

Goals and Challenges of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

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ABSTRACT

Governance of Afghanistan by Taliban is an important point in regional changes arena. As Taliban took power in Afghanistan, showed special view of Islam, developed drug trafficking and extremist activities, and affected the security of central Asia. One of the important methods of Shanghai Cooperation Organization activity is its collaboration in fighting against new threats and challenges. One of the most important goals of this organization is preventing the increasing intervention of USA in the region. Russia and China are the main members of the organization and if any problem is occurred for them, it can be considered a challenge for the organization. The shortage of budget influences the activities of Shanghai organization. Bad economical condition of most of the members accentuate financial deficit and it seems that Shanghai organization is encountered with problem. The main activity of Shanghai Cooperation Organization is collaboration in security field. Political experts believe that the most important challenge of Shanghai Cooperation Organization at super regional and international level is political-security challenge being imposed by major actors of international system and other similar organizations. We should not hope that a great organization with mechanisms of coping with the West like the one that occurred in cold war era, would be formed.

KEYWORDS: Shanghai Cooperation Organization; China; Russia; America; NATO

INTRODUCTION

Governance of Afghanistan by Taliban is an important point in regional changes arena. As Taliban took power in Afghanistan, showed special view of Islam, developed drug trafficking and extremist activities, and affected the security of central Asia. Iran and central Asia countries due to having the same border and religion were at the target of Taliban threats. The lack of religion homogeneity and strong fighting of Iran against drug trafficking caused that extremism and drug trafficking are diverted to the North and central Asia countries. The prevalence of Taliban beliefs and thoughts to central Asia, besides Islamic extremism and fundamentalism, facilitated smuggling drugs to central Asia¹ (Jonson, Alison, 2003: 82).

Goals

One of the important methods of Shanghai Cooperation Organization activity is its collaboration in fighting against new threats and challenges. In establishment summit of Shanghai cooperation organization in 2001, Shanghai convention regarding terrorism, separatism and extremism affairs was accepted. This document is valid since March 29, 2003. This organization that was established with the aims of keeping the security of borders and reducing the alien forces in the region, in Tashkent document in 2002, in addition to the above issues, it was emphasized on fighting against drug trafficking, on the protection of secret information in the framework of the SCO anti-terrorist agency, collaboration with Karzay government and developing security and stability in the region, restoring the border security of neighboring countries and countries member of the organization and the effort for serious fight against Terrorism. Strategic convergence of Russia and China is the gradual unavoidable policy that these two countries took since 1990s to reduce hegemonic power of America and avoid monopolization of international system. Their other unavoidable policy is avoiding coping or fighting with America² (Saqafi Ameri, 1997: 26).

Inability of China and Russia in avoiding America influence in the region, made them to establish such organization. Thus, one of the most important goals of this organization is avoiding USA intervention in the region. Although, American military basis in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan was established at that time with the agreement of Russia, this decision was interpreted as selecting between bad and worse, because Russia should either put central Asia under the control of NATO (America) or should let Islamic extremists (Taliban) take the power in this countries and create the second Chechen for Moscow³. SCO executive secretary Zhang Deguang in response to the analysis that considers this organization as a military block, assured that this organization will never be turned into a

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military union and such thing is not written in its chart. He added in this regard:” not all we do results into military union and there is no intention of changing Shanghai Cooperation Organization to a close military unit, there is no doubt in this regard”.

During Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Saint Petersburg on June 7, 2002, regulation of the organization- a document determining the goals and principles of the structure and main fields of the activity of organization was approved. According to this regulation, the main goals of the organization are as the followings:

1. Improving the reciprocal trust between member countries
2. Developing extensive collaborations to keep and improve peace, security and stability in the region to change central Asia to peace, stability and Good-Neighborliness, improving reciprocal military trust and its facilitation, exchanging experiences in field of activities to restore peace and holding good seminars, exchange in bilateral and multilateral collaborations⁴.
3. Assistance to create new international political and economical system, democratic, fair and logical.
4. Fighting against illegal activities, common coping with international terrorism, separatism, drugs and weapon smuggle, illegal migration and extremism and all its aspects.
5. Supporting effective regional collaborations in political, commercial-economical, military, defensive, cultural, scientific and technical, education, energy, road and transportation, financial and credit and so on fields that are common interests.
6. Assistance for balanced and full-scaled economical growth.
7. Cultural and social development in the region.
8. Assistance to provide the main rights and freedoms of human beings in accordance with international duties of member countries and national rules and regulations of these countries.
9. Maintaining and developing relations with other countries and international organizations.
10. Regional security, trying to create regional security by peaceful resolution of all international disputes in the framework of united nation resolution.
11. Respect to sovereign principle, defending the sovereign principle in accordance with united nation charter, emphasis on the power of choice of political system, economical model and the path of economical development by each country, supporting united China policy and supporting the view of Russia about Chechen.
12. Common solution of the issues occurred in 21th century.

Besides the above goals, another goal being emphasized in establishment summit (2001) and they are the important goals of this organization, is respecting ant-ballistic missile contract. The contract that avoids the establishment of national missile defense system, is considered as the stability basis of global strategic and reduction of most of offensive weapons. Performing this goal is supporting the proposal of Uzbekistan to create a region without nuclear weapons of central Asia.

Since now, various things about the goals of establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization are mentioned but the goals of its founders are as the followings:

Goals of China

- Trying to create multi pole world and fighting against America Hegemony by being friend with Russia.
- Creating a barrier against NATO proceeding to western borders of China
- Creating a surrounding secure environment to improve reformations and economical development and systematic pass of central economy to free market economy.
- Creating a new political block with their centrality and Russia.
- Filling political gap in central Asia after the collapse of USSR without sudden ignorance of Russia.
- Changing central Asia to its controlled region
- Inclination to the leadership of third world
- Balancing in west and east development of the country by increasing trade with central Asia.
- Fulfilling their energy needs in the framework of strategy of variation of energy supply resources
- Creating an environment to transfer power from generation of charismatic leaders to techno generation-Bureaucratic.
- Being free of Islamic fundamentalists in the North West namely, Oighor region of autonomous republic of Xinjiang that wants to created eastern Turkestan and they have common border with Kazakhs and Kyrgyz people.
- Resolving separatism crisis of Taiwan
- Reducing the pressure of America and West to develop values and their priorities
- Increasing their share in maintain security and stability of north west borders

- Reducing economical dependency to America (The size of foreign trading of China with America in 2002 was more than 92 billion \$ of which, it consisted of 70% of China export to America and this shows vulnerability of China economy).

Goals of Russia

- Trying to effectively reduce the intervention of West namely, America and NATO in central Asia that is a strategic threat for Russia⁵ (Shirazi, 2000: 167).
- Trying to create multi-pole world by proving a condition equal to other great powers by calculating capability of China in the organization.
- Improving their international position and prestige.
- Balance in west-oriented and east-oriented activities of Russia
- Improving one of the most vulnerable surrounding and security environments in Far East and Middle East.
- Helping to achieve unity policy and being the best aid in central Asian countries.
- Creating a surrounding secure environment for more concentration on reforms and economical development.
- More attraction of economical and commercial collaborations of central Asia⁶
- Coping with religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism
- The issue of developing NATO to east
- Relations of America, Russia and criticism of western countries to the condition of human rights in that country.

Goals of central Asia countries

- Attaining more degree of independence by neutralizing negative intervention of China and Russia with each other.
- Attaining international prestige by attending in a multi-dimensional institution without needing to yield to political and human rights pre-requirements.
- Improving making government and internal stability
- Guarantee regional peace and stability
- Opening the path of China for two-way transit of goods
- Needing an international secure environment for more concentration to remove economical problems and continuing reforms.

Problems and challenges

Russia and China are the main members of the organization, thus any problem for each of them can be considered as a challenge for an organization. In case of any retreat and the absence of Russian military forces, the way to develop NATO to the region will be open. Russia is inclined to create in the region, geopolitical counterbalance to America but at the same time with close collaboration with China, it is always thinking about development of China in central Asia but now, relations structure and benefits balance are such that managers of Russia and other countries remained of USSR are obliged to ignore China's threats because they believe that Islamic fundamentalism and the possibility of transferring the government of central Asian countries to extremist Islamists is the most real and close danger.

Each of member countries is involved with ethnical, religious issues or both of them. China in Xinjiang has problem with Oighors and in Tibet with Buddhists. Middle East countries are encountered with the development of fundamentalism. In addition, the presence of Russian minorities who are supported by Russia has added the complexity of the problems. Although there are not serious ethnical tensions in common borders of the region, it seems that these tensions will be occurred in the region. Uzbeks in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan want to be allied with Uzbekistan and its major factor is not only ethnical belongings but also increasing economical and strategic importance of Uzbekistan. The image of Uzbekistan of itself as the center of "Big Turkistan" created some tensions and instabilities in the neighbors of this country and Russians living in northern part of Kazakhstan believe that these parts should be joined with Russia⁷ (Vaezi, 2007: 76).

Outside of the borders of commonwealth countries union, more than one million Uzbek are living in Afghanistan, about 500'000 people Turkmen are living in each of the following countries, Iran, Iraq and Turkey and about 2 million Tajik people are living in Afghanistan. Now, about 2 million Kazakhs are living in Xinjiang of china and about 8 million Oighors are living in this province. While about 250'000 Oighors are living in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Oighors are famous for their long-term fight to attain independence from china and

establishing an autonomous country called "Eastern Turkestan" that is including some regions of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Ethnic conflicts are occurred many years ago in Xinjiang province of China and China has used military forces in some of the conflicts. Thus, Chinese authorities are concerned about future instabilities arising from central Asia region or being supported from central Asia countries (Aidin, 2001: 162-163)⁸. Russia is also encountered with ethnic and separatism issues in Ghafghaz and on the other hand, growing divergence of Russia among commonwealth countries and occurrence of colored revolutions with the support of America caused that Russia feel the serious threats more close⁹ (Veladimir Lukin, 2005: 17).

Water crisis in central Asia is getting worst after environmental problems of Aral lake and this lake that was the fourth great lake in the world, due to the changes of regional irrigation system and increasing consumption of Amodarya and Sirdarya, is reduced about 40 % in the level and 66% in the volume. This reduction not only reduced the production of cotton and other agricultural products in the region, and it created serious sanitary problems for residents of the region and dispersion of salt and sand in the surrounding land, but also it caused that about 11'000 sqkm are added to the area of Ghareghom and Ghazalghom deserts (Kulayi, 2005: 47-48)¹⁰. Increasing death rate and respiratory diseases, reductions of average life, reduction of drinking water indicate the serious environmental problems in central Asia (Kit, 1994: 139)¹¹.

The presence of many springheads in central Asia region increased the power of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are changed into the countries with low water security (Foroughi, 2005: 215)¹². Although there was no serious conflict in central Asia region on water resources, due to the increase of the important of water resources on one hand and strong reduction of water resources in the region on the other hand has cause the serious tension in water resources in central Asia.

In fact, now international trend is done considerable without the cooperation of Shanghai organization. These statements about the condition in Afghanistan and formation of anti-terrorism international alliance and more the condition of Iraq, Balkan and other elements of instability are valid. As it is concerned with central Asia, increasing pressure from super regional powers (America, European Union, NATO extending to the east) oblige SCO to state itself as an independent actors. The mentioned goals are not fulfilled without any effort. The demand to this new union is not dependent just to the organization but here a definite international environment in which the best factor in economical and political intervention of the west is the main determiner. The decisions taken in relation to Iraq, modernization of united nation and regional indices clarify the issues. The style and method of underlying international relations determine whether Shanghai organization is effective or not?

Shortage of budget affects the activities of Shanghai organization. Undesirable economical condition of the major part of members increased the financial problems and it seems that SCO is encountered with problem in future. Sooner or later, internal political factors related to the change of political elites and political culture characteristics of the region will be effective. It seems that some factors such as different financial capacities of the members, border issues and super border characteristic of separatism movements, the lack of administrative and management records and so on create mental inadaptability among the members. In addition, there is not stable economical basis to create geo-strategic common environment of SCO. Some factors such as fighting against international terrorism, trade investments, access to information and West policy using bilateral relations channels with each of the members of SCO, avoids the unity of member states on key issues (Alexander, Pishin, 9).

The major activity of SCO is collaborating in security field. In the West, there is two perspectives about this organization namely, in Washington: inimical view and indifferent view. Some people say that by SCO, China and Russia they try to achieve counter force with America by anti-American alliance. Others believe that SCO is not a danger, it is not important and it is the result of vain advertisement activities of Beijing and Moscow to improve their international validity that rarely can play a role in anti-terrorism alliance with America as the head of alliance. None of these two theories is justified. On one hand, SCO never will be changed into an Anti-American alliance. Creating such unity is on the contrary to all the formal documents of the organization and above all, it is opposite to the benefits of organization members who are avidly interested in collaboration with America and West namely to fulfill their economical development goals. It seems that in Russia, China and central Asia countries, they are not inclined to be turned into invaluable coins in super power disputes. Fighting against drugs production and selling, is another activity that SCO member states have different views to it. When Iran seriously coped with drug trafficking to Europe, smugglers tried to find some solutions to reduce the costs of transferring drugs. The best alternative was in 1980s of USSR because its vulnerability was increased. After the collapse of USSR and its resulting tensions, the condition of central Asia region increased the motivation of smugglers to transfer the drugs from this path. Drug trafficking besides contaminating central Asia region, increased the number of organized crimes and arms trafficking in the region. Income gap along with strong economical depression and elimination of social security network caused that people were inclined toward drug trafficking (Aydin, 2001: 171).

In these countries, it seems that the condition of drugs production in Afghanistan is getting worse after the entrance of anti-terrorism alliance forces. Despite the support of foreign military forces to improve the current situation, Afghanistan government either can not or doesn't like to do something. At the same time, Afghan drug trafficking is increased to these countries and it is a serious threat for their security. President of Uzbekistan, Karimov in his speech in Summit of heads of central Asian countries collaboration organization on May 2004 stated his dissatisfaction about anti-terrorism alliance operation in Afghanistan and added that after the collapse of Taliban regime, opium production is increased in Afghanistan annually and it is the internal terrorism financial resource. The president of Tajikistan emphasized that after beginning anti-terrorist operation, production of drugs is increased 2.5 times. He added that this problem is not only our problem, but also it is the problem of West¹³. SCO member states signed agreements on cooperation in fighting drug trafficking, psychedelic substances and their initial materials that were signed in June 2004 in Tashkent are of great importance.

Border problems inside central Asia countries should not be ignored and according to the existing realities, the current national borders in central Asia in the second half of 1920s are determined unilaterally, from USSR and in the next year, Moscow except little changes didn't let any of republics of the region the right to review in this regard. Despite the determination of Kremlin some border conflicts and issues are occurred in central Asia and considerable part of these conflicts occurred in Farghana region that is important part of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan¹⁴. These countries are fighting against 50 border regions, Uzbekistan in most of common border regions with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan tried to lay mine¹⁵ and development of regional relations in the form of regional organizations including SCO can help to solve these conflicts. Some issues such as security, fighting against international terrorism, new challenges and dangers are mostly in the priority of the activity of SCO due to the condition of Afghanistan.

Political experts believe that the most important challenge of SCO at super regional and international level is political-security challenge being imposed by major actors of international system and other similar organizations. Europe besides USA is similar to the actors that are mostly dissatisfied of establishment of this organization and development of position due to various reasons. It seems that this organization destroyed the benefits of these actors and reduced their influence in this important and strategic region. On the other hand, besides these governments, organizations and treaties such as collaboration and security organization of Europe and NATO due to the reasons rooted in existence philosophy, defined performances and their formation structure, knows Shanghai organization a serious rival that tries to challenge it. In addition to super regional challenge, it seems that regional and internal challenge are involved. The historical disappointing experience and record of regional collaborations can be one of these challenges. The other challenges are different or conflicting goals and priorities of some of the members, the good relations that all members and observing members except Iran have with America; they can manifest SCO as failure in its mission or keep it as a passive organization.

According to the statements of M. Yuhung Yovan (one of the researchers of international studies institution of Shanghai) about SCO: The organization is encountered with some challenges; the first challenge is that how we should cope with any military and ideological intervention of America in central Asia? America with the excuse of fighting against terrorism developed its political and military influence in the region. Non-governmental organizations under the support of America increase their influence in urban regions. From institutional aspects, this organization is still weak and dispersed; secretariat of the organization doesn't have adequate budget and personnel. The benefits of the organization itself are not clear. The organization shouldn't be concentrated only on benefits of Russia and China but it should concentrate on benefits of central Asia. The third challenge of organization is the interaction with other regional and international organizations such as united nation, ASEAN, commonwealth countries and so on. Shanghai organization before creating special security arrangements, should interact with other organizations and existing regimes. The fourth issue is the manger of development of organization. Shanghai organization as a powerful organization tries to maintain and develop peace, stability and security in the organization. Today, many countries like to be fully the member of this organization¹⁶ and accepting membership is other issues of organization.

Another important issue is that although Shanghai organization is assessed as balancing and treaty factor against NATO treaty, the fact is that in case of divergence of Shanghai organization to military inclinations, it will be in the direction that Washington loves it and in fact it will impose a kind of arms competition in a new framework on the current world. The correct strategy is that instead of acting to production and treaty re-production equal to NATO treaty, strong political-propaganda fields are provided for the collapse of NATO treaty. But by probable direction of Shanghai organization to military inclinations, the environment of relations between the parties and even international relations are turned into a close environment on which military and security views are dominant and it brings new cold war between NATO and Shanghai¹⁷.

Conclusion

The conditions of region governments after the collapse of USSR provided background on which, collected the countries in the region together called Shanghai collaboration organization. Borders of USSR and China were always full of tensions or even at sometimes, critical, their border disputes were remained even after the collapse. The first attempts to solve this problem were made in the middle of 90. But it took a decade to resolve border issues of two parties.

The approach of viewing East of new leaders of Russia including Primakov and the underlying practicality on China policy making that always tried to remove tensions and problems that was necessary to continue economical growth, provide the required background in authorities of between two parties to solve border issues and creating good intention and understanding environment. At the beginning of establishment of People's Republic of China, this country faced with problems and challenges around the borders, islands, the regions under the control of previous imperialist governments and land disputes with neighboring countries. Here the most important issue for China is Taiwan that America arms supports and security contracts between this country and rulers of this island, added the complexity of this issue and made Chinese angry. Land disputes with India made the relation worsened during some decades but by wisdom of Chinese leaders, it didn't lead into extensive crises and inside China is encountered with Tibet separatism and Xinjiang.

Middle East countries were not ready for independence because at first, "they were not independent country before and they didn't have required experiences to play the role of an actor in international arena, second they didn't have required economical and political infrastructures to meet the demands of society and creating stability and social security. Central Asia countries have great concerns in social, cultural and economical dimensions. But most important concern of these countries is security issues. Russia is encountered with great social, political and economical problems and never had the capability to help Middle East countries. Thus, the gap in the region encouraged other global powers (America and Europe to be in the region).

The fact that justified the presence of America in the region more than any other factor, is the new wave to fight against terrorism after September 11. Attacking Afghanistan under the sovereignty of Taliban required regional supports that Middle East was the best choice due to its proximity with Afghanistan. The countries in the region in need of west aids, gave some bases to America. Russia and China used the new wave against Terrorism to suppress Chechens and Oighores. The presence of USA in the region, its monopolization in international arena took Russia and China in the same position and they were inclined to a multi polar world.

Fighting against the presence of America in the region and extension of NATO to the east, improving China and Russia positions against America hegemony and Middle East countries with the motivations of continuance of peace and stability, economical development, fighting against religious extremists and terrorism and stability against the wave of colored revolutions caused that SCO is established by these countries. It is natural that some countries like China (permanent member) and India (observing member) to provide health, sanitary, education and security and food such big populations can not be ideological and they will inclined to collaborate with other countries including America as the super power in the world and they search their resources more in integration in global economy and joining global process. The future world is the economical world and it is not military world, if some of countries want to attend this organization by ideological thoughts, collaboration is not possible. The most important issue is that the organization and the continuance of collaboration of its members are very unclear and its dissolution or changes in the structure, member or arena are possible. The lack of mechanism of accepting new members and changing observant member to the main member was with the request of Iran to improve the situation of observer to the condition of main member of challenge for organization and they can neither give positive nor negative answer. This issue is dependent upon the future of organization, namely China and Russia. The problems of Pakistan and its disintegration and future of Afghanistan and the condition of Turkmenistan and disagreement of Uzbekistan as an effective country in the field of this organization can change the future of organization. Disagreement of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to prevent the water exit to these two countries is the greatest challenge of organization. The agreement of Russia to build dam and presenting the required credits of control plans to the mentioned countries, made Uzbekistan angry. The inclination of Uzbekistan to the collaboration with America to fight against Russia and Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and not attending summits of mass security organization with Russia all show bleak future of organization that encountered the organization with big challenges. Thus, we should not hope that a great organization with mechanisms of coping with the West like the one that occurred in cold war era, would be formed¹⁸.

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