complex enmity in the world, and this is the basic and great hurdle for the development in South Asia. If India perceives its interests, the Lahore-Kashghar route can be the best option for China and India mutual trade.

India and Afghanistan both want to move up bilateral trade via the Wagah border. Due to some apprehensions, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani warned Pakistan to close the transit route to Central Asia.<sup>13</sup>

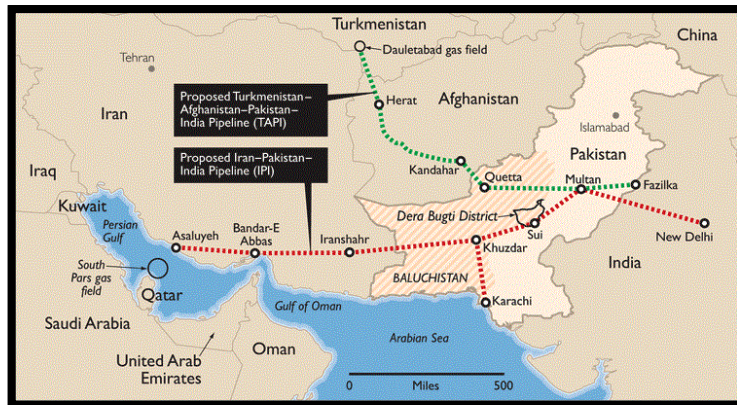
### **Central Asian Republics: The Gateways**

SCO countries from Central Asia including Turkmenistan (which is not a member of SCO) are very rich in natural resources. CARs have historical, religious and cultural ties with Pakistan. Russia, Iran, and CARs have huge natural gas and oil reserves. Pakistan is the gateway for the landlocked CARs for their exports.

Pakistan and Kazakhstan signed three MOUs during the visit of Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif to Kazakhstan in 2015. Premier Sharif and President of Kazakhstan Abishevich Nazarbayev agreed on cooperation in the various fields. President Nazarbayev showed interest to join the CPEC project for the boosting of trade activities in the region. Nawaz Sharif showed concern to connect Pakistan with Central Asia via Road, Rail and Air routes.<sup>14</sup>

Uzbekistan also desires to improve cooperation with Pakistan. Uzbekistan's envoy wished to augment bilateral trade during his visit to FCCI. Addressing the members of the business community he said that "Pakistan and Uzbekistan are agrarian states. So, I am here to encourage cooperation in the textile sector. Many Pakistani companies were already trading with Uzbekistan while there are huge opportunities to launch JVs in this specific field".<sup>15</sup>

Turkmenistan wants to smooth access to Pakistani seaports. TAPI gas pipeline project is an impending project for the enhancement of cooperation in the energy sector.



16

Tajikistan is only 15 to 20 kilometres away from Pakistan at the place of Wakhan. Recently, on April 11, 2019, the Defense Minister of Tajikistan, Colonel-General Mirzo visited Islamabad and met different high officials. He desired to improve relations in various fields. Defense Minister also met President Alvi whereas president emphasized that Pakistan has prioritized to the speedy completion of CASA-1000<sup>17</sup>.

Kyrgyzstan is also interested to enhance bilateral relations with Pakistan. In 2008, in a high official meeting, both states agreed to improve cooperation in various fields. Both countries discussed Kashmir issues and agree to set up the next session in Islamabad this year.

China and India are the largest energy consumers in the world. At present, India is showing her concerns over CPEC and BRI projects but how long for? China has invested in CPEC which is for the augmentation of trade activities. It will lead ultimately to the prosperity of the region.

## **Prospects for Pakistan in Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

### **Economic Prospects**

Shanghai Cooperation Organization seems the New World Economic Order launched by China and providing a galaxy of opportunities especially CPEC for Pakistan. Pakistan has some



major challenges like terrorism, infrastructure, energy and technology. Pakistan’s efforts to eliminate terrorism from the country and the region are remarkable. Data elucidating Pakistan’s efforts in the war on terror is as under.<sup>18</sup>

Yearly Fatalities						
Data View		Graph View		Chart View		Map view
Year	Incidents of Killing	Civilians	Security Forces	Terrorists/Insurgents/Extremists	Not Specified	Total
2003	55	137	23	29	8	197
2004	168	347	208	302	68	925
2005	166	474	79	123	26	702
2006	317	540	301	568	57	1466
2007	531	1311	548	1271	464	3594
2008	1149	1796	647	3724	516	6683
2009	1665	2154	1012	7884	267	11317
2010	1246	1537	512	4945	348	7342
2011	1575	2392	666	2750	254	6062
2012	2347	2732	730	2444	272	6178
2013	2030	2703	660	1541	375	5279
2014	1570	1476	512	3268	263	5519
2015	950	866	341	2408	73	3688
2016	522	543	279	897	68	1787
2017	295	440	215	533	61	1269
2018	163	359	163	161	14	697
2019	73	94	73	44	0	211
Total*	14822	19901	6969	32892	3154	62916

After defeating terrorists, now Pakistan is ready to take off for the economic rise. Mr. Jiang Han said in an interview that “All SCO countries advocate CPEC except India; it means that they will get more connectivity and Pakistan will get a huge market. I think this is the main benefit of SCO”<sup>19</sup>.

Professor Jaspal said;

“Pakistan is determined to use SCO forum for pursuing its economic objectives. Premier Imran Khan, in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek on June 13-14, 2019, recommended trading in local currencies and improving cooperation in combating the menace of terrorism”.<sup>20</sup>

Professor Jaspal added;

“Khan called upon member states to invest in Pakistan because it provides the vital connectivity between the Middle East and China and Central and South Asia. For the SCO members, it "is an attractive investment destination and a large market endowed with a rich array

of resources." Indeed, the geographic proximities and economic imperatives draw Pakistan closer to SCO. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC, the flagship project of President Xi's far-sighted Belt and Road Initiative, will facilitate trade among the members of the Organization".<sup>21</sup>

Director Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies Muhammad Asif Noor stated in an interview;

"With crippling economic challenges to Pakistan's economy, the SCO has a huge potential for Pakistan. The member countries have to collaborate to build e-commerce, medium and small enterprises and establish the links between industry and services. However, Pakistan needs to take this opportunity as an asset and move forward with the commercial linkages of the SCO market".<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the former ambassador of Pakistan Sanaullah Mian denies the possibility that Pakistan can get some economic benefits from the SCO platform. He said in an interview that "No such provisions are there in the SCO. Exchange of Delegations in the field of disaster management is a possibility".<sup>23</sup> In such a case Pakistan can get expertise in the field of disaster management which is itself a benefit.

Pakistan has enormous opportunities for technology exchange with China for her development and men power exchange with the Central Asian states. It will boost Pakistan's economy and foreign reserve exchanges. Pakistan is building infrastructure for trade activities in the shape of CPEC. After the completion of CPEC, SCO will be the focus of the world for economic activities.

Basically, CPEC is an ancient silk route as discussed above. It has been a great source of connectivity between South Asia and Central Asia for thousands of years. This connectivity was broken after the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republic. After the disintegration of USSR, It was an opportunity to revive this historic route for trade and China using this opportunity carefully.<sup>24</sup>

Pakistan and Afghanistan both are stake holders of this route which is being used for 3 to 2 hundred years B.C. This connectivity engages energy, trade, transportation, and tourism. Now 52 states are agreed to join CPEC and it will contribute in Pakistan's economic development as well as regional and world's economy.<sup>25</sup> The president of the Pak-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) stated to the media that "100 billion US dollar investment both from China and other countries is expected as soon as infrastructure projects under CPEC are completed".<sup>26</sup> SCO can be more important when all members will be connected through BRI. Chinese investment will help to materialize quadrilateral transit traffic agreements among stakeholders.

Energy is another basic requirement of the development in modern world. The CARs, Russia and Iran have 50% of the world's natural gas and 15% of the world's oil reserves.<sup>27</sup> China is willing to continue her support to Pakistan to meet energy needs in future. SCO is eliminating the shortage of energy in Pakistan. China, India, and Pakistan are establishing close ties with the SCO energy club. TAPI and IPI are two major proposed energy projects in the region. SCO member states are self-sufficient to fulfill their energy requirements which are the plus point for the region. Although, the Iran is facing international sanctions imposed by United Nations. If IPI will materialize in the future, it will be a great project of economic integration among Iran, Pakistan, and India as well as political cooperation.<sup>28</sup>



Pakistan signed another energy-related MOU with Russia for the construction of an offshore gas pipeline. Pakistan will receive 500 million to 1 billion cubic foot gas daily from Russia. This project will be completed by 2022-2023.<sup>29</sup>

The trade volume of China with SCO member states was 217.6 billion US dollars in 2017 which jumped to 20.7% in the first 3 months of 2018. Mr. Gao Feng spokesman of the Ministry of Commerce of China Claimed that Chinese investment in the SCO member countries stroked 84 billion US dollars.<sup>30</sup> These trade activities between China and SCO member countries affect positively on Pakistan's economy and Pakistan would enhance bilateral economic relations with SCO members. BRI Project launched by China has 1.2 trillion US Dollar (net) projects of infrastructure and communication in South Asia, Russia and Europe.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, 80 states and organizations have been signed agreements to support BRI and CPEC. PM Modi was the only leader in the Qingdao Summit who opposed BRI and raised objections on CPEC in AJK and GB whereas Pakistan and AJK rejected this objection with full zeal.<sup>32</sup> It is a very important question that how long India will oppose this utmost economic integration project which has political impacts. The present volume of Pakistan India Trade is 2.6 billion US dollars, and it can be improved up to 200%.<sup>33</sup>

Responding to the question about the possibility of convergence of interests between India and Pakistan Sanauallah Mian stated;

“Yes, if both want peace and stability and do not encourage hybrid warfare against each other. Since both are adversaries and India is bent upon isolating Pakistan diplomatically and choking its economy, there is no convergence of interests except the shared interest of promoting SCO goals”.<sup>34</sup>

Large populace and a high unemployment rate is a huge burden on the national economy of Pakistan. It can be improved via trade activities and the export of manpower to CARs. Pakistan can also build the infrastructure in a country like CPEC for the development in future. This will be a great contribution to get rid of poverty and sustainable development in the country. Pakistan was badly affected by terrorism, still is under threat and taking steps to eliminate this evil because trade has a direct connection with peace.

After joining the SCO Pakistan increasing trade relations with China and establishing good trade relations with Russia too. It will create the economic balance between the United States block and opponent group for Pakistan and Pakistan will feel comfortable when its dependency will be less on the United States. The Central Asia South Asia (CASA 1000) power project is a project of 1.6 billion US dollars that is under construction. CASA 1000 will export 1300MW hydroelectricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan.<sup>35</sup>

### **Political Prospects**

When SCO discussed, it has to understand that why all-important stakeholders of international politics are concerned about SCO. The answer is very simple, SCO has great economic potential and this potential confers the power to the organization to play an important role in the international political system in the future.

Pakistan needs to reach out to SCO members to improve its relations in different fields and for regional cooperation. SCO can be a tool to strengthen the foundation for peace and security in the region and to build a powerful engine to attain development and prosperity via closer relationships. Beijing wants to see all the SCO members on the same page against three evils and cooperation on BRI. All the above factors are based on a good political environment in the region under the umbrella of SCO and it will finish the isolation of Pakistan in the international community. Mr. Jiang Han the Political Counselor of China at Islamabad said in an interview that “Of course, it’s just initiative, Pakistan will enjoy political benefits; for example, SCO is a kind of platform to discuss regional issues so it means that Pakistan’s voice can be heard through this platform and Pakistan sought might be enhanced by this kind of platform”.<sup>36</sup> Pakistan has two dimensions of Political opportunities at SCO, regional and international levels. SCO emphasizes the rearranging of the geopolitics of the world and wants to transform the world from unipolar to multipolar.

### **Regional Political Prospects**

Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism. Now terrorism is an international phenomenon and threat to global peace. Terrorism is purely strategic and security issue, but it has political impacts. As it was mentioned above the elimination of three evils, (Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism) is the preference of SCO so Pakistan can get the support and help of SCO member countries to finish this crisis.

Increasing trade among SCO members will make them closer politically and they can take up the same opinion on different regional and international political issues in future. Combined military exercise of SCO member countries back in august 2018 had shown that all member states are willing to come closer politically that’s why their armed forces joined hand under the umbrella of the organization. Although USSR has had a history of complex rivalry with Pakistan during the first Afghan war from 1979 to 1989 but now according to a Russian scholar Dr

Vladimir Kozin Russia is happy to increase relations with Pakistan in different fields.<sup>37</sup>

Chinese Scholars are also hopeful that Pakistan and India will use SCO as a platform to make their bilateral relations good. Professor Lin Minwang from Fudan University expressed his views that “SCO is not a place for India and Pakistan to quarrel, but a platform for members to settle their disputes.” An expert in anti-terrorism from China Institute of Contemporary International Relations said “There is some concern that the hostility between India and Pakistan might affect the organization’s unity. However, the SCO will also become an ideal platform for members with disputes to solve their problems bilaterally, based on the Shanghai Spirit”.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Dr Jaspal seems a realistic approach to Pak-India relations. He stated;

“Although, the old members of the SCO desire that new members India and Pakistan co-operate each other for the regional peace and stability, yet India is not prepared to restart a dialogue process for decreasing the tension with Pakistan. Prime Minister Imran Khan and Premier Modi avoided a formal bilateral meeting at the sidelines of the 2019 summit. Indeed, they missed an opportunity to informally deliberate on their worsening bilateral relations and find a way for lessening destabilizing situation at the Line of Control. The continuity of deadlock between New Delhi and Islamabad is frustrating but the ratification of a five-year action plan in 2018 for implementing the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation of the SCO Member States create hope for improving bilateral ties between the belligerent neighbors. Another positive development was that both states troops

participated in the SCO's training exercise so-called "Peace Mission 2018" to eliminate terrorists and neutralize their networks from August 22-29, 2018 at Chelyabinsk in west-central Russia".<sup>39</sup>

Afghan issue is an ulcerous problem for the region for a long time. The United States spent a huge amount and NATO struggled for a long but failed to resolve the issue. This issue affects directly Pakistan in multiple directions. Chinese president Xi Jinping wants SCO to play the role of peace and stability in Afghanistan. China showed her interest in the peace in Afghanistan to announce 73 million US dollar military aid to Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup>

### **International Political Prospects**

American scholars believe that SCO is a challenge for the United States. US secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld is on record that "strike me as passing strange that one would want to bring into an organization that says it is against terrorism one of the leading terrorist nations in the world".<sup>41</sup> He was criticizing the invitation to the Iranian President to attend the fifth anniversary of SCO. Terrorism is an international phenomenon and Pakistan is the most affected nation in the world by terrorism. India does not miss any chance to malign Pakistan's image in the war against terrorism despite the great sacrifices of Pakistan. Dr Jaspal looks at SCO as an opportunity for Pakistan to counter this propaganda against Pakistan on regional and international levels. He stated;

"The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has gradually emerged as an essential global geopolitical and geo-economic alliance. It provides Pakistan with an opportunity to quash maligning propaganda against it. For example, on June 14, 2019, in his address to the SCO summit, Prime Minister Khan ensured SCO members that Pakistan will remain



actively engaged in SCO's counter-terrorism initiatives".<sup>42</sup>

Mr Sanaullah Mian believes that the only member of SCO will not work for the political millage on an international level, he said;

“SCO membership gives the illusion of equality with India in political terms and may help project Pakistan as a willing partner in regional peace and security. Its membership alone would not improve its relations with India or even with US security establishment in the context of Afghanistan or with FATF”.<sup>43</sup>

SCO is the largest regional organization in the world having almost 50% of the world population and about 37 million square km of land; in this capacity SCO can introduce a new international political system for peace, stability, and development. The above statement of the US secretary of state shows that SCO will address the unilateralism in the world and help Pakistan to come out from American influence. This Joint venture in different fields with almost 50% of the world's population will provide opportunities to Pakistan to attain mutual political interest in international forums. In this situation, the states in the region can try to get rid of the US foothold. Pakistan can avoid foreign interference in her internal affairs in this environment. This opportunity will broaden the political canvas for Pakistan on the international scenario. SCO has 20% of the world's GDP and 75% of the world's energy resources and this factor creates a commendable political-economic power in the world system. This potential enables SCO to bring some changes in the global political economy for sustainable development and prosperity for human beings.

CPEC is the pilot project of BRI which is launched in Pakistan and 52 states are agreed to join CPEC; it contributes to Pakistan's economy as well as the regional and global economy.<sup>44</sup>

## **Strategic Prospects**

SCO is based on the Shanghai spirit which is emphasized on multilateral cooperation including security. Peace and Cooperation is the basic principle of the SCO, not confrontation or war. SCO is committed to working against three evils. All members have hope that SCO would promote stabilization, security, and partnership against three evils. SCO holds the world's most important geographical and geostrategic area. Strengthening ties with SCO provides Pakistan opportunities to improve her political, economic and military relations with SCO member states. SCO is doing well for the peace and stability of the region. All states agreed to work and committed for cooperation against drug trafficking, smuggling of weapons, and illegal immigrants. It is the potential contribution to the stability of the region as well as for Pakistan.

Terrorism is a real threat to South Asia, Central Asia, and SCO member countries. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) presence in the different areas of Afghanistan is alarming for Pakistan too. SCO established Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure RATR, an ideal arrangement for the containment of terrorism from the region as well as from the world. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018 intelligence chiefs of China, Russia, Iran, and Pakistan met in China and discussed the cooperation to counter ISIS in the region.<sup>45</sup> During this meeting, it was found that ISIS was involved in the frequent suicide attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan cannot afford another terrorist or extremist organization on her land after a bloodshed experience of TTP. Pakistan is committed to working against terrorism with full zeal and zest. Pakistan has a vast experience of war against terrorism and in this capacity, Pakistan armed forces would like to share their experience with RATS.

Mr. Jiang Han the Political Counselor of China at Islamabad said on this issue;

“In SCO we have a regulation that does not bring bilateral issues into this but however I think it is a platform for each

other countries to connect so that if Pakistan wants or India wants we can communicate through this platform” he added that “It is a platform for the member countries to enhance their relationship. I believe that Pakistan and India can enhance their relationship through this platform”.<sup>46</sup>

The spokesperson of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that “China hopes Pakistan and India would improve bilateral relations after becoming full members of the SCO”.<sup>47</sup> Prof. Dr. Khawaja Alqama claimed;

“I believe that the Chinese slowly but surely trying both India and Pakistan to reduce their tension. China has invested in a big way everywhere in the world which includes India too. China Solved her issues with the Soviet Union and he would urge Pakistan and India to keep deterrence but sit together with each other for the life of the common man” “very slowly, I believe Chinese will set a strategy which will bring both India and Pakistan to the table talk as it happened after the War of 1971”.<sup>48</sup>

But professor Jaspal is not very hopeful due to current developments. He affirmed;

“Despite having the opportunity to meet on the sideline of the summit, Indian PM Narendra Modi and Pakistani PM Imran Khan did not formally meet, however, they exchanged pleasantries. The continuity of tension between India and Pakistan is frustrating because both have been confronting many common threats and challenges, and without a sustained

dialogue process, they cannot resolve them”.<sup>49</sup>

Mr Sanaullah Mian thought;

“Membership established parity as their membership was linked and it raises public morale that Pakistan has not been spurned by China and Russia”.<sup>50</sup>

American president Trump play role in his capacity for the mediation between Pakistan and India. At the time of his meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan on July 22, 2019, while talking to media President Trump said;

“I was with Prime Minister Modi two weeks ago, and we talked about this subject. And he said, “Would you like to be a mediator or arbitrator?” I Said, “Where?” He said, “Kashmir.” “I would love to be a mediator” he was responding to a question about the long-standing Kashmir issue between Pakistan and India”.<sup>51</sup>

China and Russia can help Pakistan to be a powerful state in the region, but it depends on the Pakistani leadership that how they will use this opportunity. Dr Khawaja Alqama designs this situation like;

“Russian realized that Pakistan was allied with the US in the Cold War but, today India is the strongest ally of the US in this region. Now if Russia and China cooperate with Pakistan, it might contain the US and India. I believe that China will not allow India to manipulate the plate form of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”.<sup>52</sup>

While responding to the question, can Indians manipulate SCO against Pakistan? Mr. Sanaullah Mian said, “For the present, it

is not possible. If China becomes friendlier to India, it may be possible; still this can happen subject to Russian proactive support. This scenario looks unlikely”.<sup>53</sup>

The meeting between the head of state of Pakistan and Afghanistan on the sideline of SCO in June 2018 was very interesting and encouraging. This was a significant step towards the normalization of bilateral relations. They agreed during the meeting to intensify combined efforts to avoid terrorism which is a threat to their national security.

Now the United States confessed the fact that the Taliban are stakeholders in Afghanistan. The US left Afghanistan after the Doha agreement and the Taliban are in the power over there. Recognition of the Taliban government is a serious question mark but countries all over the world are in touch with the Taliban. SCO is committed to the harmonious solution of Afghanistan. The success of CPEC and then BRI is well connected with the peace in Afghanistan and the region as well. So, China cannot afford instability in Afghanistan or any part of Pakistan. In this context, SCO is focused on the mediation role for stability in Afghanistan. Chinese President Xi is personally interested to involve SCO in the Afghan peace process. For the stability in Afghanistan, China's joint staff General Fang announced 73 million US dollars during the meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani.<sup>54</sup> On the other side, although China did not recognize the Taliban government, Beijing has some connection with Kabul. Taliban stated that we will welcome China for the rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan. We can foresee that China and the Taliban Government will get an agreement for the economic activities via Afghanistan to CARs.<sup>55</sup> (Heinrich Mark, Asia Pacific, 2021)

### **Conclusion**

As it is discussed in this study, it can be said that SCO is a theoretical framework or development plan and BRI project is implementing this framework on the ground which leads to reviving the great ancient Silk Route for the immense trade activities, development and prosperity. Reviving of Silk Route

will boost the economy all over the world especially in the concerned connected countries like Pakistan and China. China need shortest route for oil trade via Gwadar to Kashgar which is only 2000km on the other hand sea route is 12900km. Logically, it can be said that there will be many prospects and opportunities for Pakistan after the completion of CPEC and then BRI as the result of reviving of ancient Silk Route. If Pakistan will focus on the stability and continuity of the political system and economic policies as well; Pakistan can get and cash huge opportunities on account of national and regional development. This development will lead the country to get political, economic and cultural benefits. Pakistan can use this development to get more benefits from different fields like education, health, security, defense production, tourism, roads and railways network and many more fields. The investment will work only at that time when it will make a combination of strong and sustainable economic policies and political stability.

All the discussions and interviews with diplomats and political scholars are agreed on this approach that revival of ancient Silk Route and Shanghai Cooperation Organization can be beneficial for Pakistan in all means but, it is not a ripe fruit that Pakistan can get easily. No doubt, so many prospects are there at the SCO platform but there are some elements which can be hurdle for Pakistan. It is quite possible that Pakistan can face the challenges to provide the required elements and molitcis (Military and Mullah's interference to get Power in the state system) in Pakistan is one of the big issues in this perspective. Hope for best that Pakistan will overcome these challenges.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Khalid Rahman, *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Prospects and opportunities* (London: Pluto Journals, 2007), p.131.
- <sup>2</sup> Dawn, (Karachi), 16 June 2006.
- <sup>3</sup> Rizwan Zeb, *Pakistan and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization* (Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program November 2006), p.57.
- <sup>4</sup> Infoplease. February 2019. <https://www.infoplease.com/world/population-statistics/worlds-50-most-populous-countries> (accessed April 24, 2019).
- <sup>5</sup> WITS. 2017. <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/CHN> (accessed 24 April 2019).
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Cao Yue. export.gov. 30 7 2019. <https://www.export.gov/article?id=China-Oil-and-Gas> (accessed 11 September 2019).
- <sup>8</sup> Zahid and R.M. Ammar, 'IMPACT OF CPEC ENERGY PROJECTS ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF PAKISTAN', November 2018. [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Strait-of-Malacca-route-compared-to-the-CPEC-route-to-China-6\\_fig1\\_329799370](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Strait-of-Malacca-route-compared-to-the-CPEC-route-to-China-6_fig1_329799370) (accessed 17 August 2019).
- <sup>9</sup> Jiang Han's interview with Khawaja Muhammad Kaleem. Islamabad, (16 September 2019).
- <sup>10</sup> Tahir Amin, 'Pakistan-Russia Relations and the Unfolding "New Great Game in South Asia"' in *The Regional Security Puzzle around Afghanistan* (ed): (Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2016) p.200.
- <sup>11</sup> Ayaz Gul, 'Pakistan, Russia Sign Rare Military Cooperation Pact', 8 August 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-russia-sign-military-cooperation-pact/4519031.html>. (accessed May 01, 2019).
- <sup>12</sup> DG ISPR Pak, 21 October 2018, <https://twitter.com/officialdgispr/status/1054220949376114688?lang=en>. (accessed 01 May 2019).
- <sup>13</sup> Rezaul H. Laskar, 'Will close Pak's transit route to Central Asia if not allowed to trade with India: Ghani' 09 September 2016, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/will-close-pak-s-transit-route-to-central-asia-if-not-allowed-to-trade-with-india-ghani/story-vRm33SJ9q6E2EOnsBrOBPJ.html>. (accessed 01 May 2019).
- <sup>14</sup> Dr Muhammad Munir, 'Pak-Kazakhstan relations: A welcome initiative', 01 September 2015, <http://www.ipripak.org/pak-kazakhstan-relations-a-welcome-initiative/>. (accessed 06 May 2019).
- <sup>15</sup> Parvez Jabri, 'Pak-Uzbekistan removes basic hurdles to promote bilateral trade', 29 January 2019.

---

<https://www.brecorder.com/2019/01/29/469498/pak-uzbekistan-removes-basic-hurdles-to-promote-bilateral-trade/>. (accessed 06 May 2019).

- <sup>16</sup> Lisa Curtis, Ariel Cohen and Owen Graham, 'The Proposed Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline: An Unacceptable Risk to Regional Security', 30 May 2008, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-proposed-iran-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline-unacceptable-risk-regional-security>. (accessed 14 April 2019).
- <sup>17</sup> Radio Pakistan, 'President calls for enhancing bilateral ties b/w Pak, Tajikistan', 11 April 2019, <http://www.radio.gov.pk/11-04-2019/president-calls-for-enhancing-bilateral-ties-bw-pak-tajikistan-in-different-fields>. (accessed 06 May 2019).
- <sup>18</sup> South Asia terrorism Portal. Datasheet – Pakistan, 17 July 2019. <https://satp.org/datasheet-terrorist-attack/fatalities/pakistan>. accessed 21 July 2019.
- <sup>19</sup> Jiang Han, op.cit.
- <sup>20</sup> Prof. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, op.cit.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Muhammad Asif Noor, interview by Khawaja Muhammad Kaleem, Islamabad, 01 September 2019.
- <sup>23</sup> Mian Sanaullah, interview by Khawaja Muhammad Kaleem, Islamabad, 30 August 2019.
- <sup>24</sup> Dr Adam Saud, 'Revivalism of Silk Routes: CPEC and South Asia-Central Asia Connectivity' Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.218.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> Dr Amna Mahmood. 'Expansion of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Implications for Pakistan' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.06.
- <sup>28</sup> Dr Muqarrab Akbar. 'Paradigm of Strategic cooperation: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan in SCO' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.115.
- <sup>29</sup> Farhat Asif, 'SCO and Pakistan' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.242.
- <sup>30</sup> Dr Amna Mahmood. 'Expansion of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Implications for Pakistan' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.09.



- 
- <sup>31</sup> Syed hasan Javed, "The SCO and Pakistan: Political, Economic and Strategic Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan in Post Qingdao SCO Summit' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.61.
- <sup>32</sup> Asif Noor, 'Post Qingdao SCO: Prospects and challenges for Pakistan' in Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: Oppertunities and challenges for Pakistan (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies.p.25.
- <sup>33</sup> Dr Muhammad Muneer, 'Expansion of SCO and its Impact on Pakistan-India Relations' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies 2018) p.207.
- <sup>34</sup> Mian Sanaullah, op.cit.
- <sup>35</sup> Dr Muhammad Muneer, op.cit.
- <sup>36</sup> Jiang Han, op.cit.
- <sup>37</sup> Dr Muhammad Khan, 'Post Qingdao SCO: Prospects and challenges for Pakistan' In: Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies 2018) p.40.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. p.41
- <sup>39</sup> Prof. Dr. Za far Nawaz Jaspal, op.cit.
- <sup>40</sup> Dr. Manzoor Khan Afridi, 'Role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization for Regional Stability' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies 2018) p.185.
- <sup>41</sup> Rizwan Zeb, op.cit., p.51.
- <sup>42</sup> Prof. Dr. Za far Nawaz Jaspal, op.cit.
- <sup>43</sup> Mian Sanaullah, op.cit.
- <sup>44</sup> Dr Adam Saud, op.cit., p.215.
- <sup>45</sup> Dr Tughral Yamin, 'Strategic Opportunities for Pakistan in Post Qingdao SCO Summit' In Post Qingdao Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit: opportunities and challenges for Pakistan (Islamabad: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, 2018) p.159
- <sup>46</sup> Jiang Han, op.cit.
- <sup>47</sup> Farhat Asif, op.cit., p.239
- <sup>48</sup> Prof Dr Kha waja Alqama, op.cit.
- <sup>49</sup> Prof. Dr. Za far Nawaz Jaspal, op.cit.
- <sup>50</sup> Mian Sanaullah, op.cit.
- <sup>51</sup> Oval Office, 'Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Khan of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Before Bilateral Meeting', 22 July 2019. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-prime-minister-khan-islamic-republic-pakistan-bilateral-meeting/>. accessed 25 July 2019.
- <sup>52</sup> Prof Dr Kha waja Alqama, op.cit.
- <sup>53</sup> Mian Sanaullah, op.cit.

- <sup>54</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, ‘What’s Behind China’s Offer of Military Aid to Afghanistan?’ 11 March 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/03/whats-behind-chinas-offer-of-military-aid-to-afghanistan/> .accessed 27 July 2019.
- <sup>55</sup> Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-spokesman-says-china-can-contribute-afghanistans-development-state-media-2021-08-19/>