

Significant Role of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in the Context of Pakistan's Efforts to Eradicate Terrorism

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Keywords	Abstract
Counterterrorism, Pakistan, Regional Security, Regional Cooperation, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Terrorism.	<i>When the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 2001, its objective was to collaborate in the war against terrorism and address challenges related to regional security. Its covert mission in the post-9/11 world is to counter the expanding power of the US government throughout the region. The organization's structures were later enhanced by the inclusion of two nuclear-armed countries, boasting strong economies and sizable standing armies. Owing to this critical expansion, Pakistan now has an improved opportunity to work with other SCO members to promote regional peace and stability through economic and military cooperation. In addition, the SCO will allow Pakistan to improve its ties with almost all of its neighbors. To effectively present potential solutions and offer policymakers appropriate guidelines regarding these issues, this study provides the necessary data to draw conclusion on the core matters under consideration. Furthermore, it offers actionable recommendations based on its findings.</i>

INTRODUCTION

The People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and several former Central Asian republics have begun a political, economic, and security partnership through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). It was established in 1996 due to agreements reached between these countries (Wani, 2023). Uzbekistan joined the group in 2001, and on June 15, 2001, the organization was formally renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to cooperate to enhance regional security and fight against terrorism (Hao, 2023). Its ideal objective in the post-9/11 era is to counter the US government's growing influence in the area. The SCO was quickly established due to the two great nations' dislike for the NATO military, which was headquartered in their backyards. Pakistan and India, two major regional players, had the opportunity to apply for membership in 2006 and 2014, respectively, and cannot afford to ignore this major development. At the 15th SCO Summit in the Ufa capital city of the Republic of Bashkortostan, Russia, on July 10, 2015, Pakistan and India were awarded full membership after ten years of deliberation (Qadir & Rehman, 2016; Yuan, (2023). China and Russia have been attempting to restore relations among their rival South Asian countries ever since the SCO was founded. Russia backs India's candidacy for membership, while China supports Pakistan's. Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus, and Mongolia are the other observers (Sajjanhar, 2022). The SCO aims to promote the nations of Central Asia's cultural and economic efforts (Yuan, (2023). Over the years, the organization has focused a significant amount of its attention on Central Asian security

concerns, even if it has no plans of formalising as a military organization similar to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (Chakraborty, 2017; Zhao et al., 2024).

Since its formation, the SCO has effectively protected the region's development by guaranteeing the defence, political, economic, and social stability of its member nations as well as their territorial integrity (Azizi, 2024). However, as it progresses, the SCO will be faced with dealing with several major challenges, such as different and often conflicting agendas, conflicts of interest among member countries, institutional deficiencies in the SCO system, and a lack of practical collaboration. Fighting terrorism is the main objective of the SCO, an international intergovernmental organization. Because of the characteristics of terrorist activity within the SCO, including a rise in terrorist operations and the presence of terrorist organisations outside, members of the organization must cooperate to combat terrorism. The regional anti-terror tools of the SCO are operated in collaboration with member nations as a result of the establishment of a strong legal framework by the organization (Kulaga, 2024). With an emphasis on security details, member countries discuss issues about politics, diplomacy, the military, and justice as they connect with terrorism. Since its inception, the SCO has played a key role in the prosperity of the region by preserving the political, social, and economic stability of its member countries as well as their territorial integrity and security (Garbuzarova, 2021). In this regard, systemic inefficiencies and functional gaps in cooperation within the SCO pose a serious challenge to the organization's pursuit of divergent goals, which often results in the achievement of conflicting goals and conflicts of interest among member countries.

Objective

- To explore the role of shanghai cooperation organization in the context of Pakistan's efforts to eradicate terrorism.

Research Question

- What was the role of shanghai cooperation organization in the context of Pakistan's efforts to eradicate terrorism?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research methodology and an interpretative philosophical perspective. Social phenomena can be studied using various types of qualitative approaches. The literature research method was used in this investigation. The literature review methodology is often known as the "non-contact method", as, in contrast to other qualitative research methods, it depends on earlier studies and their findings in order to understand a phenomenon (Khan et al., 2021). After reviewing the existing literature, this study used a narrative approach to arrive at its conclusions.

The researcher examined several papers that were relevant to the topic and reported them under various headings in order to conduct a systematic review of the literature. The researchers have divided the literature into distinct headings based on the many components of the study. These literature reviews make up the remainder of the paper, which is then followed by the main conclusions drawn from those studies. The researchers concluded their findings at the end.

LITERATURE ANALYSIS

The literature analysed for this study is presented below. To present the studies more systematically, they are divided into different headings.

China's Attitude towards Border Security: The founding of the SCO can be connected with China's change of viewpoint on border defence in the 1990s, during which time it implemented a border stability plan termed a "modern approach to neighbourhood security". Beijing's "new security definition", which was presented in 1996, can be summed up as an effort to give up outdated speech and place more emphasis on cooperation and mutual gain (Yuan, 2023). Before this, the Chinese leadership had avoided legally binding agreements on border demarcation and territorial disputes with neighbours in the hopes that the balance of power would eventually shift in their favour and better conditions could be worked out. This policy changed when the government of China noticed that the frameworks of agreements with adjacent nations are helpful because they facilitate the prediction of regional relations. All Central Asian states, such as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, consented to cede territories to China (Vanderhill et al., 2025); in Kyrgyzstan, this led to violent protests in 2002 that claimed six lives. Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Tajikistan have all signed border agreements (2002); these treaties also improved the environment for resolving border disputes (Cheng, 2018). As the number of border crossings increased and the movement of people increased, additional restrictions were required, necessitating increased cooperation between security mechanisms.

Potential Challenges Arising from India and Pakistan's Inclusion in the SCO: The long-term survival of South Asia may be in danger if the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) only supports India. The internal relationships between the SCO's member countries will become more complicated if Pakistan joins. If both Pakistan and India join the SCO without strengthening their mutual connections, the SCO is likely to face difficulties as a result of their disagreements and conflicts. Many contradictions and problems in the broader region include both Central and South Asia. Including Pakistan and India in the SCO may shift the organization's geopolitical power. It might be detrimental to expand an organization or invest more material capital than is necessary (Rauf & Tariq, 2024). Two of the largest neighbours of the SCO are India and Pakistan. The functional structure of the organization may be violated by the SCO. Because both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons, the SCO's initiatives to regulate nuclear weapons may be in danger. As stated otherwise, it is improbable that the SCO will affect Pakistan's and India's stances (Berdibaevich et al. 2017; Rauf & Tariq, 2024). Following are India's regional priorities in opposition to Pakistan.

- a. Utilise the energy potential of the region. Achieve your economic and geostrategic objectives.
- b. To restrict Pakistan's influence in the area and stop the creation of a Muslim bloc.
- c. To protect India's interests from enemies like China, Russia, and the United States.
- d. India is trying to counteract Pakistan's influence in the Central Asian countries by improving relations with Iran and Afghanistan. India is happy to be helping Afghanistan's armed forces with their training needs. Many Indian journalists are working in Afghanistan, and Afghan media and students collaborate. In the information technology sector, India has also been helpful (Ganaie & Ganaie, 2022). India is also taking advantage of the Afghan market by working on reconstructing projects there and exporting cheaper Indian goods. From Afghanistan, India may easily cause security issues for Pakistan and could be a threat to Pakistan from two

angles. Any Muslim bloc can simply avoid developing a soft spot for Pakistan given India's involvement in Afghanistan (Kumar, 2022).

- e. She built a military installation in Farkhor, Tajikistan. Assist in the upkeep and repair of military equipment.
- f. India's desire to join the SCO has the backing of Kazakhstan. India and the US are collaborating in the oil and gas sector, the pharmaceutical industry, the military, and the information technology field.
- g. India is working with Kyrgyzstan and China to establish a software development and training centre (Adnan & Fatima, 2015).

Looking Forward: Significant Challenges and an Extensive Journey: Only in three cases can this objective be achieved. Developing and implementing cooperative interventions is the first practical target. Empty discourse and vague objectives without concrete steps, especially when it comes to financial issues, will never work (Khan et al., 2023). The second is to keep up market principles like fair treatment, reciprocity and equity, reciprocal openness, and a combination of multilateral and bilateral approaches. Just thinking about your interests is a mistake because it further distances you from the customer base. The third step is to develop goals and teamwork. While early investment is crucial, participants must refrain from overextending themselves and doing the same construction twice. The traditional defence advantages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will soon be maintained. Nonetheless, cooperation in this area needs to be improved if the company wants to build on its previous accomplishments (Khan et al., 2023). The RATS should be swiftly merged to better serve its purpose and enhance relevant cooperation in creating the SCO's list of terrorist organisations and individuals wanted, as well as in standardising common counterterrorism measures (Lukin et al., 2025; Tanaka, 2025). To prevent the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the potential for an arms race, the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (CANWFZ) program ought to be categorised as an advanced regional initiative (Gautam, 2024).

To achieve the above-discussed peaceful transition of the region, further anti-drug trafficking measures should be launched, along with strong participation in UN efforts to establish a drug-free area around Afghanistan (Lukin et al., 2025). The SCO can only be genuinely helpful to the stability of its member states and the entire region of Central Asia if it takes proactive measures to incorporate ongoing initiatives such as joint research and training initiatives against terrorism, joint counterterrorism exercises (including rapid response and search and rescue), and support for Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts after the war (Khan et al., 2023). The effort aims to combat cross-border violence of various kinds, including illegal migration, drug trafficking, and gun smuggling. Knowledge about terrorism in East, South, Southeast, and Central Asia is exchanged (Lukin et al., 2025). It is important to proceed cautiously when expanding organization and external communication. A rising number of nations indicated interest in joining the SCO, working with it, or becoming observers after Pakistan, Mongolia, India, and Iran were accepted as observers. In light of this, in addition to the SCO's cooperation, the Shanghai Summit directed the SCO secretariat to supervise the implementation of agreements on cooperation between the SCO and other institutions. Accordingly, the Council of Coordinators of the Council of SCO Member States was also charged with coming up with recommendations about the process for admitting new members (Seiwert, 2023).

Tension between India and Two Members of the SCO: Both Pakistan and China, who are part of the SCO, are in dispute with India over the border. Since its creation, the country has

been the target of cross-border terrorism. India has not been able to resolve the matter alone up to this point. Entering a group whose main objective is to combat terrorism, extremism, and radicalism is therefore encouraged. India is now able to cooperate with the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Framework (RATS) to combat terrorism (Chen, 2023). India and other SCO members signed a revised draft of the organization's first anti-terrorist convention during a meeting (MacHaffie, 2026). It is now more critical than ever to address the security situation in Afghanistan and South Asia after the withdrawal of international forces (Stepanova, 2022). The recent wave of suicide bombers in Kabul that killed over 100 people was the most horrifying act of the last few years. If Afghanistan remains unstable, the security situation in India and the surrounding area may deteriorate. As a result, all SCO members will cooperate to combat terrorism. Third, India has a great energy need due to its developing market status. Resource-rich Central Asian nations could be good sources of electricity for India. India's admission will enable it to carry out its connected Central Asian policy. Using the SCO to exert pressure on Pakistan to develop a connection with Central Asia, India can now revert to its previous position in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project. Pakistan hopes to improve its positive political standing in South Asia by promoting the permanent members of the SCO as "impressive diplomacy and a breakthrough" (Wani, 2022).

Regional Security Integration: The founding members of the SCO believe that better regional security and integration in South Asia will result from cooperation between India and Pakistan (Rauf & Tariq, 2024). They have thereby increased their Shanghai Cooperation Organisation membership for the first time since their formation. Hua Chunying, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, expressed hope that Pakistan and India will uphold the principles of friendship and good neighbourly relations, which are crucial to the SCO (Hindustan Times, 2017). It was believed that the two countries would strengthen their ties and bring the SCO back to life (Khan & Afridi, 2025). Regarding the political unrest in South and Central Asia, Chinese leaders believe it is also time for China and India to cooperate and assist one another. China hopes that India will support its One Belt, One Road programme when it goes through Pakistani-Occupied Kashmir (POK). China's economy could greatly gain from this regional connectivity (Khan & Afridi, 2025). China's intention to build strong commercial relations with both India and Pakistan is evident from their decision to join the SCO. Chinese spokesman Hua Chunying stated that China and India ought to prioritise cooperation and back one another's development objectives during a press briefing in Beijing (Dawn, 2017).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: The recently proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be beneficial to all cooperative organisations that are Shanghai Future Members (Rab et al., 2023). To completely understand the "Shanghai Spirit", Pakistan must collaborate with other SCO members to create favourable settings for cooperation and consensus (Yaqoob & Qureshi, 2025). Pakistan balances its relations with the US through the SCO as well. Since the Trump administration took office, Pakistan has had no relations with the United States. However, Pakistan has become less valuable to the US as a result of Afghanistan's military withdrawal (Munshi, 2022). Pakistan is forming partnerships with other powerful nations like China and Russia as a result (Yaqoob & Qureshi, 2025). Through the SCO, Pakistan has the most robust platform for cooperation with these nations. Pakistan may easily deepen its relations with its neighbours in Central and South Asia with the help of the organization (Rab et al., 2023).

Peace Mission of SCO: Despite good intentions and a shared desire to combat the "three evils", the lack of unity and cooperation among SCO partner nations remains a challenge, especially in the defence and security domains (Yuan, 2023). This is evident in the decision of whether or not to take part in the highly acclaimed yearly joint exercise known as "Mission of Peace" (Yuan, 2023). Ultimately, the success of the organization depends on individual member states' adherence to the principle of voluntarism (Song, 2014; Lukin et al. 2025).

CONCLUSION

Members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an influential international organization, cooperate actively in the areas of politics, the economy, and security. Its rise in politics, institutions, and economic spheres reflect its growing global presence. The region represented by the SCO is one of the world's hotbeds of rapid multiploidisation. Since gaining full membership, Pakistan and India have extended the organization's geopolitical impact southward to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

However, bilateral relations between two of the organization's key partners, China and Russia, remain crucial to the SCO's overall development and effectiveness. Meanwhile, the United States poses significant challenge to the organization, despite having a negligible physical presence in the region. Under the guidance of Pakistan and India, the organization's expanded military and economic strength could create new opportunities for regional stability, economic growth, and progress.

In terms of security, SCO member states can benefit from the vast counterterrorism experience of Pakistan's armed forces, particularly its army. To withstand further terrorist threats, neither the Central Asian Republics nor the subcontinent can survive on their own. As the SCO's impact and popularity increase, its institutional maturity will naturally define the involvement of other regional countries. Ultimately, the SCO is positioned to progressively restore a balance of power, reversing the shift towards a unipolar world dominated by the US in recent decades.

Acknowledgement: Sincere thanks to anonymous reviewers and the editor whose insightful comments helped me to improve this paper.

Authors Contributions: Both authors contributed equally to this study, including the conceptualization, data collection, critical data examination, drafting and refining of the writing structure and style. Both authors revised, proofread, and approved the final version of this research paper.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest that could affect the objectivity or results of this research. This study conducted independently and free from external influence, control or financial relationships regarding the research subject.

Funding Information: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: The data supporting the findings of this research are available online.

Research Ethics Statement: We followed all relevant research guidelines and properly attributed all cited material used in this study.

Generative AI statement: The authors declare that they did not use generative AI to write or create this paper.

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