

INDIA'S MULTILATERAL COOPERATION IN COUNTER-TERRORISM: A CASE OF SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

India has joined as a full member of the Shanghai cooperation organization in 2017. Shanghai cooperation organization was successful in countering Terrorism regionally in central Asia. This opens up new hopes and aspiration for India in its fight against terrorism. Pakistan joining the organization as a full member in tandem with India provides better opportunities for India in its normalization process and peace building in South Asia. This paper discusses the major threat to India's security architecture followed by India's involvement in the regional binding through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its increased influence in Central Asia in the field of Counter Terrorism.

KEYWORDS: *Security Perception of India, Establish a Network of Various Militant, Multifaceted Characteristics and Motives*

INTRODUCTION

The transnational evolution of terrorism in the 21st century has brought many countries closer to cooperation. Countries tend to align themselves based on the strategic interests and economic gains they foresee. Counterterrorism has precipitated to the top layer of discussion in recent decades of mutual relations between countries and international organizations in pursuing global peace and security. The journey India continues in fighting the insurgencies and terrorist activities have taken a new dimension on 26 November 2008, as the traditional capabilities were undermined by few terrorist outfits of Let at Mumbai killing innocent people and disturbing the tranquility of the nation. The immediate reaction was the Structural transformations in its fight against terrorist threats in the future in order to effectively execute the counter-terrorism measures forward. The establishment of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) (National investigation agency,, 2019) and the state level establishment of a counterterrorism force within the state polices are notable examples of this structural transformation. The 26/11 by itself brings India closer in counterterrorism efforts with many organizations; regionally and internationally, to fill the gaps in its fight against global terrorism. Shanghai cooperation organization is first of its kind in the 21st century in signing a convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism by its founding members in combating terrorism on 15 June 2001; 3 months prior to the September 11 terrorist attack on united states (Guang, 2009). India has sworn as a full member of Shanghai cooperation organization (SCO) in 2017 at the Astana summit opening a new platform for itself to engage regionally in its effort to counter terrorism (Desai, 2017). The regional Anti-Terrorism Structure within the cooperation

has been a successful mechanism in eliminating terrorist threats in the region. This paper focuses on how India improves its experience in counter terrorism with the full membership in the Shanghai cooperation organization.

INDIA'S MAJOR TERRORISM THREATS

Greater democratization in the international relations and world peace by means of its self-righteous Neutralism and non-alignment movement was predominant in the founding principles of Indian foreign policy in the late 1950's (S.D.Muni, 1991). Later Security and economic development become a priority in its foreign policy. Historical events, aspirations, and challenges had gradually formulated the security perception of India. India's security perception is framed with its initial war with China in 1962 and with Pakistan in 1965, 1971 and 1999. The cold war, creating a bipolar world has further shaped its strategic perspective in the late 1990's (Kaura, 2017). India's continuous engagement with USSR for its security requirements were slowly evaded after the Soviet disintegration. It has become closer to the United States in its security needs post-cold war (Ganguly, 2003/2004).

The terrorism threat in India has emerged as early as in the 1980s during the Sikh unrest. The Sikh militant group Babar Khalsa has Hijacked Kanishka, an air India flight in the Irish coast on 23 June 1985 and exploded the flight, killing all on board. Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism has constituted the main terrorist threat in India. These states sponsored terrorism is characterized by the border disputes between two countries since the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 during the time of independence (Dwivedi, 2008). Pakistan has resorted to engaging with proxy war and cross-border terrorism after its failed attempt in annexing Kashmir by force. Pakistan based jihadist group like Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammad and Bangladesh based Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami has been major terrorist outfits challenging the security of the country. Indian parliament has been attacked in December 2001 by Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad challenging the high-security standards maintained by Indians (Raman, 2013). Mumbai being the financial hub of India has witnessed three major terrorist attacks with huge civilian casualties in the last two decades. The first attack on Mumbai was in March 1993 with 13 coordinated attacks by Dawood Ibrahim's syndicate killing more than 250 civilians. In April 2006 al Qaeda has projected the 'concept of conspiracy' against Muslims of the world (Raman, 2013). Mumbai was again the victim of terrorism in 2006 with nine coordinated attacks in the commuter train in the suburban station. The negligence and intelligence miscalculation made Mumbai to witness another terror attack on 26th November 2008 (Raman, 2013).

Pakistan's Inter Intelligence Agency (ISI) has been a threat since the 1950s (sakhivel, 2010). ISI of Pakistan has been active in creating trouble in various parts of India like the North-East, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. It has major involvement in terrorist strikes in India like Mumbai blasts, attack on Indian Parliament, massacres in Jammu and Kashmir and Gujarat (sakhivel, 2010). The ISI has been trying to establish a network of various militant, terrorist and Naxalite groups in India to carry out its activities directed against Indian interests. Pakistan has been continuously supporting terrorist organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad Jamaat-ud-Daawa (sakhivel, 2010). Wali-ur Rahman, advisor to Bangladesh prime minister on international crimes said 'Pakistan and ISI have been the biggest threat to us (India and Bangladesh) as they keep sending their operatives to India and Bangladesh. . . ISI is still an epicenter of terror. . . Not only in these two countries, but they also dispatch their operatives to Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and all over the SAARC Countries '(The Economist Times, 2015)

India faces its terror attack in three regions; the North East in general, Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian hinterland. The ethnic identity is the root cause of uprising in the Northeastern states especially Assam and Manipur (Kalita, 2011). The terrorism in the North Eastern state is complex with its multifaceted characteristics and motives. The region is prone to large scale migration from its neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar (Upadhyay, 2006). These regions are economically weak compared to the rest of mainland India. Assam has the lowest of the Human Development Index of 0.362 in a scale of 1 and Mizoram with a score of 0.552 having highest in the Northeastern state in which the national average is 0.619. The multiethnic grouping in North Eastern state is the primary cause for the unrest in the region. The eight state of North East hosts 160 Scheduled tribes belonging to five ethnic groups (Kalita, 2011). United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in Assam, Peoples Liberation party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Peoples United Liberation Front (PULF) in Manipur, Isak-Muivah (IM), National socialist council of Nagalim (NSCN) in Nagaland are the extremist groups involved in anti-state activities (Kalita, 2011). Hence the insurgencies emerged out of these states are primarily for acquiring autonomy or secession. The unrest in Kashmir has started from the beginning of unification of Kashmir to mainland India in 1947 (Kaura, 2017). Since then India considers Kashmir as an integral part of its territory (Kasuri, 2015). Cross border terrorism and insurgencies are prevalent in Kashmir. Al-Qaeda forces that fled Afghanistan were actively supporting militant activities in India Occupied Kashmir with the support of the Taliban and the local indigenous Pakistani terrorist groups (Dwivedi, 2008). Pakistan has been actively providing support to these groups. Indian Hinterland faces terror attacks with the amalgamation of all these terror groups followed by Naxalism, extreme Hindutva, drug, and narcotic nexus.

Terrorist targeting India uses suicide attacks and swarming techniques as an effective means to create maximum damages. The 26/11 Mumbai terror attack demonstrated the intensity of asymmetric warfare India has to foresee with its own security lapses. Ten trained Lashkar-e-Taiba militants had infiltrated the Mumbai coast from Pakistan (Raman, 2013). Operational tactics such as increased casualty outreach and targeted attacks on foreign citizens during the Mumbai terror attack exhibits the extent of the urban-centered terrorist attack that India has to overcome in the future. In Mumbai terrorist has used the advantage of lean everyday technology such as google maps and wireless communication devices, improvised explosive devices and executed commando-style operation (Shahzad Rizvi, 2015). These technologies provided situational awareness and real-time information regarding the various responses during the attack. Four attacks in five locations; using the swarming techniques in Chhatrapati Shivaji terminus where millions of civilians use the transportation means; Leopold café and Oberoi Trident targeting the foreigners; Nariman house targeting the Jewish community in Mumbai and the Taj hotel for a hostage-like situation (Arquilla, 2009). Two taxis were exploded to create ambiguity and confusion to the existing situation (Angel Rabasa, 2009). Similar suicidal swarming techniques were employed by the terrorist in the recent attacks against the defense establishment of the country in Uri and Pathankot in 2016. In Uri, the terrorist attacked the army base by breaching into the compound by merely cutting the wire fence and in Pathankot, the attackers had entered the air force base through a secure rope on the wall (Sreekumar, 2016). The change in the modus operandi in the low-intensity conflict to 'frontal strike' has been the major shift in the tactics employed by a terrorist in India.

INDIA AND SCO: GENERAL COOPERATION

The disintegration of Soviet Russia has created security instability in the region. This instability emerged out of the border settlement of the new states formed after the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Iris, 2009). The initiative by China to settle the border disparity in the early 1990s created a regional grouping called Shanghai five with initial members including the China Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and the newly formed Russia (Iris, 2009). Later this regional grouping was renamed to Shanghai cooperation organization in 2001 at Shanghai with initial members including Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Rinna, 2014-15). The evolution of Shanghai cooperation from the Shanghai-five has brought new security dimension to the Eurasian regionalism. The western elites consider this grouping as a counterreaction to the western establishments with two regional powers; China and Russia (Iris, 2009). The peaceful settlement of the border disparity between the Eurasian countries has led the institutions to focus its attention on the non-state actors which are the major challenge to the security in the region. The Shanghai cooperation considers the three evils i.e. Terrorism, extremism and separatism as the major challenges to the regime security (Guang, 2009). The Establishment of the Shanghai cooperation has been a major deviation from the traditional neoliberal concept of regionalism. The traditional assumption states that sustained development in a regional organization is possible only with the involvement of politically democratic and economically liberal countries (Iris, 2009). But the Eurasian regionalism is formulated on the concept of security based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation. SCO did not cede sovereignty and is an intraregional organization rather than a supranational organization such as the European Union or the NATO alliance (Iris, 2009). The preservation of regime and the minimal interference in the sovereignty of the institution provide countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan to be part of the institution.

India has joined the organization in 2001 and has been an observer till 2017. Its rise to permanent member status gives India as well as the SCO a wide platform for cooperation in the Eurasian region. With the inclusion of India, SCO represents a roughly 2/5th population of the world today. The cooperation of India includes economic security, cultural and humanitarian collaboration (Stobdan, 2017). The modest relation maintained by India in the central Asian region can be boosted with the further involvement in the Shanghai cooperation. Today India has a trade of \$1.5 billion with the central Asian nations (P, 2018). The grouping enhances the bilateral relations with the central Asian nation through close engagement with the member states within the organization. The lack of a direct trade link between the central Asian nations possesses a major challenge to the establishment of trade with the Eurasian countries. India has to trade either through China or Russia for its needs. The utilization of the Chabahar port in Iran helps India to connect itself with the central Asian nations (Watson, 2017). The SCO platform can be meaningfully utilized for India in this regard. The oil-rich central Asia is another emerging source for India for its energy needs. World's 3.5% of oil reserves and around 6.8% of natural gas are in central Asia (Roberts, 2010). Hence the energy requirement of the nation can be converged through investing in this region. The SCO acts as a channel for India to negotiate with China which is a crucial actor in the infrastructure development of the central Asian nations. Like China India's major intension is to utilize the market opportunity and infrastructure development measures in this region. Today China and Russia play a major role in building infrastructures in these nations (Rinna, 2014-15). The inclusion of India has created a shift in the power balance in the organization dominated by China and Russia. The power balance created within the

organization thereby provides incentives for the central Asian nations to further develop the cooperation with the organization.

Free trade is not perceived in the Shanghai cooperation organization. The central Asian regimes believe that the free trade agreement, through the SCO infringes over the sovereignty of the state (Aris, 2011). These possess a major challenge as well as an opportunity for the emergence of India in this region. The sovereignty factor maintained within the organization preserves the integrity within the organization and eliminates the regional seclusion. This provides India to maintain its own stand in the regional dynamics with respect to its territorial integrity and trade relations with the nations without affecting the ethos of the organization. SCO is based on norms and lacks a legal framework which makes its decisions non-obligatory in nature. The institution works solemnly on consensus rather than any predefined guidelines. This distinction exists between the Eurasian regionalism as well as the western organization. The SCO inspired the Chinese with its much-discussed BRI project and its ambiguous Eurasian development (Bhuyan, 2018). India has to perfectly utilize the platform to assert its stand on the Chinese expansionist policies. Although culminated as a new member of the rights of India in the institution is as equal to other dominant power. This provides a veto status to the country in the major decisions of the Institution. Although it acts as an effective organization in Eurasia, the absence of defined structure in the decision making is criticized in a wider sense. The major decisions are made by political representatives of the involving countries and hence can be criticized for the weakness of implementation of these policies due to the regime change and the ideological shift in the political elite of the country. Therefore, the relations within the organization are fragile in this aspect but are interwoven with strong mutual collaboration and diplomatic engagement with the organization and the Eurasian countries. Today India has to focus its attention in the free trade agreement, security and trade connectivity in this region. By multiple focus in this region, India will be able to improve its relationship with the central Asian countries.

THE COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

The predominant focus of SCO is addressing the non-traditional security challenges that beset the central Asian region. The major organ assigned to the security challenges of the region is called The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) (Guang, 2009). It is headquartered in Tashkent and started its operation in November 2003 and acts as the coordination of non-military actions including intelligence exchange and which are relevant to addressing the three evils; terrorism, separatism, and extremism which are regarded as the major threat to the Eurasian regionalism. The RATS consist of a council and an Executive committee. The executive committee is a permanent body which is responsible for the functional implementation of its work (Aris, 2011). The council is the main decision-making body and the active members are the Ministers in charge of counterterrorism in their respective states. The guiding principle for the RATS activity is based solemnly on the 'Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and extremism'. The RATS create an information and intelligence base for information sharing within the organization and identify major threads to the region's security (Guang, 2009). RATS is hence regarded as the most effective mechanism in shanghai cooperation organization with the active participation of different layers of Bureaucracy in its decision-making process.

India's security concerns have escalated to a transnational nature. Today the security concerns engaged in the country requires cooperation from other nations through bilateral and multilateral relations (P.W. Purushotham, 2009). The central

Asian nations as well as India experiences tensions of Islamic extremism whose evolutionary traits spreading across central Asia. SCO as security architecture for India can be utilized as a right platform in collaborating with the member countries. India has joined SCO at its own discretion rather than any external influence of China or Russia. The arc of terrorism, a belt stretching from the middle east, Central Asia and South Asia to Southeast Asia is a major development in the terrorism outspread after the 2003 Iraq war (Guang, 2009). Hence SCO has a greater impact in the cooperation between central Asian and South Asian nation in the prevention and elimination of funding and supporting of these terrorist networks widespread across Asia.

The basic incentive for India to be a part of SCO can be assigned to the membership of Pakistan at the time of India into the organization in tandem (Taneja, 2018). As India's major security challenges emanate from Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism, bringing Pakistan into the organization provides greater opportunity for India in discussing its issue in the closed regional friendship. The absence of a legal framework and the structural arrangement unlike another regional organization-helps to retain the credibility of the country through participation in the meeting of heads of government which includes representatives holding the posts of prime minister, a foreign minister, national security advisors military personals (Aris, 2011). This close interaction and further discussions eliminate the Bureaucratic red tape emanating in the bilateral cooperation of India and Pakistan. It also further enhances the understanding of both the countries leadership which plays a crucial role in policy formulation.

The failure of SAARC as a regional organization which hosted both India and Pakistan as a permanent member can be attributed for the absence of a third powerful entity to help rebuild the delineated relation between both the countries in the past (Aris, 2011). Unlike SAARC, SCO in which China plays a predominant role can actually initiate a dialogue between the two nations in regarding peacebuilding. The Chinese interest in the peacebuilding initiative can be drawn from the words of Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lu Kang:

“We welcome the positive remarks made by the Indian and Pakistani leaders on improving their bilateral relations, to move forward, Pakistan and India must dialogue and resolve their conflicts, including Kashmir” (Aneja, 2018).

This can be reflected in the words of the Chinese ambassador to India Luo Zhaohui “Security cooperation is one of the three pillars of the SCO. Some Indian friends suggested that India, China, and Pakistan may have some kind of trilateral summit on the sidelines of SCO. So, if China, Russia, and Mongolia can have a trilateral summit, then why not India, China and Pakistan? Maybe not now, but in the future, that is a great idea. It will help to resolve bilateral issues and help to maintain peace and tranquility” (Roy, 2018).

SCO hence provide a platform for China to act as a mediator between the neighbors in the issue and bring peace to South Asia.

India and Pakistan had jointly participated in the Exercise peace Mission 2018, the military exercise of shanghai cooperation organization (Peri, 2018). This exercises under the SCO has positive implications such as developing a greater cultural understanding of different nations among the armies, strengthening mutual trust and cooperation. These military exercises enhance peacebuilding initiatives in South Asian region in the long run. India urges greater cooperation among the member states by adhering to national responsibility, a principle of mutual respect for sovereignty territorial integrity.

As discussed earlier the SCO does not infringe the sovereignty of the member countries. This helps India to conduct multilateral engagement without compromising its security. The information sharing is based on consensus rather than any particular norms followed. The SCO is criticized for the fact that the consensus is not obligatory and hence the member states might not be willing to share information and intelligence which they consider undermines their own security (Aris, 2011). This acts as a barrier for the functioning of the Regional anti-terrorism structure in coordinating the events within the system. This non-obligation of state makes the counter-terrorism initiative less successful in most of the cases. It has been passive at moments of severe threats. The terrorist attack in Tashkent, Bukhara in 2004, Andijan in 2005, escalation of military action in Afghanistan by Al Qaeda are few in evidence where the intelligence of the SCO rendered null effects (Iris, 2009). Hence being a full member, India cannot expect much from the regional cooperation in general but can cooperate in bringing down Islamic extremism within the region.

CONCLUSIONS

The Eurasian regionalism through shanghai cooperation has brought central Asian nations under a single platform. The increased interest of other nation into the organization has been due to the result of the effective and collective success of regionalism under Shanghai cooperation. The structural absence of shanghai cooperation is suited for the nations in central Asia because of the non-democratic and less liberal nature of the states in the region. As a strong democratic power within the organization and a nation with a liberal economy, India can play a crucial role in the dynamics of cooperation in the region. As Shanghai cooperation cannot be considered as a one size fits all solution for the security challenges to the region, it can be well utilized for the cooperation of the countries within the region for the common threats that is considered as a challenge to the regime security. Ensuring the stability of Eurasia is a priority for India to build strong relation within the region. The stability factor has been well maintained by the Shanghai cooperation until its inception.

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