

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Geopolitical Security and Economic Cooperation

Saeed Azizi

School of Politics and Public Management, Qufu Normal University, Qufu, China

Email: azizi_saeed@qfnu.edu.cn

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Abstract

This article delves into the complex interaction between China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), exploring their roles in global geopolitics, security collaboration, and economic cooperation. The BRI, often referred to as the New Silk Road, represents a remarkable effort to connect nations and reshape the global economic landscape, promoting connectivity and collaboration. Within this narrative, the SCO emerges as a pivotal participant, evolving from its origins in Central Asian security to encompass a broad spectrum of social, economic, and security concerns. With India, Pakistan, and Iran joining as full members, the SCO now represents almost half of the world's population and a significant GDP share, promising transformative impacts on trade, security, and regional development. On security matters, the SCO has demonstrated its commitment to combating terrorism, extremism, and separatism through joint military exercises and intelligence sharing. The establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) has been instrumental in addressing security challenges and fostering regional stability. Economically, the SCO has shifted its focus to promote an integrated economic space, facilitating the free flow of goods, technology, services, and capital among member states. Under President Xi Jinping's leadership, China's Belt and Road Initiative aims to revive ancient trade routes and foster shared destinies among nations, connecting over four billion people and a substantial GDP share. Beyond economic development, the BRI also seeks to enhance domestic and regional security, reducing reliance on maritime routes for energy supply. This article concludes that the collaborative efforts of the BRI and SCO hold the promise of a more interconnected and prosperous world in which diversity and cooperation over-

come adversity.

Keywords

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Three Evils, Economy, Security, Central Asia

1. Introduction

The interaction between global powers and regional powers has become increasingly multifaceted in the complex landscape of global geopolitics and economic cooperation. The realm of international relations is one in which the concept of “perplexity” truly comes to life as the intricacies of diplomatic relations and economic ventures continually evolve, presenting complex challenges and opportunities for countries. China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) lies at the heart of this dynamic—a massive endeavor that transcends borders and reshapes the global economic stage. The BRI, often referred to as the New Silk Road, is a captivating narrative of connectivity and collaboration on an unprecedented scale in modern history. It embodies the spirit of diversification and cooperation, weaving together nations, cultures, and economies into a vibrant tapestry of shared interests and mutual development. In a world where uniformity often prevails, the BRI’s burst of innovation and ambition is a testament to the boundless possibilities of global engagement. But what role does the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) play in this grand geopolitical security and economic cooperation narrative? This complex question takes us deep into the heart of contemporary global affairs, where the SCO emerges as a pivotal player in shaping the destinies of nations and regions. As we navigate the complexities of this relationship and delve into its intricacies, we uncover a story of security collaborations, economic integrations, and the relentless pursuit of a shared vision. This paper seeks to address the dynamics of China’s Belt and Road Initiative and illuminate the ever-evolving role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the intricate geopolitics and global economics.

2. Background on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

One of the most significant facets of China’s foreign policy in recent years is its increased engagement in multilateral diplomacy and organizations. The SCO stands out as perhaps the most prominent multilateral security institution in Central Asia, and China has played a vital role in its establishment and development. For over two decades, China has actively fostered interactions and collaborations with the former Soviet republics in Central Asia, primarily through regional groups like the Shanghai Five and its successor, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Jia, 2007). During the years 1996 and 1997, Russia,

China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan signed an agreement that established the “Shanghai Five” to foster trust, border delimitation, and good neighborly relations between these five countries. In June 2001, Uzbekistan joined the “Shanghai Five”, and the six countries signed the declaration to establish the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO continues to evolve into a stable representative unit, which has broadened its remit to cooperating on social, economic, and security considerations (Kalra & Saxena, 2007). In June 2017, the Head of State Council of SCO in Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan, gave full membership to the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2023).

Both countries have become unconditional signatories to all SCO commitments and documents, aiming to constructively strengthen and develop cooperation within the SCO organization’s framework (Alimov, 2018). By joining Iran to SCO, full member countries reach nine. The full Member States are the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, the Republic of Uzbekistan. At the same time, three states are Observer, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, Mongolia. Aslo fourteen Dialogue Partners, the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the State of Qatar, the State of Kuwait, the Republic of Maldives, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Turkey, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2017). Besides joining the countries to SCO now the total population of the SCO countries will reach almost 3.5 billion. This accounts for nearly half of the world’s population, and the combined GDP is estimated to be more than 25 percent of the global total (Khan, 2018) (Figure 1). The SCO provides all member states an opportunity to work together and increase bilateral and multilateral trade and defense relations for the development of the region. If the SCO’s success continues, it will change the lives of 45 percent of the world’s population, as we can say, a significant achievement in the planet’s development. In a comprehensive view, the SOC has focused on two phases of security and economic cooperation. However, The SCO aims to promote cooperation among its member states in various areas, including security, economy, trade, technology, and culture. The SCO also has several mechanisms and groups, such as the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) and the SCO Business Council, that are designed to enhance cooperation in specific areas (Figure 2).

2.1. Economic Phase

Although SCO’s fundamental goal was in security fields, cooperation between countries expanded to the economic arena. The SCO will most likely succeed in

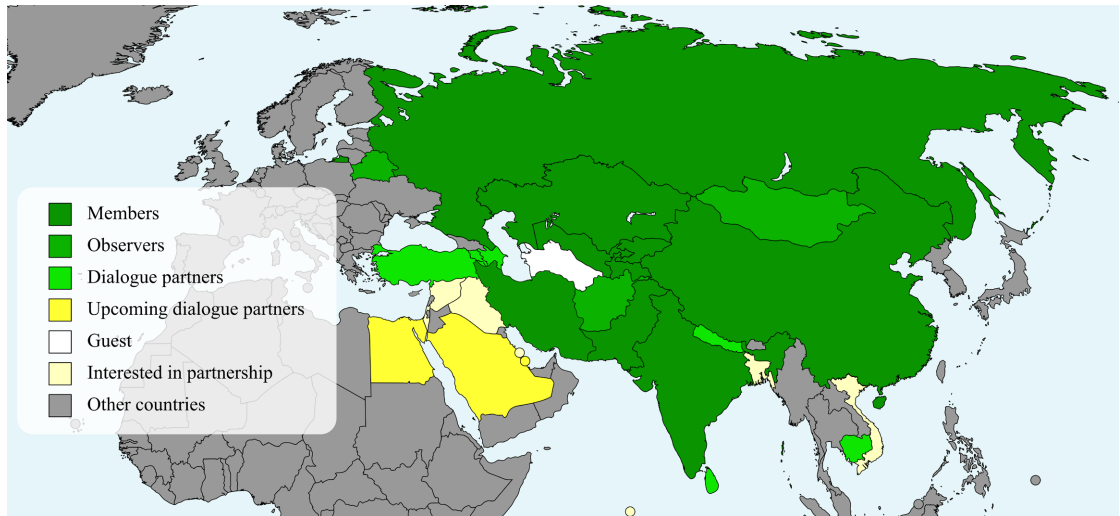


Figure 1. SCO members states.

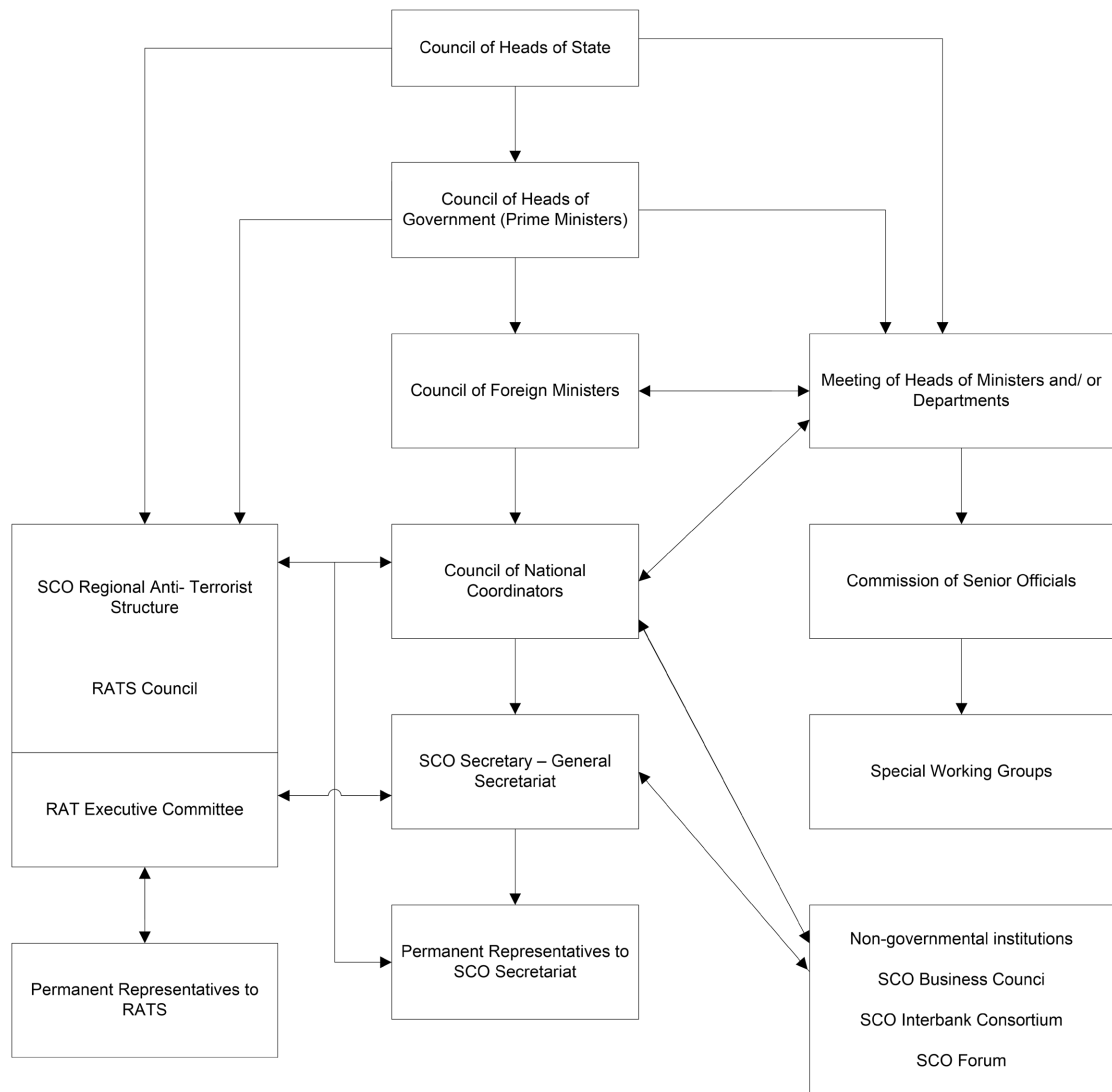


Figure 2. SCO structure.

expanding its economic agenda and promoting economic cooperation and integration among member countries (Dwivedi, 2006). SCO economic collaboration is designed to create an integrated economic zone for developing impoverished countries, focusing on multilateral trade, investment, transportation, and energy policies (Hawkins & Love, 2006). Chinese interest in the SCO mainly focuses on widening access to Central Asian countries' energy resources to diversify China's imports (Harun, 2007). Besides, China and the other SCO members are already working on 127 joint projects covering trade, agriculture, technology, telecommunications, environment, health, investments, customs, finance, taxation, transportation, energy, education, and other areas of mutual interest. The SCO goal in economic cooperation is to realize the free flow of service, goods, technology, and capital among SCO members (Sun, 2007).

The SCO has engaged in substantial economic cooperation over the years, contributing to its growing influence in global trade. Its share of global trade has risen from 5.4 percent in 2001 to 17.5 percent in 2020, with a global trade value of \$6.06 trillion in 2020. Despite fluctuations due to global financial crises and the COVID-19 pandemic, SCO global trade has shown steady growth. The eight member states of the SCO are home to 41 percent of the world's population and contribute 24 percent to the world's GDP.

China and other member states of the SCO have achieved significant growth in trade cooperation over the past two decades. The total trade value has increased 19.2 times, with an average annual growth rate of 17.1 percent. China's trade value with other member states has grown from \$12.2 billion in 2001 to \$245.3 billion in 2020. China has become the largest trading partner of Uzbekistan and Pakistan, the second-largest trading partner of Russia and India, the third-largest trading partner of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, and the fourth-largest trading partner of Kyrgyzstan. The types of commodities exported to other SCO member states have been continuously enriched, with industrially manufactured products dominating. China's crude oil and metal ore imports from other SCO member states were \$28.8 billion and \$10 billion, respectively, in 2020 (Figures 3-5) (Yao, 2022).

The economic safety of a country is extraordinarily critical for its resilience, balance, and capacity to cope with internal and external security challenges. It is closely related to country-wide protection and is a crucial issue for international locations nearby and worldwide. Central Asian nations must order economic security and establish mechanisms to shield their economic plans via the SCO and BRI, each of which can provide significant advantages.

2.2. Security Phase

The SCO's membership includes some of the world's largest oil producers and consumers of energy, and security is an essential issue for collaboration (Sznajder, 2006). The SCO security cooperation focused on fighting Three Evils (terrorism, extremism, and separatism), countering information security, drug and

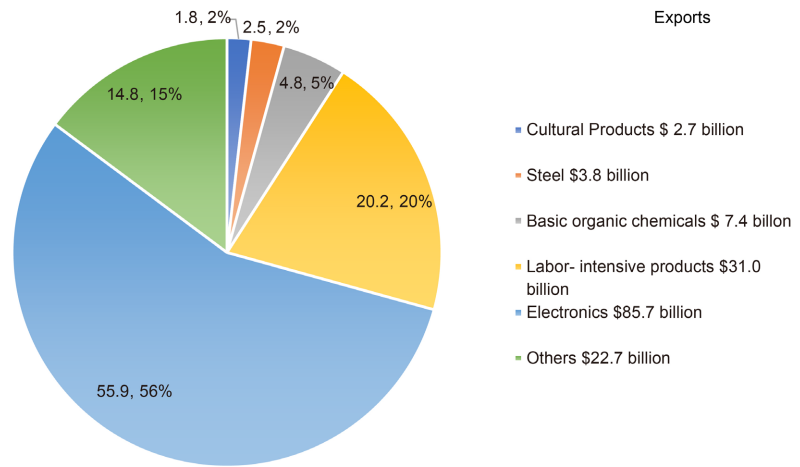


Figure 3. China's exports with SCO countries.

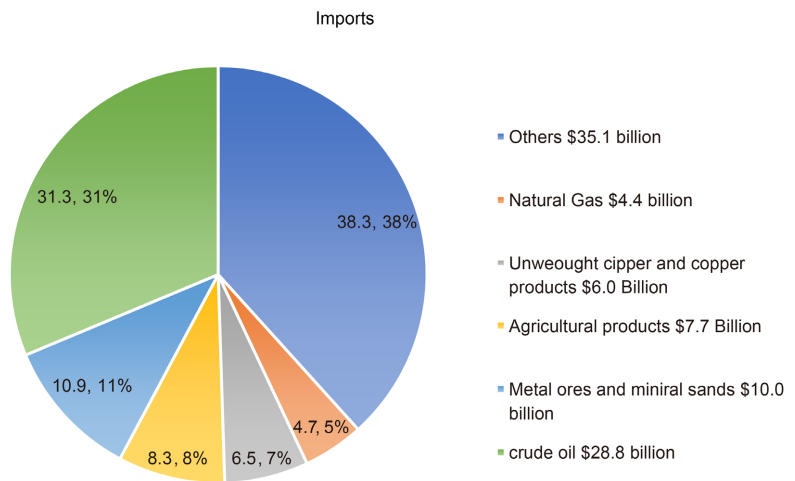


Figure 4. China's imports with SCO countries.

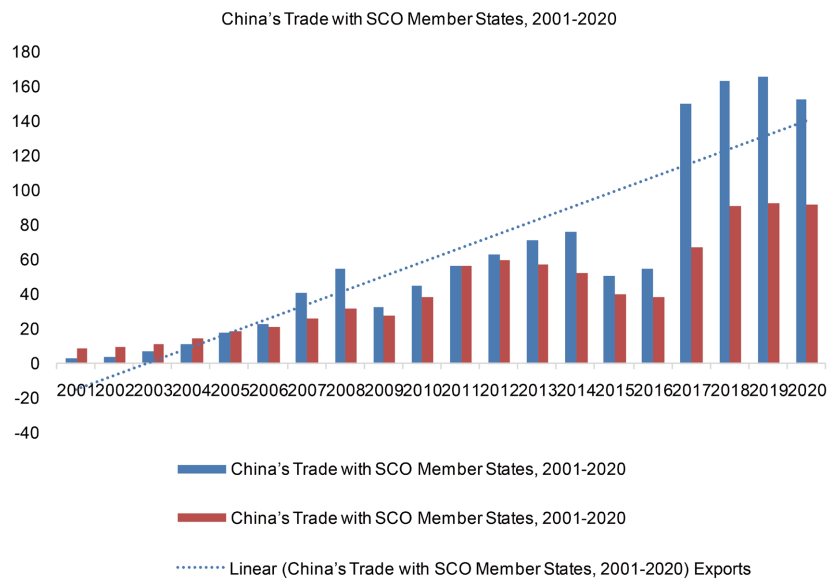


Figure 5. China trade with SCO countries.

weapons trafficking, illegal immigration, financial security, internet-based, and organized crime (Grainger, 2014). Whereas these “three evil forces” damage all member states, the SCO created a security institution under the name The Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), based in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. The RATS activities include analyzing regional terrorist movements, exchanging information about terrorist threats, advising on counter-terrorism policies, and sharing intelligence on regional security issues (Koolae & Tishehyar, 2013). The Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) is an excellent resource to fight against three evils: terrorism, separatism, and extremism, which are considered threats to regional stability, peace, and security. RATS also strengthen cooperation with other issues, such as drug trafficking and illegal migration. Furthermore, RATS is essential in solving security challenges in Central Asia (Koolae & Tishehyar, 2013). China and Russia contribute military and policing aid to the regional states to reduce drug smuggling, increase border controls, share intelligence, and hunt down terrorist networks. China and Russia have also combined military patrols to enhance regional security (Torjesen, 2008), which will be discussed more in the following part of this paper.

3. Combating the “Three Evils” in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

In collaboration with neighboring countries, China has established a robust mechanism to combat terrorism, ethnic separatism, and religious extremism called the “Three Evil Forces”. This joint effort involves China and member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) working within the SCO framework to address these security challenges. One of the primary objectives of the SCO is to enhance security and stability through collective action, with a specific focus on countering the Three Evils (Dupont, 2007). Additionally, the SCO addresses non-traditional security concerns such as cross-border crime, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, and regional terrorist activities (Sun, 2007). The significance of this initiative was underscored on June 15, 2001, when the terms and definitions related to these “Three Evil Forces” were outlined. These forces employ violence against governments and ordinary citizens, attempting to alter behaviors, borders, or established norms. Their actions substantially threaten international peace and security, making it imperative for the SCO to address them comprehensively (Ambrosio, 2008). China has been actively participating in strengthening this fight against the “Three Evils” within the SCO framework. Joint military exercises and coordinated efforts among SCO member nations have become crucial in demonstrating the determination and capabilities of SCO countries to combat these threats. In a 2004 statement, President Hu Jintao stressed the SCO’s role in countering the “Three Evils” along with drug trafficking and international crime, which are also incorporated into the SCO’s charter (Carroll, 2011). China and Russia have taken a leading role within the SCO in launching a concerted effort against these “Three Evil Forces”, including terrorism, separatism, and extremism. This cooperative strategy involved anti-terrorist

cooperation agreements between China and Central Asian republics during the early 2000s (Aris, 2009). While actual combat operations by the SCO forces in Central Asia have been limited, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been actively engaged in joint anti-terrorist military exercises (Bolonina, 2019). Notable examples include the first-ever joint exercises with Kyrgyz military forces in October 2002 under the name Exercise-01 and the multinational "Coalition 2003" exercise in August 2003, involving troops from five SCO member countries (Blasko, 2010). These military exercises testify to the commitment of SCO member nations in the battle against the "Three Evil Forces". China has consistently participated in these joint military activities, highlighting the cooperative spirit within the SCO.

3.1. SCO's Military Exercises: Strengthening Security and Cooperation

In August 2003, troops from five SCO member countries, including China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, participated in the "Coalition 2003" anti-terrorist maneuver along the Kazakhstan-China border. China further reinforced its commitment by conducting joint anti-terrorist military exercises with Russia under the code name "Peace Mission 2005", which commenced in Vladivostok, Russia, and extended to East China's Shandong Peninsula (Xinhua, 2017). The collaboration extended to other SCO member nations, with joint exercises taking place in locations like Tajikistan (Coordination-2006), Kazakhstan (Tian-shan Mountain No. 1), and a larger-scale "Peace Mission 2014" at China's Zhurihe Training Base. These exercises involved multiple SCO countries, including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, demonstrating a united front against terrorism. Subsequent exercises, such as "Peace Mission 2016" in Kyrgyzstan and "SCO Peace Mission 2018" in Russia, emphasized training in urban counter-terrorism scenarios, fostering trust and interoperability among SCO member nations' armed forces (Bin, 2015). In September 2021, India joined the SCO joint military exercise known as "Peace Mission-2021." This exercise aimed to foster close relations between SCO member states and enhance the abilities of military leaders to command (Anushka, 2020). Also, The SCO was planning to hold the "Peace Mission 2023" counter-terrorism drills in Russia's Central Military District in the Chelyabinsk Region (Anushka, 2020; India Today, 2021).

So, the SCO's military exercises, undertaken in collaboration with China and other member nations, serve as a cornerstone for strengthening regional security and cooperation. These exercises underscore the collective commitment to combatting terrorism, extremism, and separatism while enhancing trust and interoperability among the armed forces of SCO member states. The SCO's multifaceted approach, encompassing military exercises, intelligence-sharing through RATS, and cooperation on various security challenges, bolsters regional stability and peace, aligning with China's broader objectives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In parallel to these exercises, the SCO established the Regional Anti-terrorist Structure (RATS) to gather, analyze, and share pertinent informa-

tion, build databases of terrorist networks, and maintain connections with other security organizations.

3.2. SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS): A Hub for Security Cooperation

SCO has also created the Regional Anti-terrorist Structure (RATS) to collect, analyze, and share relevant information, develop databases of terrorist networks, and maintain connections with other security organizations. The SCO's Secretary-General declared that the gathering would lead to such activities regularly. Besides Three Evils, other transnational issues like illegal narcotics, arms trafficking, and unlawful migration inside the area have been distinguished by the SCO nation members to act upon collectively (Wallace, 2014). The security institution of RATS is based in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. RATS activates analyses of the environmental terrorist movement, exchanges information about terrorist threats, advises counter-terrorism policies, and shares intelligence on domestic threats. RATS is an excellent resource to fight against three evils: terrorism, separatism, extremism, and counter threats, which are dangerous for regional stability, peace, and security to strengthen cooperation with other problems like drug trafficking and illegal migration. Besides, this security institution, RATS, is significant in solving security challenges in Central Asia (Koolae & Tishehyar, 2013). The functional objectives of RATS are multifold: 1) To enhance anti-terrorist cooperation within the SCO region and strengthen collaboration with other international organizations focused on countering terrorism, separatism, and extremism. 2) To develop international projects aimed at countering terrorism, separatism, extremism, and radicalism, including cooperation with the United Nations Security Council, its Anti-terrorist Committee, and other global organizations, to establish robust systems for managing global challenges and threats. 3) To gather and analyze information related to the "Three Evil Forces". Member states of the SCO are expected to consistently contribute data to create a comprehensive information database that can further enhance anti-terrorism efforts within the SCO region. 4) To plan and organize international conferences dedicated to addressing terrorism and other territorial threats, facilitating the exchange of ideas and valuable information, and fostering further cooperation in countering regional security challenges (Nurgaliyev, 2008). Over the past two decades, various SCO member states have collaborated on a series of joint counter-terrorism military exercises, as mentioned earlier. These exercises have proven instrumental in shaping the collective response to terrorism, extremism, and separatism. China, in particular, has played a pivotal role in these military initiatives (International Federation for Human Rights, 2012). These joint military exercises, an integral part of the SCO's efforts, are essential for the region's security and safeguarding of the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The activities of terrorist organizations, religious extremists, and national separatist forces pose a significant threat to implementing the BRI, making them the region's most pressing non-traditional security challenge (Yuan, 2023). These

extremist groups, despite differences in political objectives, organizational structures, personnel, and activities, share a common characteristic, such as opposition to secular governments and the advocacy of establishing Islamic states. The changing international anti-terrorism landscape and evolving regional security dynamics have led to these extremist organizations forming cross-cutting connections, decentralizing, fragmenting, and establishing links with international terrorist organizations (Grävingsholt, 2004). The fight against these “Three Evil Forces” remains a top priority for the SCO, reflecting its commitment to regional stability, peace, and security.

4. The Importance of the Belt and Road Initiative

Xi Jinping’s leadership, marked by the vision of the “China Dream” and the nation’s transformation, has been a defining era since he assumed party leadership in late 2012. President Xi’s primary objective is to restore China’s historical greatness and influence, ultimately shaping it into a prosperous, trusted, socially advanced, and harmonious nation. At the core of this vision lies the revival of an ancient trade route that once bridged Eastern and Western civilizations across the vast Eurasian continent, a concept known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Rolland, 2015). The BRI, often referred to as the New Silk Road economic belt, was introduced by President Xi during his tour of Central Asian republics in October 2013. This ambitious initiative primarily revolves around developing extensive railway networks connecting Western China to Europe through Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, the Balkans, and the Caucasus, spanning an overwhelming 11,000 kilometers across Eurasia (Djankov & Miner, 2016). Chinese authorities view this vast transportation network as the initial phase in creating a Eurasian commercial corridor. It aims to stimulate the economies of landlocked Central Asian nations, facilitating their integration with European and Asian markets. The belief is that trade liberalization and enhanced financial cooperation within the regions linked by these railways will pave the way for a new regional economic community. President Xi’s vision fosters a shared destiny among China’s neighboring nations. Furthermore, the Belt and Road Initiative extends into Southeast Asia, with a maritime component reaching from the Indian Ocean to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean (Scobell, Ratner, & Beckley, 2014). In essence, China’s vision for the Belt and Road Initiative encompasses a staggering population of 4.4 billion individuals and a combined GDP of 21 trillion dollars, accounting for 33 percent of the world’s economic output. It connects emerging markets with substantial growth potential. While China already enjoys close ties with many nations through trade and economic partnerships, it seeks to fortify transportation infrastructure and establish new hubs and industrial parks (Rolland, 2015). The extensive network envisioned by China will ultimately link the nation with three continents through pipelines, railways, and roadways, revitalizing trade over land and sea routes. If realized, this vision would make Beijing a focal point for global connectivity (Li & Schmerer, 2017). The Belt and Road In-

initiative serves various objectives, including advancing China's economic development by boosting exports, improving access to shared resources, and supporting vital domestic projects. Recent reports suggest that the Chinese government is committed to investing up to 1 trillion dollars in infrastructure projects, particularly in central and western regions set to become gateways to the BRI (Rolland, 2015). In addition, Premier Li Keqiang embarked on a global "railroad diplomacy tour" in 2014 and, in December 2014, announced the creation of a 3 billion dollars investment fund for Central and Eastern European countries. This initiative aims to enhance connectivity, including plans to develop a new interconnectivity corridor. During the Budapest summit in 2017, Premier Li Keqiang underscored China's strong commitment to improving connectivity with Europe. China views railways, ports, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as the cornerstones for achieving balanced development and fostering social cohesion in Europe (Wang, 2020). Contracts and subsidies for China's national rail car manufacturers will bolster their position in foreign markets, benefitting overseas economies. Beijing also offers financial aid to countries intersected by its railways, often in exchange for local resources (report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, n.d.) Beyond economic considerations, domestic security concerns drive the construction of a regional transportation framework. In 2000, then-Secretary-General Hu Jintao recognized the need to strengthen ties between China and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, an area often marred by ethnic violence and religious radicalization. This could lead to a comprehensive program to develop rail and road infrastructure connecting remote and underdeveloped regions to the dynamic eastern areas of China (Kim & Indeo, 2013). Today, a similar rationale extends to China's neighboring regions. Beijing aims to construct railways linking Xinjiang with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, extending westward to the Middle East and Europe. The economic development driven by infrastructure projects is expected to enhance political stability in these regions (Tekir, 2022). China's infrastructure policy also aligns with its strategy of fostering relations with continental neighbors, mainly when tensions exist with maritime neighbors. Strengthening ties with neighbors remains a cornerstone of China's policy, with President Xi emphasizing this priority in October 2013. Given strained relations in the East China Sea, China is focusing on building cooperation and stability on its western land borders (Aminjonov et al., 2019; Chubarov, 2019).

As the United States withdrew from Afghanistan, China contemplates an economic partnership that builds upon over a decade of investments in Central Asia, including the development of pipelines, mineral extraction infrastructure, transportation facilities, and communication networks. Beijing seeks to maintain stability in its backyard, particularly in Central Asian secular autocracies rich in gas and oil, which contribute significantly to China's energy supply and help mitigate radicalization among its Muslim population. Focusing more intently on Central Asia, China also considers its relationship with Russia. Instead of spark-

ing conflict, the BRI aims to enhance cooperation between Beijing and Moscow (Samay, 2022). This initiative becomes more relevant as Russia's relations with Europe become increasingly strained, leaving President Vladimir Putin with fewer options for allies and support. The BRI seeks to forge closer economic ties between China and its neighbors, predominantly Central Asian and SCO members, creating a network of trade connections, transportation links, and multilateral, regional institutions with China at its core. One such initiative is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, launched in Beijing in October, which will finance various projects under the Belt and Road Initiative. (China Leadership Monitor, 47) Ultimately, Beijing's infrastructure strategy serves a vital purpose. For over a decade, Chinese administrations have sought to reduce dependence on the Strait of Malacca, through which 80 percent of China's energy supplies from the Middle East and West Africa pass. The planned infrastructure, including pipelines, roads, and railways, will enhance China's capacity to transport vital energy resources from Central Asia and the Middle East, reducing its vulnerability to a potential maritime blockade enforced by the United States in East Asia (Liao, 2006). In this context, the Belt and Road Initiative represents a significant step in securing China's energy supply through new pipelines in Central Asia, Russia, and Southeast Asia's deep-water ports. For good reason, energy sufficiency has consistently been a priority for Chinese policymakers. Currently, the Belt and Road Initiative promotes a multi-level pattern of security cooperation, including multilateral, bilateral, and regional cooperation. It aims to enhance security in Central Asia, particularly in the fight against the "three evil forces," ensuring the region's safety and the success of the BRI.

5. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the SCO Relationship

The interaction between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) represents a pivotal subject of global interest in geopolitics and economic cooperation. These initiatives are crucial components of China's foreign policy strategy, intending to strengthen regional connectivity and integration region with the word (Farwa, 2018).

The BRI, an expansive platform for multilateral collaboration, has seamlessly integrated with the SCO, emerging as a significant component. Many member and observer states within the SCO actively engage in the cooperative efforts of the BRI. China's committed efforts include aligning the BRI with the development strategies of SCO member and observer nations and other regional cooperation initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Remarkably, the six economic corridors outlined in the BRI encompass almost all SCO member and observer states, promising mutual dividends for Eurasia's collective development. In practice, the BRI and the SCO support and reinforce each other, furnishing valuable references for pioneering models of regional cooperation founded on win-win principles (Qiang & Cao, 2023).

One remarkable commonality between the BRI and the SCO lies in their shared

principles and guiding spirit. The BRI champions peace, development, collaboration, and mutual benefit values, echoing the “Shanghai Spirit” that serves as the soul of the SCO’s growth and expansion. Both these initiatives aspire to foster a multi-polar world, underlining the importance of negotiations on equal footing, abandoning Cold War mentalities and power politics, and embracing state-to-state relations based on dialogue rather than confrontation. The pursuit of partnership over alliance is at the core of their vision, all in the collective pursuit of constructing a world characterized by enduring peace, universal security, shared prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, cleanliness, and harmony (Erin, 2023).

The comprehensive evolution of the SCO plays a pivotal role in advancing business cooperation within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framework. The SCO, recognizing the increasing trend of integration in regional and global economies, must expand its economic role and adapt accordingly. Implementing the BRI expands vast prospects for the SCO’s development. Notably, the transformation of the SCO and the mechanisms facilitating economic exchange with the EAEU emerge as the most strategically efficient choices. The Chinese government has actively advocated for Russian-led efforts in Eurasian economic integration. Chinese leadership actively supports the idea of the SCO playing a more substantial role in BRI construction. The construction of the BRI has led to significant economic cooperation among SCO member states, thereby boosting intra-SCO trade (Xinhua, 2014).

While the strategic focus of the SCO primarily revolves around upholding regional security and advancing regional economic development, it has also undertaken the pivotal task of aligning its objectives with the BRI. This alignment has garnered unanimous support from SCO members, who have incorporated the development plans of their respective countries with the BRI. Notably, China and Russia have forged a connection between the BRI and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), while Kazakhstan has harmonized its economic blueprint with the BRI. Pakistan stands to gain significantly from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, while Uzbekistan has bolstered its connectivity and expanded its role in regional development. In this context, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan have solidified their collaboration with China (Xinhua, 2018).

The relationship between the BRI and the SCO unfolds across several dimensions:

1) Common Geography: The BRI and the SCO share a geographical focus on the Eurasian region. Under Chinese leadership, the BRI envisions an expansive infrastructure and economic development initiative that seeks to connect China with Europe, Africa, and other parts of Asia through an extensive network of roads, railways, ports, and related infrastructure. In contrast, the SCO constitutes a regional organization comprising eight member states in Eurasia, including China, Russia, and several Central Asian nations (The State Council Information Office of China, 2023).

2) Common Goals and Infrastructure Projects: The BRI and the SCO main-

tain complementary goals. The BRI's focus on promoting economic cooperation and connectivity among nations aligns harmoniously with the economic and trade objectives of the SCO. The SCO's core aims encompass enhancing regional security, counteracting terrorism, and fostering economic cooperation, making it a natural partner for the BRI's extensive infrastructure projects. Collaboration between the two entities is apparent in various infrastructure projects, with many BRI initiatives intersecting with the SCO's geographical scope. For instance, the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, a facet of the BRI, holds the potential to elevate connectivity and trade among SCO member states (NIDS, 2019).

3) Economic Cooperation: The BRI's commitment to promoting economic cooperation through infrastructure development, trade facilitation, and investment opportunities aligns cohesively with the SCO's emphasis on combatting threats such as terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Concurrently, the SCO underscores economic cooperation, infrastructure ventures, and trade liberalization. The two initiatives work synergistically. Prime Minister Li Qiang has introduced proposals to strengthen collaboration between the SCO and BRI, including efforts to bolster regional security, stimulate economic recovery, synchronize BRI with the development strategies of member states, and deepen cooperation in education, culture, tourism, and sports. In sum, the BRI and SCO wield substantial influence in shaping the economic and political landscape of the region (Laruelle, 2018).

Ultimately, the relationship between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization signifies a significant alignment of goals and a shared commitment to regional development and prosperity.

6. Conclusion

The complicated interaction of global geopolitics and financial cooperation has ushered in an era of multifaceted interactions between world powers and regional powers. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is at the heart of this panorama, a massive undertaking that transcends borders and reshapes the worldwide economic degree. The BRI weaves a story of connectivity and collaboration on a remarkable scale, forging bonds between international locations, cultures, and economies. In a global frequently characterized by standardization, the BRI's innovation and ambition stand as a testament to the boundless possibilities of world engagement. But inside this narrative of grand geopolitical protection and economic cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) emerges as a pivotal participant, shaping the destinies of nations and regions.

This paper has sought to understand the complexities surrounding China's Belt and Road Initiative and shed light on the ever-evolving role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization within the complex web of global geopolitics and economics. As we have navigated the labyrinth of this relationship, we have discovered a story of safety collaboration, monetary integration, and an unwavering

pursuit of a shared vision. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, born out of China's energetic engagement in multilateral diplomacy, has become a giant player in Central Asian security. Over the years, its impact has multiplied, encompassing a vast spectrum of social, economic, and safety concerns. The SCO has evolved into a representative frame that not only fosters trust, delimits borders, and promotes exact neighborly relations but also tackles vital issues like terrorism, extremism, separatism, and more. With the inclusion of India, Pakistan, and Iran as complete members, the SCO now represents almost 1/2 of the world population and boasts a combined GDP exceeding a quarter of the global economy. It has become a platform for international locations to collaborate on alternate protection, and regional development, promising to trade the lives of hundreds of thousands and foster worldwide improvement.

In phase of protection, the SCO has proven its dedication to combating the "Three Evils"—terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Through joint military exercises and intelligence sharing, member international locations have confirmed their determination and ability to confront those threats. The advent of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) based totally in Tashkent has been instrumental in reading terrorist actions, sharing data, and advising on counterterrorism guidelines. RATS has not only been a treasured aid in the combat in opposition to the "Three Evils" but also in addressing transnational problems such as drug trafficking and unlawful migration. It plays an essential role in resolving safety challenges in Central Asia, contributing to regional stability and peace.

Economically, the SCO has shifted its consciousness from security topics to fostering an incorporated financial area. Member countries have engaged in multilateral change, funding, transportation, and power policies, with China's interest focused on accessing Central Asian power assets. The SCO's economic cooperation ambition is to create possibilities for impoverished countries, promoting the free flow of products, technology, offerings, and capital amongst member states. This monetary security is crucial for resilience, stability, and coping with safety challenges.

The Belt and Road Initiative, under President Xi Jinping's leadership, is a centerpiece of China's global vision. This formidable project aims of linking continents, revive historical alternate routes, and foster shared destinies amongst countries. With large railway networks, pipelines, and maritime additives, the BRI has the potential to reshape international connectivity. It encompasses over 4 billion human beings and a large GDP proportion, promising monetary increase and cooperation.

The BRI serves as an economic development strategy and a means of promoting national and regional security. It seeks to create balance in regions like Xinjiang and Central Asia, also strengthening political relationships with neighboring nations. China aims to stabilize its energy delivery by reducing its dependence on maritime routes, a crucial priority for its policymakers. The Belt and

Road Initiative takes a multi-faceted approach to security cooperation, including multilateral, bilateral, and regional efforts, with the aim of strengthening security in Central Asia and countering the “three evil forces” while also ensuring local safety while also facilitating the success of the BRI.

In conclusion, the connection between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a dynamic and evolving one, with both entities running in tandem to promote geopolitical security and financial cooperation. As these projects safeguard the future of countries and areas, their collective efforts keep the promise of a more interconnected and prosperous world, where diversity and collaboration triumph over adversity and isolation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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