NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN CENTRAL ASIA: ROLE OF SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION, 2001-2015

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN CENTRL ASIA: ROLE OF SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION, 2001-2015**" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SCO	Shanghai cooperation organisation
CAS	Central Asian States
CAR	Central Asian region
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
UNO	United Nations Organisation
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
CIS	Commonwealth of independent states
EU	European Union
ISIS	Islamic State of Syria and Iraq
HUT	Hizb–ut-tahrir
JUD	Jamat-ud-dawa
ISAF	International Security Assistant Force
ICAB	International Council for the Aral sea basin
IFAS	International Fund to save the Aral Sea

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) covers more than three fifths of the Eurasian landmass and represents one fourth of the world population. In that sense it is the biggest security organisation in the world next to the UN (Oldberg 2007:13). The SCO is also the only international security organisation where China is a member and the US is not. Central Asia is at the centre of the organisation both in a geographical and political sense.

Central Asia is a place where the strategic interests of the world powers intersect. External factors sustain political, military, and to a large extent economic stability in the region. Russia, the West, and China act as the main outside stabilizers. World and regional powers actively defend their military–political and economic interests in Central Asia (Baizakova 2013:59).

Under the impact of globalisation the need of cooperation in the realm of security has become all the more important. The Central Asian States need to conduct a coordinated policy with each other in order to protect the advantage that they possess on grounds of their strategic position. This is crucial for protecting their interests in the international arena. The significance of the strategic position of the CAS has increased in last two decades.

In the area of security cooperation in the region, it takes place through several multilateral forums. The most important among them is Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). SCO has emerged as the multilateral platform for the CAS, Russia and China to promote cooperation and negotiate on issues of conflict. The strength of SCO lies in its adaptability and flexible understanding on issues of common concerns. The organization has grown rapidly with development of its own institutions and internal formal mechanisms to discuss areas of regional security interests among the member states. With the evolution of SCO the subject area of agenda before the member states has broadened. This has contributed in diluting the conflicting understanding of member states on multiple issues while at the same time acting as a platform to allow the member states to work together against transnational issues like terrorism.

The range of activities within the SCO can be categorised under following three broad heads:

- Regional security
- Economy
- Culture

The maximum level of cooperation has been generated in the first of these areas. Thus there has been the maximum progress in developing regional security architecture within the SCO. There have been a number of international treaties and agreements among the member states to counter the regional security threats. They regularly organise joint military exercises and training session to

help counter the threats emanating out of the sources of insecurity. Specific mention must be made about the level of cooperation reached by the SCO member states against the menace of international terrorism. As Aris argues that after the withdrawl of American security forces from Afghanistan, the threat may even perpetuate in absence of a sustainable security system in Afghanistan (Aris 2012:8). Among the other agenda taken up within the purview of the SCO are illegal migration, cyber security, drug peddling, etc.

An analysis of the working and institutional evolution of SCO as a regional security organisation shows that it has achieved an influential position of a regional player playing an important role in promotion of vital security interests of its member states. It has emerged as a platform for multidimensional cooperation among the member states on various issues of economic, security and political significance. It has been able to evolve as a representative regional institution in the CAR since it represents most of the CAR and largely the Eurasian region.

The Shanghai Five, the predecessor of the SCO was established with a focus on confidence building processes among the member states of Shanghai Five. They focused on military force reductions and mitigating the conflicting interests between China and countries sharing their borders with China like Tajikistan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The above mentioned five states conceptualised the idea of a multilateral regional platform in the year 1996 during a high level meeting in Shanghai. If we trace back to the actual process of development of this process, we need to go back to the year 1964 when border negotiations between Russia and China began. These negotiations could not succeed and did not progress at all for the first two decades. However after Mikhail Gorbachev's regime came at the helm of affairs in the erstwhile USSR, the Sino-Soviet relations began to relax (Kumar 2010:18).

The Shanghai Five became a platform where interactions among the member states were driven by their domestic needs and exigencies of time. Regional and global issues were also discussed. But the main focus remained on national concerns and creation of conditions conducive for a stable and peaceful society within their respective territories. Regional peace and stability was also an important issue area to be considered by this grouping.

Many scholars view the evolution of Shanghai Forum in three stages of development. The first stage which covered the period from November 1989 to December 1991was the period of collapse of the Soviet Union and signing of many bilateral treaties and negotiations between Russia and China (Akatayeva 2008:5). During this period the process of negotiations yielded positive outcomes as in the year 1990, the two countries signed an agreement on reduction of armed forces and agreement on guiding principles for strengthening of trust in the military forces present at the border between the two countries.

By this agreement the two sides undertook the commitment to implement mutual reduction of armed forces and confidence building in the military field in the border region by deciding upon significant reduction of armed forces following negotiations (Kumar 2010:10). In May 1991, few months before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Beijing and Moscow signed the "Agreement on Soviet-Chinese state borders in its eastern part" completing the process of negotiations which began in 1964.

The "Shanghai Process" can be seen as an evolution of the Soviet-Chinese negotiations in two spheres. Firstly, as a continuation of negotiations for strengthening the confidence-building measures and concrete reduction of armed forces along the borders which were now conducted jointly by Russia, the Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,on the one side and China, on the other. Secondly, as a continuation of negotiations on borders, first of all, in its western part, which were inherited by the former Soviet Republics (Ambrosio 2008:5).

The second stage is considered to be the period from December 1991 to April 1997. During this period the five nations of the organisation concluded bilateral negotiations among themselves. China played the role of main negotiator which brought Russia and CAS like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the negotiating table. After the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, these countries continued with the negotiations as a joint delegation to discuss on border issues and steps for armed forces reduction in the border areas and developing mechanisms for counter-building measures. The negotiations on these measures resulted into two agreements between the members of the 'Shanghai Five': agreement concerning Strengthening of Trust in the Military Field in the Border region in the year 1996 and mutual reduction of armed forces in the border region in 1997 (Aris 2009:4). In these two agreements the countries agreed to adopt significant measures in the border area, by exchanging information on the agreed components of the armed forces on the border and to limit exercises as a whole. The term "Shanghai Five" was coined at the summit meeting held in Shanghai in April 1996 (Kumar 2010:7).

After so much of bonhomie, the unresolved issues of border demarcation continued to complicate the mutual relations of the two powers. The third stage began in April 1997. This stage is distinguished by multilateral negotiations among the five countries: Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and China. The nature of initial bilateral format of talks changed to multilateral negotiations once the steps taken to confidence building measures and reduction in armed forces by each of the five participating states yielded in positive outcomes (Brummer 2007:189).

At the Almaty Summit in the year 1998, the participating states under Shanghai Five expressed their concern about the rising threat in the region after the Taliban took over Kabul. This crisis was seen as a common threat to the entire region as each of the member states in Shanghai Five had been dealing with this menace at national level and trying to contain such activities. The joint

statement following the Almaty Summit condemned such activities an underlined that any form of extremism, separatism and radicalisation on religious lines is unacceptable (Chung 2004:12). They also acknowledged that the interests of all the parties involved in the conflict at the regional level should be taken into consideration while arriving at any decision.

In the next Summit held at Biskek in 1999, an agreement was reached to eliminate religious militancy in the region. It was an outcome of the spread of religious extremism and terrorism into Central Asia and Russia as also in the Chinese region bordering Xinjiang. Here they agreed on deepening their military cooperation. Also focus was given on the issues like drug trafficking, illegal immigration, smuggling of arms and weapons, narcotics trade, etc. Here, the countries also agreed to launch multilateral cooperation in economic field. They also decided to give priority to the Almaty joint statement of 1998 (Chung 2004:15).

Following the Bishkek summit, the Shanghai Five met again in Bishkek where they agreed that the law enforcement agencies of the Shanghai Five countries would apply forms and methods of cooperation including joint operation (Kosyrev 2007:8). To execute joint operations they agreed that the chiefs of law enforcement agencies were to meet annually.

At the Dushanbe summit held in 2000, the issue areas were broadened to accommodate diplomatic, economic, military and technological fields for strengthening regional security and stability. Along with the earlier mentioned issues they also agreed to resolve disputes over trans-border resources like water, energy and infrastructure. The leaders of Shanghai Five appreciated the progress of the summit process. Also while condemning the terrorist activities in the region, the Dushanbe summit promised to enhance cooperation among security and law enforcement departments. This summit marked the conclusion of the first round of the 'Shanghai Five' summit (Trenin 2005:18). It was held in the aftermath of the Tashkent explosions in 1999 and armed incursions of militant groups in the southern region of Kyrgyzstan for taking hostages.

The Shanghai Five members continued to meet regularly for discussing increasing number of topics common to the interests of the participating states. The continuous process of negotiations and talks led to the setting up of the Council of National Coordinators in the year 2000.

The Summits at Almaty, Bishkek and Dushanbe created the much needed bonhomie and level of mutual trust which was later termed as the 'Shanghai Spirit'. The range of agenda to be taken up by these countries gradually expanded to include multiple issues from diverse fields such as environmental issues, economic issues, cultural cooperation etc.

All these developments and measures led to the need for a formalised system of summits and negotiation processes in form of a regional grouping or association.

The above mentioned three summits led to significant changes in the nature of interactions within the existing negotiation process within the Shanghai Five:

- It led to a from the initial structure of "five countries—two negotiating parties" to a form of "five countries—five sovereign negotiating parties" and
- A change in the multilateral forum of Five nations with a mechanism for dialogue processes aimed at resolving disputes related to military confidence building measures and the issue of armed forces reduction in the border areas to a new format where the member countries could develop cooperation among themselves in the different spheres of common interests.

Setting up of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation transformed the Shanghai Five into a better coordinated and much broader platform. It was set up in June 2001. Uzbekistan also attended the inaugural Summit in 2001. The reason for Uzbekistan to develop interests for this multilateral security platform was the internal disturbances that it was facing within its territory. The capital city of Uzbekistan faced the heat of a series of bomb blasts and explosions by religious fundamentalists and extremist groups like IMU. Afghanistan lying in the southern part of Uzbekistan also heightened the threat perception arising out of instability in its neighbourhood. Thus Uzbekistan wanted to secure peace and stability within its domestic territory by joining the Shanghai Five and thus laying the foundation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as a legal entity on 15 June 2001.

To secure their interests in the multipolar world and enhance the prospects of regional and national security the Shanghai Five members led to its transformation to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in 2001. The message was clear as they aimed at enhancing their regional ties and develop a level of mutual trust and respect so as to counter the rise in non-traditional security threats in the region. Thus they adopted the Declaration for the creation of the SCO and chose a future oriented path of regional cooperation.

The participant countries also expressed their desire to develop a common approach towards global problems and with regard to security and economic development of the region. It took note of the need to strengthen the mechanism of consultation and coordination of their actions on regional issues. The declaration also highlighted commitment of the organisation to the principles and objectives of mutual respect and non interference in each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, recognition for mutual benefit, resolution of disputes through mutual consultations and non-use of military force and reduction in armed military forces in the region.

The member states also agreed on the view that the first and foremost priority should be the security agenda crucial for the regional stability (Lanteigne 2007:145). They also agreed on the

steps to be taken for speeding up the process of negotiation and concluding treaties and agreements for setting up of an anti- terrorist organisation to be located at Bishkek.

Hence Security has always been the topmost agenda for SCO since the five countries first met in 1996. One of its main tasks has been to tackle with the menace of what has been called as three evils of the region: terrorism, separatism and extremism. The five founder members signed a convention on Fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism as early as 2001 when they met at the founding summit of SCO.

Thus the evolution of SCO from an initiative towards confidence building measures in the border region of the five states including the great powers, Russia and China and the three Central Asian republics to a full-fledged regional security mechanism has been a considerable success. It has not stopped at this but has gradually expanded when India and Pakistan were made member countries of SCO. There has been a constant awareness among the SCO members that regional security can best be realized through sincere efforts put in by all the neighbouring countries of the region which consider their relationship as essentially complementary rather than adversarial.

The SCO Charter, adopted in 2002 at a summit in St. Petersburg, specifies the priority goals and tasks of the organization which among other things significantly mentions to act in close cooperation with each other to counter the three evils of the Central Asian Region i.e. terrorism, separatism and extremism in every form and to arrest the rise in trade of drug trafficking, illegal migration and transnational crimes.

In the international and regional arena significant and rapid changes were taking place. The environment was volatile and thus needed a concerted effort for maintaining peace and stability. This realization led to the development of a common understanding by all the member states to expand the agendas on the list which included among the other things, strengthening of relations among themselves, cultural linkages, friendship and development of mutual trust. The main reason which pushed for development of an understanding among the member states was the security threats to their domestic territory which could not have been secured by their individual efforts rather it need a collective approach. The onset of civil war in Afghanistan between the Taliban and Northern alliance was seen as the most immediate factor leading to a fresh concern about their security by the member states (Bakshi 2009:12).

 The organisation declared their main agenda to be the concern of regional security in the year 2002. Their first proactive step was to establish a 100 kilometres zone of 'reduced military activity' surrounding member's shared borders. In 2003 they appointed their first secretary general and began discussing ways of strengthening co-operation and meeting common challenges. In 2004, the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) was formally launched and members made the joint

declaration to fight terrorism and strengthen economic ties cooperation (Dittmer 2011:14). At the SCO summit in 2005 members granted observer status to Mongolia followed by Pakistan, Iran and India the following year (Ahmad 2011:162). Amplifying their central Asian roots members signed the treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighbourliness Friendship and Cooperation in 2007, reaching consensus on regional and international principles in 2008 and formally reiterating their plan to combat terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime and promote multilateral economic cooperation in 2009. In 2010, with a growing status and becoming more globally accepted, they made a declaration of cooperation with the United Nations and accepted an observer's seat at the UN General Assembly (Sheineson 2011:121).

Since its commencement the SCO member's commitment has been cemented through the signing of two crucial documents: the Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Sphere in the Border Areas and the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Areas (Brooke 2011:52).Another significant achievement has been in improving the century old conflict between China and Russia over border issues, a place where instability and conflict were once rife (Guang 2011:45). In 2013, the fact that the SCO has become a central forum for dispute and conflict resolution for the greater region demonstrates a unity and cooperation that previously did not exist between members and observer states.

In July 2015, 15th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit was held at Ufa in Russia. The summit was unique in many ways as for the first time in its 15 years of existence, SCO extended full membership status to any country. The summit commenced the process of acceding India and Pakistan as its member states in the organisation. Also the summit was held on the sidelines of BRICS summit under one roof where fifteen head of states gathered from different countries of the world. Also important decisions were taken in form of passing of SCO Development Strategy 2025, approval of three years plan (2016-2018) of cooperation to fight against the three evils of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. The summit also saw upgradation in the status of Belarus from dialogue partner to the status of observer and admission of new dialogue partners in form of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia and Nepal.

At the 14th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Prime Ministers' Meeting, in Zhengzhou, Henan province of China, held in December 2015, the member states of the SCO agreed to work closely and act together to fight the security threat from ISIS. They also urged to draft an anti-extremism treaty to be negotiated among the member states. Currently there is no UN sanctioned unified force in the world to counter ISIS and there has not still been any such push from the UN. In the Zhengzhou summit, China expressed the possibility to launch an anti-terrorism cooperative mechanism under the SCO framework. China is worried as its domestic separatists groups have

enough reasons to tie up with the ISIS. The leaders of the grouping have agreed to hold the 15th summit of Prime Ministers of member states in Kyrgyzstan in 2016.

Thus the development of SCO can be understood by the increasing importance and exclusive concentration on non-traditional security threats within the CAR by the member states of the SCO (Kosyrev 2012:63).SCO emphasises on a concerted and comprehensive outlook and a multidimensional approach towards cooperation efforts against the non-traditional security threats in the region. All these efforts require a tangible and reliable contribution by the member states towards the protection of people within their territories and to make the environment conducive for poverty eradication and sustainable development within their boundaries.

The notion of security which is emphasised by SCO has taken the broader meaning of the concept. It includes the non-traditional security threats in their understanding of threats to their security. This makes it imperative for the member states to take a collaborative approach towards securing their people from these threats. For this purpose, SCO has focused on harmonisation of relationship among the member states which includes signing of agreements, forming consensus on different issues of common interests and a synchronisation of member states's domestic level policies to contain these challenges.

The SCO Convention on combating of the three evils of CAR i.e. the threats of terrorism, separatism and extremism form the central theme of cooperation among the member states of SCO. For this purpose they put emphasis on intelligence sharing and exchange of cooperation between the member states. Identification of areas and issues where they share complementary perspectives is another mechanism by which the cooperation efforts are synchronised. Development of processes to address and punish acts of deviance of the convention and contravention of agreements among the member states of SCO are some of the measures to counter the sub state level security threats.

Addressing the central concerns of terrorism, separatism and extremism are important for their stability and creating conditions for socio-political development in their national boundaries as well as in the region. With respect to the definition of terrorism, the SCO member states have agreed on its flexible definition consistent with the multiple interpretations used by the CAS and the other member states of SCO. This approach is important as the member states have different domestic interpretations to these threats and a conflict in this aspect will restrict the entire basis of cooperation among the CAS.

Since scholars like Lukin also agree that at the initial stage of cooperation developing a common understanding on the accepted definitions of these threats is extremely important for strengthening of coordinated and concerted efforts by the member states. Otherwise these prevent successful

implementation of policies to combat the menace of terrorism (Lukin 2007:142). Thus, SCO recognises the sovereign rights of the member states to devise a security agenda suitable to their domestic conditions. Primarily, combating and containing the growth and spread of the three evils of CAR has been the pivot around which the SCO member states cooperate and collaborate in their security efforts.

SCO promotes the shared understanding of its member states on the notion of security. It regularly stresses the character of the organization as an open organization independent of any bloc and against any other regional and global organisation or state. SCO declares its intention to cooperate with any state outside the SCO and with any organisation on the issues which are of central concern to the member states of SCO. At the Moscow Summit in 2003, SCO declared in a statement that in the current scenario it is important that the resources and efforts of the international community are pooled together to find for ways to preserve international security and evolving a global security architecture which will be inclusive of all the nations of the world.

Organising the SCO: structure and working

SCO has established itself as a fully fledged international organization in accordance with the principles of international laws and conventions. It has its own established working committees and internal mechanisms which have been increasingly institutionalised. Also the higher officials and meet on a regular basis apart from the annual summits which include the Head of States of the member countries. The agenda is set by a working committee of the organisation. There are specialised committees within the institution which consist of experts on judicial matters, high level ministers heading different ministries and various bodies which enforce the decisions taken by these commitees. The Declaration which was signed by the meber states in 2001 forms the basis on which the organisation has established itself as an intergovernmental organisation. The Declaration is also is fundamental to the legal existence and lists the purposes and objectives as envisioned by the member states.

There are numerous articles within the SCO Charter which act as set of guidelines for the working of the SCO as a regional body. Apart from focusing on multidisciplinary cooperation, these articles also aim for developing an understanding on promotion of basic human rights and working according to the laws and regulation which has global and regional acceptance. These also talk about developing respect for their respective domestic laws and national legislations. Developing mutual partnerships and cordial relations in the security sphere is the prime agenda which finds place in the Charter. Also the Charter explicitly mentions about the position of SCO and that it does not intend to act against any other regional, international and global bodies or alliances. It declares to establish itself as an independent democratic liberal organisation focusing on its member states mutual benefits and interests.

The Charter mentions about the level of cooperation which had been achieved through the predecessor of SCO i.e. Shanghai Five and it elaborates on its successful functioning. It declares that it wants to follow on the path of Shanghai Five while taking the level of cooperation to newer heights and developing an understanding on issues of conflict and mistrust among the member states. The Charter keeps the Shanghai Spirit at the core of the functioning of the organisation. The member states solemnly declare their ambitions and goals in the Charter of SCO: Friendship and better regional ties along with the development of mutual trust and cooperation for their domestic laws and creation of a just and democratic international political and economic order. Regional peace and security is another set of goals which have gained their attention and has in current scenario boosted the relations and level of cooperation among the member states.

The Charter also elaborates on its importance while taking up the issues of resolution of bilateral border disputes and inter-state disputes. This provision has yielded good results as the area of cooperation has considerable widened in different conflicting spheres which earlier had put a strain in the relations among all the member states. The SCO Declaration also focuses on the principle of open dialogue and negotiation. It mentions all its objectives while clearly underling that it is not an alliance of countries directed against the interests of another set of countries. It distinguishes itself as an independent regional organisation.

Though SCO has been criticised by many scholars about its goals and objectives that these are vague and ambiguous, the SCO has been able to establish itself as a legal personality in the sphere of international law. In 2004, SCO gained its status of legal personality. It was provided only after it had set up its formal structures and inner mechanisms. Thus it can be argued that being an organisation with a formal legal personality of its own the regional body can rightfully engage in international arena with the regional and global organisations. It also empowers the SCO to have a certain degree of authority to act in international arena. It also sets the boundaries of activities of the organisation to the purposes and objectives mentioned in the treaty signed by the member countries, it implies that the SCO cannot act beyond the agreements mentioned within its Charter. Any additional subject on which it wants to act will need the agreement by all the member states. SCO has the benefit that its member states are continuously engaged in dialogue and negotiations on different issues including the vague provisions mentioned in the Charter. A successful outcome of this negotiation process is an agreement among the member states on the definitions of the words, 'terrorism, separatism and extremism' mentioned in the SCO convention of 2001. This has helped them to act towards these non-traditional security threats in a concrete and substantial manner.

International organisations have some formal structures and mechanism which are common to all of them like a plenary organ, an executive body and a secretariat.

These mechanisms are responsible for their respective duties in assisting the member states while fulfilling their objective of regional cooperation. They help in setting up of agreed agendas, formulating and finalising the policies, draft the financial statement, and supervise the lower inner structures. The headquarters generally houses the secretariat which the main functional body endowed with the chief administrative duties. The secretariat also has the privilege of representing the organisation on different multilateral and international forum. SCO also encompasses certain formal structures within itself which are described below.

The Council of Heads of State

It is the topmost authority in-charge of identification and formulation of high priority agendas. It provides the guidelines of administrative nature to the activities within the SCO. It decides about the cooperation of SCO with other regional, international organisations, international legal personalities and with other countries. It decides about the issues of urgent importance affecting the regional interests. It also plays an important role in organising the annual summits and regular interactions among the member states. It also decides on the hosting member of the annual summits which is according to a rotation system adopted by the member states. The host nation also gets the privilege of becoming the President of the organisation for one year.

Council of Heads of Government

It is the body which is entrusted with the responsibility of examining and taking up matters of economic nature. It is the body which prepares and presents the budget of the organisation. They generally meet once a year. The Council of Heads of Government and the Council of Heads of state form the plenary body of the SCO since all the member states of SCO attend their meeting once a year to decide on the issue of general policy to be followed by them.

Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs

It is the body which mainly takes decisions on the ongoing and current matters of interests of the member states. It is in-charge of organising meeting for such purposes and enforcement of resolutions. It organises dialogue process and negotiations on important international and global issues. These meetings are organised at least a month prior to the meeting of the Council of the Heads of State. It is chaired by the Foreign minister of the host country.

Conference of the Heads of Agencies

It is responsible for issues which need specialised experts like economy, security, defence, disaster management, commerce, etc. its conferences are attended by academicians, defence analysts, security expert, jurists, economists, environmentalists, etc.

Council of the National Coordinators

It is the main mechanism within SCO for regular, everyday routine work and works for the better coordination and management of tasks between the member states. It generally meets thrice a year. It is chaired by the Chief Coordinator of the host member of the meeting of the Council of Heads of State.

Secretariat

The Secretariat of the SCO is located at Beijing. This is the principle authority for execution of tasks and policies agreed among the member states. It is generally responsible for the administrative support and technical guidance to the organisation. It also provides the general legal and information and communication support system. It examines the draft resolutions and studies the documents and policy decisions taken by the member countries in the annual and regular meetings and conferences. It also works in close cooperation with the RATS and works on the proposals stipulated by the member countries within the SCO. It also supervises the implementation work of the SCO decisions. The head of the Secretariat also called the Secretary general is appointed by the Council of Heads of State. The post has a non-consecutive tenure of three years which is held by the representatives of member states in a rotation system as according to the alphabetical order of the member countries names. They follow the Russian language alphabets.

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

It is the permanent body within the SCO responsible for coordinating on member states activities with regard to countering terrorism, separatism and extremism. It is located at Tashkent in Uzbekistan. The body consists of an executive committee and a council. The RATS council has been held high by many international organisations for its work against combating terrorism and extremism in the region. It is the chief decision making body of RATS which includes high level officials and concerned authorities of the member states. It follows the principles of SCO charter in its everyday work and policy formulations. Also it works in accordance of the Shanghai Convention. It also conducts its policies on agreed treaties and documents and decisions of the member states within the framework of the general guidelines of the SCO.

Thus there is a layered and functional separation of roles and structures within the SCO. Member states work on consensus basis without the monopoly of any single member state. RATS and the Secretariat headed by the Secretary general are the only permanent bodies in the organisation. Rest of the five bodies within the SCO are primarily inter-state in nature because these focus on the domestic laws and work by the member states on national level. Thus their role is basically

primary in character. The officials of the SCO are appointed by the Council of heads of State after recommendation by their domestic authorities. They are thus non-elected representatives of the member states.

From the analysis of the institutional aspects of the SCO, it can be inferred that the institutional growth of Shanghai Cooperation Organization was complete by the end of 2003. From that period of time, the SCO started functioning as a mature international structure possessing its own working mechanism, headquarters, and budge (Kaushik 2009:182). It is based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan which is responsible along with the SCO Secretariat to carry out day to day operations.
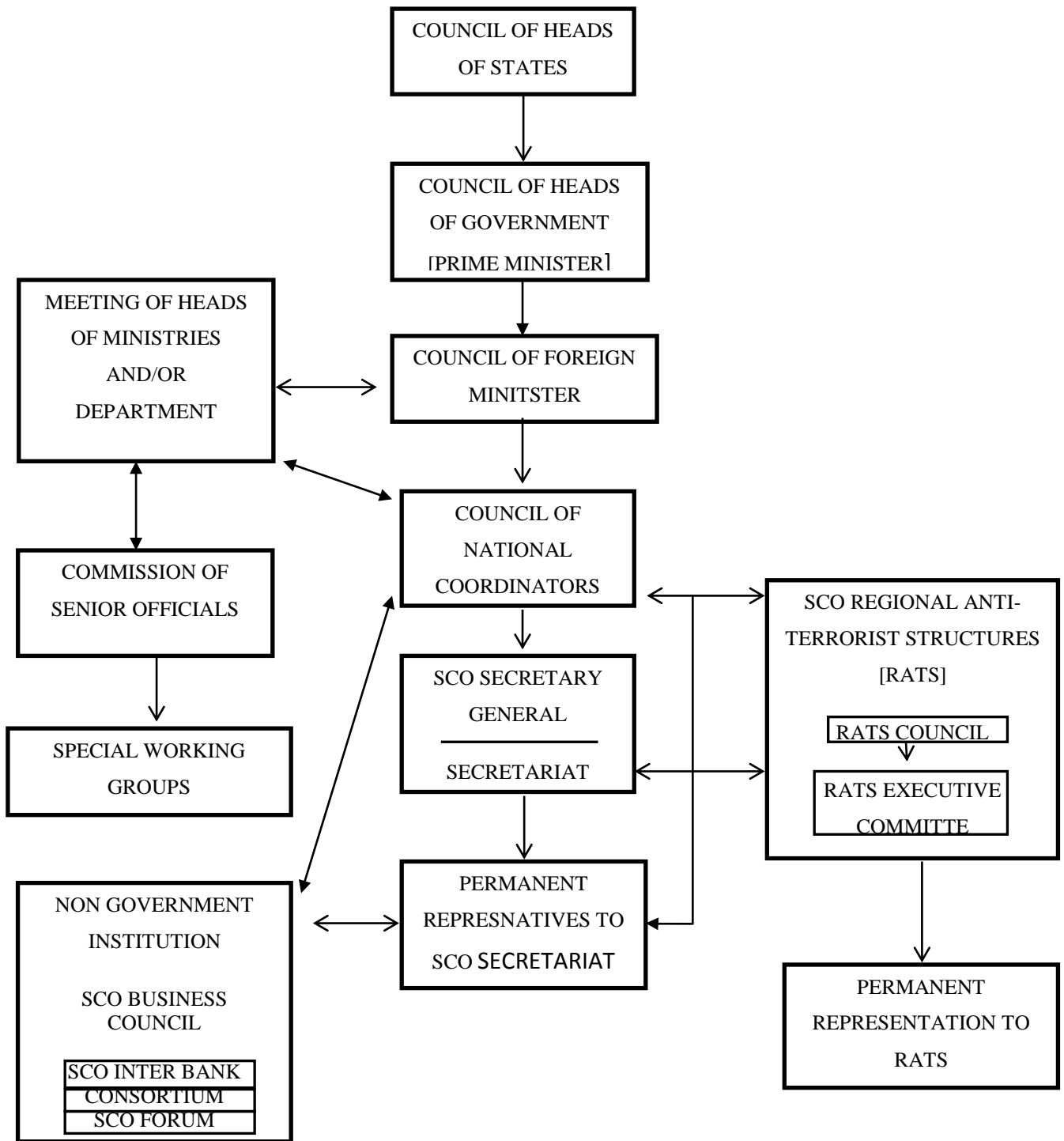
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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ COUNCIL OF HEADS    │
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│ MEETING OF HEADS    │   │ COUNCIL OF FOREIGN  │
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│ DEPARTMENT          │             │
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        ▼           │ COUNCIL OF          │          │ SCO REGIONAL ANTI-  │
┌─────────────────┐ │ NATIONAL            │◄────────►│ TERRORIST STRUCTURES│
│ COMMISSION OF   │ │ COORDINATORS        │          │ [RATS]              │
│ SENIOR OFFICIALS│ └─────────────────────┘          │ ┌─────────────────┐ │
└─────────────────┘           │                      │ │ RATS COUNCIL    │ │
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┌─────────────────┐ │ SCO SECRETARY       │          │ │ RATS EXECUTIVE  │ │
│ SPECIAL WORKING │ │ GENERAL             │          │ │ COMMITTE        │ │
│ GROUPS          │ │ ─────────────       │◄────────►│ └─────────────────┘ │
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│ NON GOVERNMENT      │   │ PERMANENT           │   │ PERMANENT           │
│ INSTITUTION         │   │ REPRESNATIVES TO    │   │ REPRESENTATION TO   │
│                     │◄─►│ SCO SECRETARIAT     │◄──│ RATS                │
│ SCO BUSINESS        │   └─────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────┘
│ COUNCIL             │
│ ┌─────────────────┐ │
│ │ SCO INTER BANK  │ │
│ │ CONSORTIUM      │ │
│ │ SCO FORUM       │ │
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Figure : Structure of the SCO

14

Membership states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Member States:

Date	Country	Enlargement
26 April 1996	China Kazakhstan Kyrgyzstan Russia Tajikistan	Founders
15 June 2001	Uzbekistan	First Enlargement

Acceding States:

1. India (Memorandum on accession signed in June 2016)
2. Pakistan (Memorandum on accession signed in June 2016)

Observer States	Dialogue Partners	Guest Attendances
1. Afghanistan 2. Belarus 3. Iran 4. Mongolia	1. Armenia 2. Azerbaijan 3. Cambodia 4. Nepal 5. Sri Lanka 6. Turkey	1. ASEAN 2. CIS 3. Turkmenistan

Summits of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:

The summits of the Council of Heads of State are held annually on a rotation basis in accordance with the SCO Charter. The venue of the summit is decided in sync with the Russian alphabetical order of the member state's name. The Charter also calls for an annual summit of the Heads of Government of the member states on an annual basis. The Foreign affairs Ministers of the member states meet at least one month before the summit of Heads of State of the member states. Any urgent issue can be taken up by the Foreign Ministers of the member states if any of the two member states call for it.

Summit of Head of states

Date	Country	Location
14 June 2001	China	Shanghai
7 June 2002	Russia	Saint Petersburg
29 May 2003	Russia	Moscow
17 June 2004	Uzbekistan	Tashkent
5 July 2005	Kazakhstan	Astana
15 June 2006	China	Shanghai
16 August 2007	Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek
28 August 2008	Tajikistan	Dushanbe
15–16 June 2009	Russia	Yekaterinburg
10–11 June 2010	Uzbekistan	Tashkent
14–15 June 2011	Kazakhstan	Astana
6–7 June 2012	China	Beijing
13 September 2013	Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek
11–12 September 2014	Tajikistan	Dushanbe
9–10 July 2015	Russia	Ufa
23–24 June 2016	Uzbekistan	Tashkent
7–8 June 2017	Kazakhstan	Astana

Summit of Head of Government

Date	Country	Location
September 2001	Kazakhstan	Almaty
23 September 2003	China	Beijing
23 September 2004	Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek
26 October 2005	Russia	Moscow
15 September 2006	Tajikistan	Dushanbe
2 November 2007	Uzbekistan	Tashkent
30 October 2008	Kazakhstan	Astana
14 October 2009	China	Beijing
25 November 2010	Tajikistan	Dushanbe
7 November 2011	Russia	Saint Petersburg
5 December 2012	Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek
29 November 2013	Uzbekistan	Tashkent

14–15 December 2014	Kazakhstan	Astana
14–15 December 2015	China	Zhengzhou
2016	Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the end of cold war, the non-traditional security threats have become the source of growing concern around the world. Many scholars feel that war has ceased to be a means of resolving disputes and is no more synonymous solely with physical forms of combat. On the horizon are a host of potential wars-diplomatic, political, economic, trade, information, cultural and environmental, etc. we need to realize these contemporary threats and the profound effect they can have on a nation's growth and progress. However the form seems to have changed, argue A.P.S.Chouhan and Jyoti M.Pathania in their article on "Non-Traditional Security: A conceptual Analysis" (2011). In the context of Central Asia, scholars recognise multiple non-traditional security threats ranging from the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism, drug smuggling and narcotics, environmental degradation, water scarcity, food shortages, somatic diseases, transnational crimes, corruption, internal disputes etc.

Scholars working in this area have focused on the role of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in dealing with these threats in Central Asia and bringing in peace and stability. As argued by Stephen Aris in his article on "Central Asian Regional Security: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation" (2010), SCO has emerged as a framework for cooperation in the primary interest of its member-states. In the regions of weak states, SCO provides the basis for a different form of cooperation and regime security that should not be dismissed.

L.C. Kumar in his book "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Eurasian Security through Cooperation" (2010) argues that SCO has an open and inclusive character aligning with the principles of United Nations Charter and international law. He goes on to elaborate its significant contribution to the development of atmosphere conducive to peace and security in the region by counter-acting the non-traditional security threats in the region.

While dealing with the topic of terrorism in Central Asia, Lessya Karatayeva in her article " Problems of counter-terrorism efforts in Central Asia",(2010) talks about the counter-terrorism measures adopted by the Central Asian countries and the hurdles in the effectiveness of these measures. She points out how these five states are dependent on Russia and China for funding of the regional security structure. She observes that the SCO sustains on the huge amount of resources, human, intellectual and financial provided by Russia.

Ingmar Oldberg in his article "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Powerhouse or Papertiger?"(2007) talks at great length about the threat of separatism the Central Asian countries are facing. He argues that under the mandate of SCO Special Forces from Kazakhstan and China have been tracking down the Uighur separatist leaders in China who have ethnic and familial ties with Uighur community living in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Marina Sorkina in the article "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Geopolitics at the crossroads of Eurasia" (2009) argues about the origin of extremism in Central Asia. She argues that the policy of atheism followed by erstwhile USSR and the lack of a uniform formal model of Islam have been some of the very significant causes for the growth and revival of radical and extremist Islamism in the CAR. These radical outfits in the CAR spread their propaganda through terrorist organisations like the Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and Al-Qaeda. She distinguishes between the militant activities in the North Caucasus region from the terrorist activities in the CAR. She argues that the Chechen conflict was the result of maladministration of Russian government and the bad policies adopted by them. While the Islamic revivalism in the CAR was a result of spread of the notion of jihad and the emergence of a number of radical organisation is the region who were following extremist ideologies in the region. She claims that it spread to Chechnya as well in the form of Chechen holy jihad.

Apart for some differentiation, these groups carrying out such activities are directed against the secular liberal governments and the objective of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in the region. This Caliphate they want to set up on the lines of Sharia law. These outfits claim to be peaceful organisations while at the same time they sanction the use of non-violent means to spread their propaganda as legitimate and give them a holy form in form of jihad. The CAR borders Afghanistan which can explain the threat perception from these grouping. In context of regions like Dagestan and Chechnya radical elements were always present there but the poor handling by Russia and the worsening socio-economic situations in the region led to the easy recruitment of youth from the impoverished regions. They needed an outlet which was provided by these radical groupings. Faisal Javaid in his article "Role of SCO: with special reference to USA rivalry towards Central Asia"(2015) argues that the CAR during the period 1996-2000 was characterised by a steep rise in extremist activities influenced by radical Islam in countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Rise of Hizb ut tahrir and IMU along with the Al Qaeda can explain the growth and revival of such activities in these countries. This has emerged as grave security concern for the Central Asian States.

 He further elaborates the successful collaborative approach adopted by the member states of the SCO in countering the three evils of the CAR. He explains these joint cooperative mechanisms and

military exercises, meeting, summits and training sessions to arrest the growth of Islamic radicalism in the region.

Marcel De Haas in the article "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Towards a fully grown Security Alliance", (2007) talks about the evolution of SCO in the last one and half decades and how RATS as a security mechanism has yielded positive and encouraging outcomes for the member states of SCO in their efforts to counter the terrorist and extremist activities.

Stephen Aris in his article "Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Mapping Multilateralism in transition" (2013), goes on to assess and examine the current dynamics of SCO and its key roles and functions. The fight against the threat of three evils in the region is the core of the SCO security agenda. The SCo member states ate also furthering the list of areas where they can develop cooperation and can utilise their complementarities. The member states have agreed on the need for a consolidated and comprehensive outlook for regional and global issues which are of significance to ensure the stability and prosperity of the member states. Also those issues having long-term implications for the strategic interests of the region have been decided to be taken up on a priority basis. Primarily he focuses on the issue of drug peddling and illegal trafficking of narcotic substances in the CAR. This issue has become a cause of concern for all the member states of the SCO as all of them, some more than the others have become victims of this scourge. The growing instability and chaos in the neighbouring Afghanistan has further encouraged the anti-social elements and traders of drug narcotics. For dealing with this menace SCO had adopted a strategy in 2011 by all of its member states. This is the main policy area around which they have developed their coordination efforts to deal with this issue. They have developed a united regional response system to restrict the production, sale and trade of narcotics within their domestic borders.

On the Somatic diseases front, Feruzakhon Kakhkharova, in the article "Somatic Diseases: Non-Traditional threat to the Security in Central Asia" (2011), argues that HIV/AIDS, endocrine and various infectious diseases present a clear danger to the Central Asian States. The deteriorating health care facilities, Central Asia is at a risk of epidemics of various diseases. The potential consequences are so devastating that the Central Asian States should have no doubt as to the need to take adequate actions before the situation gets out of control and the epidemics explode.

In the context of ecological challenges, Kuldip Singh in his article, "Environmental Challenges and Central Asia on Water Related Problems", (2011) argues that Central Asian States are like the rest of the world are prone to global warming. However, by the virtue of its location and topography , this region is more vulnerable than others, though ultimately the globe as a whole would be the victim.

Niklas Swanstrom in his article "Traditional and non-traditional security threats in Central Asia: connecting the new and old" (2010) emphasises on the internal weaknesses and other obstructions in the efficient working of SCO as a regional security provider. He argues that first of all SCO is far from anything which is binding as a union, military alliance or a pact. There are no common military forces, joint command or even a combined planning staff. There are many organisational constrains and financial issues. Overdependence on Russia for financial support is not sustainable for SCO as a security community. Further the border issues and issues related over water sharing present a major constraint for smooth working of SCO to combat non-traditional security threats in the region.

However given all the constraints and loopholes, scholars like Roy Allison (2004), Stephen Blank (2008), Faisal Javaid (2015), Ingmar Oldberg (2007), Roger N. Mcdermott (2012), Stephen Aris (2009), etc are optimistic about bright prospects of the organisation as regional security provider especially for combating non-traditional security threats in the region.

Anara Tabyshalieva in her article , 'Challenges of Regional Cooperation in Central Asia : preventing Ethnic conflict in Ferghana Valley (2012) looks at the crisis of social fragmentation in the Central Asian Region and its consequences in the context of regional cooperation. She talks about the Soviet legacy in the Central Asian Region and then goes on to explain its impact on the regional social and ethnic divisions. She also highlights the current state of ethnic and religious tensions and its perpetuation in the CAS. She also underlines the substantive attempts of the CAS to unify their newly independent states through appeals to each state's distinct interpretation of its role in the region's history and culture.

The basic common aim of the SCO has naturally been to preclude conflicts and build confidence among the member states. The fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism have emerged as the most urgent and important tasks for cooperation, since these problems are transnational in character and directly threatening the stability in the region, about which Russia and China are also concerned about. Thus it has the backing and support of two superpowers of the region. SCO performs other functions as well; however the major outcome of this organisation has been that it underpins their independence by giving equal voice with Russia and China as well as the veto powers. Also it boosts the sovereignty of the Central Asian countries as SCO does not hinder those developing contacts with USA, EU, NATO, etc.

DEFINITION, RATIONALE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of this work is to study and analyze the role of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in dealing with non-traditional security threats in Central Asia. The weaknesses of the member states in their domestic realm do not allow them to fight these threats on their own. They realize the transnational nature of these threats which can multiply in different manifestations and form if not cut at their roots. The vicious cycle of weak governments and rise in non traditional security threats will only further aggravate the misery of people in the region.

In the context of this, SCO has provided a platform to its member states to deal with these threats. SCO has emerged as a platform for the Central Asian nations to address the challenges in form of trade in illicit drug trafficking, terrorism, organised crimes, extremism, etc, to name a few. These threaten the regional and national stability of the member states through problems such as drug addiction among the youth, communicable diseases, radicalisation of masses with false propaganda, transnational criminal activities, etc. massive corruption in these states further obstructs their economic and political structures and functions. It has been argued that the domestic and regional environment of the CAR provides suitable grounds for growth and spread of the non-traditional security threats since it is linked with unrestricted transnational nature of these threats.

Thus the SCO appears as an appropriate means to address these concerns of transnational nature. SCO has developed mechanisms to combat these issues at a higher level and adopt a coordinated approach to the security issue in the region. SCO has been regularly emphasising and working towards an approach to these threats based on recognised international law and standards. SCO in effect has presented a new concept of security aimed at the development of cooperation, mutual respect and recognition of territorial sovereignty, mutual trust and an equal partnership and participation.

The time frame 2001-2015 has been chosen as SCO was established in 2001 and the most recent summit of SCO was held at Ufa in Russia in July 2015. The summit was significant as it enlarged the membership of SCO with full membership accorded to India and Pakistan.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the evolution of SCO as a regional security apparatus from 2001-2015.
2. To assess the role of SCO in the security scenario of Central Asia.
3. To identify the activities of SCO to mitigate the non-traditional threats in the region.
4. To examine the role of SCO as a security community.
5. To study the role of SCO in ensuring peace and stability in the region.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What are the non-traditional security challenges in the context of Central Asia ?
2. What are the conditions which make SCO a formidable security apparatus in Central Asia?
3. What are the major treaties and conventions among SCO members for curbing non-traditional security threats in the region?
4. What are the structural and policy problems that prevent SCO from being an effective Central Asian security organisation?
5. How can SCO evolve as a more comprehensive institution in connecting and integrating Central Asia to deal with non-traditional security threats?
6. What have been the achievements of SCO as a security community?

HYPOTHESES:

1. Common understanding regarding the core non-traditional threats: Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism, helped SCO to develop as a strong and effective multilateral organisation.
2. The constraints to SCO's effectiveness are related to inter-state disputes over water, environment and treatment of ethnic minorities etc in Central Asia.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The proposed study will be based on the descriptive and analytical methods of research. The study will discuss about the salient aspects of the non-traditional security threats in the context of Central Asia , particularly the three evils in the region (separatism, extremism and terrorism) and illegal drug trafficking. The study will be using both qualitative and quantitative methods. In order to study the various views of SCO as regional security apparatus, it will take numbers of variables such as treaties, journals, magazines, thesis, newspapers ,books, media sources, etc. Both primary and secondary sources will be consulted for the research. The primary sources will include the official data, documents, treaties between the countries. The secondary sources will primarily include books, journals, newspapers and articles as well as internet sources. The relevant information from lectures, seminars, workshop and symposium will be used to fill in the gap.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERS:

Chapter 1: Introduction: Formation and Evolution of SCO

The introductory chapter will discuss in brief the concept of Security with an overview of the present security scenario in Central Asian region. The chapter will discuss the gradual structural and institutional evolution of SCO in last decade with a brief mention of years leading to Shanghai Five and then to the SCO.

Chapter 2: Non-traditional security threats in Central Asia

The chapter will discuss the major non-traditional security threats in Central Asia. It will give a general outline of those threats which have risen prominently in the context of Central Asian Region.

Chapter 3: Role of SCO in fighting the Three Evils of Central Asian Region

The chapter will mention the mandate of the SCO in fighting the three evils. It will mention the treaties, conventions and agreements among the nations to fight these evils. However the main focus will remain on the issue of cross border terrorism.

Chapter 4: Advantages and Constraints in SCO's evolution as a Security Community

The chapter will examine the factors which act as advantages and constraints for the evolution of SCO as a security community, while asserting that SCO will continue to play an important role in the security dimension in the region.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The chapter will summarize the key findings and arguments of the study and conclude with the testing of the hypotheses.

CHAPTER 2: NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN CENTRAL ASIA

WHAT ARE NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS

In this age of twenty-first century, the change has been swift and complex. knowledge replaces the 'the mindless fist', communication technology has transformed us into a 24-hour society that never sleeps, and a globalised planet with transnational boundaries makes us at once interdependent and conscious of each other. In the changing scenario every aspect of our lives is bound to change. Thus, threat perceptions also change. Security threat has transcended from merely being related to territorial defence to encompassing other areas of conflict. These threats might be internal or external in origin but ultimately threaten the human security. The conventional notion of Security now includes the Non-Traditional security as well. It has begun to be accepted the world over and the importance of deterring existing threats and combating new threats has been well recognised.

Re-conceptualisation of security became necessary because of gradual but fundamental and long term changes in the international system. End of cold war led to a globally interdependent world, change in the nature of warfare to include a struggle for techno-economic superiority, political and cultural space rather than purely military might. It marked a paradigm shift in the study and analysis of security and world order from a traditional framework to a non-traditional one.

End of cold war was accompanied by several Non-Traditional Security threats in form of international terrorism, environmental degradation, cross border crimes, etc, which led to the multifaceted concept of security. This other dimension of security was never given serious thoughts by domestic governments. These threats emerged to gain importance if not to overshadow the traditional threats to security. The notion of security was broadened and the focus went beyond state and military security. These non-military threats to security pose a significant danger to a nation's progress, development and unity. There is an imminent need to identify the macro non-traditional threats and prepare to combat the dominant security challenges of the new millennium. Whether these threats have domestic origin or from outside the domestic territories are insignificant to their consideration as security threats. Similarly, whether they are a product of deliberate or inadvertent acts is irrelevant. The harmful impact which they will have on the individual or the surrounding environment is what actually matters. Hence, there has been a paradigm shift in the security concerns of all nations from a narrow, unilateralist, traditional military threat to a much broader, multilateral, non-military threat to security.

Against this backdrop, the late twentieth century and prominently the twenty-first century saw a rise of non-traditional threats, in particular human security. As per analysts (Bajpai 2000:7), the most

important torchbearers of the idea of human security or non-traditional security were a series of reports from multinational independent commissions consisted of many prominent leaders, intellectuals and academicians.

Theoretically, the first aspect regarding Non-Traditional threats to security is the object of the threat, whether they represent danger to life itself or to the satisfaction of basic needs and the fulfilment of human aspirations. There is a five-fold classification in this respect (Fischer 1993:14). Their geographic sources may be internal, external, emanating from some other country or even global. Negating these five dangers to security and their geographic source are the effects as mentioned against each one of them below:

DANGERS/ THREATS TO	EFFECTS
Survival	Death
Health	Disease
Economical well being	Poverty
Liveable environment	Environmental degradation
Political rights	Oppression

These five type of threats listed above are closely related to each other and partially overlap. Chronic diseases can be fatal; poverty gives birth to malnutrition, followed by deprivation among children. Environmental pollution in many cases can cause death, while soil erosion diminishes agricultural production thus decline in income and creation conditions of poverty. There also exists a vicious cycle by which two or more of these dangers can mutually reinforce each other. Such relationships shall be further focused on while suggesting a response mechanism.

Though the subject of Non-Traditional Security is at a nascent stage, scholars have come up with many theories on these threats categorised under realist, liberal and idealist schools. The end of cold war has forced a major rethink about the basic assumptions underlying security studies. The realist and neo-realist theory considers that the state acts only as a function of its selfish interests, first among these interests being the search for greater security (Fischer 1997: 5).

National strategic thinkers are supposed to protect the fundamental values of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of their state are fundamental values. The threats which can endanger these core values are considered as threats to their national security. Some of the threats may come from domestic sphere in the form of open challenge to the ruling government, a civil war, etc, which threaten the stability of society which the policy makers are

expected to protect. A state incapable of dealing with such challenges itself may be considered a threat to national security and stability. However, the common notion of challenges to national security are understood as those which emanate from outside the domestic territory. Particularly, nations are careful of challenges posed by the use of force or threat of use of force by one state against the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of another state. This concern for national security is the primary focus of the Realist approach to international relations.

The realist concern is majorly about the threats of a military nature against the state from threats emanating outside the boundaries. Developments inside the domestic territory may be sufficiently threatening to the viability or stability of the state, but the main concern of realists lies with the external threats. Realism emphasises not only on military response but also on non-military coercive countermeasures, e.g. political and economic sanctions against the sources of such threats. But for Realists the term 'Traditional Security' is generally referred to those threats which are threats to national security.

The liberal notion of Security includes not only the protection of the foundations of the state against external threats but also other types of values and other types of threats. Among the values of concern to the liberals are human rights, individual and communal identity, individual's spiritual growth, the material well-being of individuals and communities, public health, social and cultural viability of ethnic and national groups, environmental protection and sustainable development. The protection of these values is what is generally referred to as Non-Traditional Security (Akaha 2002:12).

The transnational/ idealist school has as its paradigm that international life was founded on the search for peace, not on the search for power, as the realist school assumed. This peace could henceforth not be assured by the search for a balance of power, but on the contrary through the satisfaction of the needs of all nations and the democratisation of international life. The transnationalists envisaged that they could transcend quest for power over others by taking into account solidarity of interests. They pursued the objective of creating an international society, or a social pact among states, which would permit the eradication of the violence intrinsic in national egoisms.

While the domain of Traditional Security is well defined and zealously guarded, no consensus is found as to what comprises Non-Traditional Security threats, what it includes, what it excludes and where to draw a line if there exists any. Scholars argue about an interfacing or mingling of agendas between NTS and TS (Buzan 1997:10). Interfacing becomes relevant because while the old security agendas continue to exist, newer issues crop up, mingle, and co-exist with the traditional concerns. Requiring a non-traditional approach to deal with traditional militaristic security makes the interfacing between the two dimensions of security all the more pertinent e.g. ethnicity and

ethno nationalistic insurgencies are traditional challenges to the state authority. Thus, it seems that the new security concerns are not mutually exclusive rather they overlap and have linkages with Traditional security issues.

NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN CENTRAL ASIA

After the disintegration of Soviet Union and independence of five Central Asian states, the strategic environment of the region came under a constant state of flux. A series of new security challenges emerged in front of these countries which were regional in nature and had trans-national effects. The Central Asian states are facing common security challenges in form of corruption, terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking, severe epidemics, transnational crime organisations, environmental degradation, illegal migration, etc. These issues pose a challenge for domestic governments in Central Asian countries. The incapacities of Central Asian states in dealing with these threats at individual level makes it imminent for CAS to come together and address these threats at the national as well as at the regional level (Stobdan 2006:154).

These threats have adverse impact on the stability and development of Central Asian states. These have the potential of reversing decades of hard work in social and economic sectors. The Central Asian countries are countries in transition, generally categorised as developing states. The origin of these threats are very much linked to the larger social, political and economic factors (Blank 2007:42). Weak political and economic scenario not only leads to negative development but also threatens the very fabric of the weak states in which such threats thrive in conducive environment.

TERRORISM AND RADICAL ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Terrorism has probably been one of the most frequent subjects of analysis for nearly last two decades. Terrorism can be defined as a breach of state's monopoly on violence (Buzurtanova 2011:2). Terrorism is the use of force by non-state actors in order to achieve political goals. This is how terrorism is distinguished from other Non-Traditional Security threats such as organised crime, environmental degradation, etc. Many scholars consider terrorism is a natural response of the marginal when there are no other options left to influence the politics and the policy (Swanstrom 2009:78).

In case of Central Asian states, all of them name terrorism as one of the principal threats to their security, but they differ in terms of their localisations. For some of the Central Asian states, terrorist threats has external character like in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan while for other states it comes from within like Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and in some cases it may also emerge both from within and beyond like in Tajikistan (Rashid 2011:8).

There is a tendency among all the Central Asian states to place state security, its stability and sovereignty over the security of their citizens. There is a lack of substantial mechanism of power succession in these young states which clearly shows that the process of nation-building has not been completed so far. Given this situation the threat of terrorism becomes all the more pertinent. In Kazakhstan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HUT) is probably one of the most notorious among scores of terrorist groups. Other active groups include Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Al-qaeda, Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahedins, etc. HUT first appeared in Kazakhstan in the south in the 1990s (Luzyanin 2007:83). It is presently active in southern part of the country. Kazakhstan also faces threat from Uyghur and Russian nationalists. Thus it has consistently extradited terrorist suspects to China, Russia and Uzbekistan. In response to this Kazakhstani government has been actively using all the instruments available for combating terrorist activities in its territory.

Tajikistan faces the main threat of terrorist activities from those forces who were opposed to the Comprehensive peace agreement that ended the civil war in Tajikistan in 1997. These are Islamist militants led by Tohir Yo 'ldosh and Juma Namangani who formed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan(IMU) in 1998. Their main agenda is to unite Central Asia as an Islamic state (Norling 2007:430). Also, significant threat comes from neighbouring Afghanistan and Xinjiang provinces in China. Geographical proximity escalates the threat perception. Tajikistan thus focuses on border control mechanisms.

Terrorism in Uzbekistan is more prevalent than in any other Central Asian states. There has been a series of terrorist attacks, Tashkent bombings (1999), IMU invasions of 2000-2001, and Tashkent attacks in 2004. The country has been extremely vulnerable to Islamic extremism and thus lies at the forefront in Central Asia in combating this threat.

Terrorism in Kyrgyzstan has increased since the U.S. military invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban in 2001 (Yermukanoy 2005:8). Southern Kazakhstan is increasingly sympathetic to terrorism and radical Islam.

As Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan banned Hizb-ut-Tahrir as a terrorist organisation. Other radical groups still giving the headache are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the radical Islamic group Akromiya.

Radical Islamists have always found a favourable place in Central Asia which is a historic centre of classical Islam located in a region of strategic, cultural and historical importance (Sahai 2005:98). Yet, only in recent times have radical Islamists entered the region, because during the Soviet era it had been closed off to the rest of the Islamic world. For most Radical Islamists, the main entry point to the region was the Ferghana Valley which was an area densely populated with deeply religious people, and at present, which is being shared among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and

Tajikistan. These Radical Islamist groups existed even during the Soviet period, but remained underground. Only during the period of Gorbachev's reforms they emerged. Over time, other groups also became active in the region, including Hizb ut-Tahrir (HUT) and its splinter groups Akramiylar and Hizb un-Nusrat, as well as Uzun Soqol (Long Beards), Nurcular, Tabligh Jamaat, Lashkar-i-Taiba, Hizballah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), and the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG). These groups have different methods and strategies but they all have a shared goal to overthrow the secular governments and establish in its place an Isamic state. Currently Hizb ut-Tahrir is the most popular radical group in Central Asia (Wadlow 2011:72). This movement attracts lots of youth because of its coherent ideology which other groups lack.

In the early 1990s, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union there was a general breakdown of the socio-political system in the CAR. Collapse of socio-economic structures and decline the role of state, the role of radical Islam increased. It accentuated their freedom of action. On the eve of the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997), Islamists became one of the forces of the emerging opposition, and in Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley, radical organisations held local councils, spreading its extremist propaganda and volunteer militias (Jiali 2009:67). During this time in Tajikistan, radicals played a major role where after achieving independence, a deep political, social and economic crisis, as well as disruption of the balance between rival clans led to a civil war.

In Uzbekistan the situation was different as in the Fergana Valley, where the decline of the state, social crisis and ethnic tensions created a power vacuum on a local level; which was filled in by radical Islamists, most important being Adolat (Justice), operating in Namangan.

Post 9/11 attacks, the level of activities of the Islamic radicals in Central Asia declined drastically, and its character changed. They restricted their activities to propaganda and recruiting volunteers. However numerous incidents occurred as a result of growing social discord, ethnic tensions and the CAS attributed their causality to radical organisations to combat opposition, tighten its control over the society and legitimise the above actions on the international arena. The revolt in the Uzbek city of Andijan in 2005, is one such incident whereby the rebellion against the authorities was partially caused by the Islamic factors (Baran 2004:6). However, the main reasons for the protests were the atrocities of the authorities and social tensions, while the driving force came from adherents of branches of Islam traditional to the region, and not the radical Islamic militants, who are mostly Salafists. Other instance of actual activity by radical Islamic militants in Central Asia was the incidents in Kazakhstan which began in the second half of 2011, and the attempts by Islamist terrorist organisations to influence the situation (Lang 2013:10). Kazakhstan in last few years has witnessed an unprecedented series of terrorist attacks mainly in its western part.

In response to these terrorist attacks, the Central Asian states have imposed several restrictions over religious freedom. All except Tajikistan have restricted religious parties such as the Islamic Renewal Party and maintained Soviet-era religious oversight bodies and approved clergy. The Central Asian governments censor religious literature and sermons. According to some analysts, the tight control of religious affairs may cause a wide gap that these radical Islamic groups are aiming to fill. In many cases, as can be seen, government crackdowns directed against Islamic extremism have hidden clan, political and religious repression. In some regions of the Ferghana valley, some Uzbek communities kept Islamic practices alive throughout the repressive Soviet period, and they now oppose the secular oriented Uzbek government. Islamic extremist threats in the regimes may increase with the economic distress widening as a result of the global economic slowdown (Watson 2007:30). Large number of unemployment and high poverty rates among the youth in the Ferghana valley are widely cited by analysts as making youth more vulnerable to get attracted to religious extremist organisations.

Thus, the Central Asian states face the genuine rise of terrorist activities and thus it is imperative that the Central Asian governments realized the threat soon and chose the platform of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to fight the terrorist activities both on national level and regional level. However the readiness to increase the level of political pluralism as a long term strategy to fight terrorism is still questionable.

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia Region has made a negative mark on the world map as the hotbed of major international drug trafficking centre. According to United Nations drug control experts, 80 percent of heroin consumed in Western Europe originates in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Olcott 2000:15). Geography and history make Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan attractive areas for drug traffic. These states are situated at the crossroads of world's largest illicit opium producing regions and the most lucrative markets in Western Europe. CAS is located in the close proximity of the countries forming the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran). Through China, these CAS have access to the countries of the Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos, and Thailand), which are the world's largest producers of illicit opium trade.

CAS such as Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan share boundaries with Afghanistan counted as the largest opium producer in the world. Also the CAS border China which happens to offer a market for drugs and also a supplier of ephedrine, which is illegal in most parts of the worlds but legal in China.

The northern and Balkan heroin routes:

[Source: http://migaid.org/balkan-help]
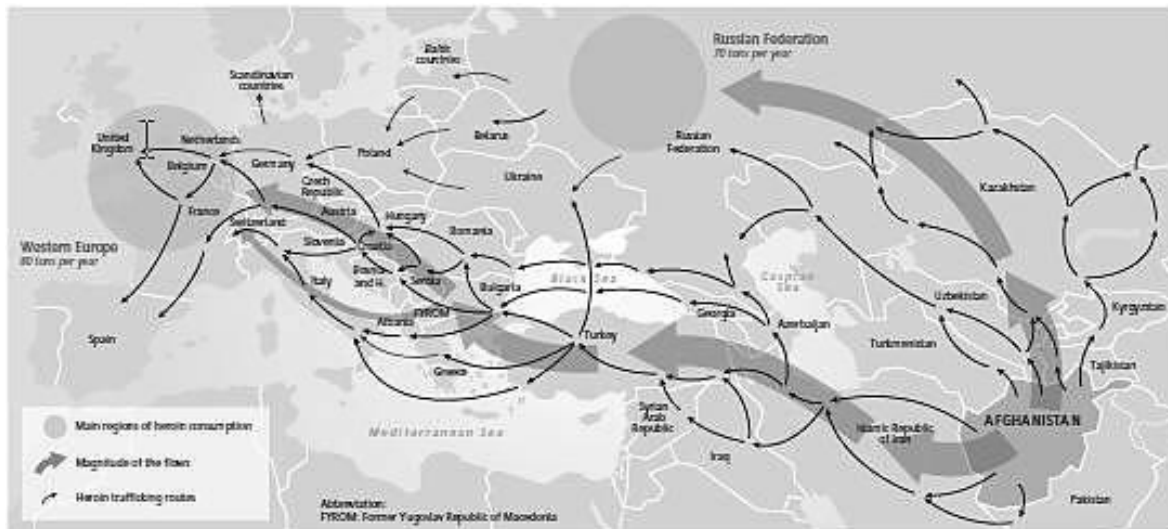
With such massive trade of drugs and related narcotics, there is an adverse impact on the CAS. These products not only deteriorate the health sector but they are also fundamental in composing 'fuels for small wars' in destabilising the heartland Central Asian States. It has been estimated that around 30 million people at some point of time were living on as drug farmers along with their families whose livelihood depends on cultivating illegal hemp, poppy and cocoa (Makhmudov 2011:10). Not only that, narcotics business serve as liquid commodities, especially during the financial crisis time. They act as sources of mobile financing for local wars in the CAR.

To cater to the needs of the drugs industry deteriorating economic conditions are exploited and in many instances are artificially created. Economic depravity makes the local administration and border guards complicit in corruption in form of bribes and ordinary citizens more willing to take the risks associated with the transport or cultivation of drugs. Thus the menace of drugs is directly linked to organised crime. The most extreme Islamic radical groups are thus involved in a big way with the drug trade, as are those that seek weapons.

The increased presence of drugs in Central Asia impacts the Central Asian population in myriad ways. It puts a burden on the government's exchequer, increases crime rates, hampers public safety, rising cases of domestic violence, increases cost of health care, causes spread of deadly infectious diseases and further undermines the economic productivity.

The Central Asian states lack the funds and technical expertise to wage a successful war against drugs. Lack of political willingness is another major issue. There is a dangerous vicious cycle developing. Since the weak domestic regimes are hesitant to take the political risks associated with opposing a dangerous opponent, the threat is palpable (Litovkin 2012:184). Drug trade already has

a powerful presence in the region and if stricter actions are not taken by the CAS the effects will be all the more far-reaching.

The proliferation of drugs is a burden on the economic and social environment and a threat to the traditional system of values. Drug addiction damages the physical, psychological, and emotional health of whole pockets of society, wreaking particular havoc on the younger generation. The proliferation of drug trade in the CAS also finances the separatist, radical, religious, and terrorist movements that are active in the region.

The efforts of CAS have been underfunded and marked by the frustrations produced by engaging with governments that are unable or unwilling to take comprehensive measures to address the problem. Regional security structures like SCO, NATO, OSCE, etc are assisting these CAS in a major way. International assistance could help address the funding and technical problems associated with combating Central Asia's drug problem.

SOMATIC DISEASES IN CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Along with the challenge of drug peddling, the Central Asian states are facing a number of somatic diseases in form of HIV/AIDS, endocrine and various infectious diseases. HIV/AIDS particularly presents a clear danger to states, their citizens, and institutions. With dilapidated and deteriorated healthcare facilities and health systems, the CAS are at the risk of epidemics of various diseases (Bazanov 2010:44). The socio-potential consequences are so devastating that the CAS should have no doubt as to the need to take adequate actions before the situation gets out of control and the epidemics explode.

Infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS have transnational character and have direct impact both on the individual welfare and on societies as a whole. Somatic diseases threaten human security on several levels. By damaging health and shortening life expectancy, it introduces material, physical and emotional burdens on families and communities. It is generally accompanied by violence and discrimination against the infected and their families, leading to social tensions and in many cases human rights violations.

Generally, somatic diseases lead to psycho-organic disorders whereby patients show increased fatigue, annoyance, susceptibility, and low labour efficiency. Thus it adversely affects the economic productivity causing economic losses to the nation. With the family structures breaking down as a result of mental alterations and placing additional burden on already politically and economically fragile states, somatic diseases directly threaten the security, viability and prosperity of a nation. All these lead to impoverishment of the citizens and the states.

In case of CAS, HIV/AIDS has emerged as the major menace in the category of somatic diseases. Today, according to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Eastern Europe and Central Asia have the fastest HIV/AIDS growth rates in the world (Ancker 2007:45).

The threat is dreadful for smaller CAS, which are not very populous countries and have limited financial, human and technical resources, even a small percentage of HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is sure to have an enormous impact. Given this background, the spread of this disease will have an adverse impact on the human capital, economic, political and military security of the Central Asian States and which makes it imperative to analyse the threat as a Non- Traditional Security threat to the CAS. The Central Asian region is characterised with high levels of denial and socio-cultural misunderstanding about the disease and absence of political initiative and poor health infrastructure make the situation all the more dangerous (Litovkin 2010:78). Following map shows the status of HIV/AIDS in the CAS.
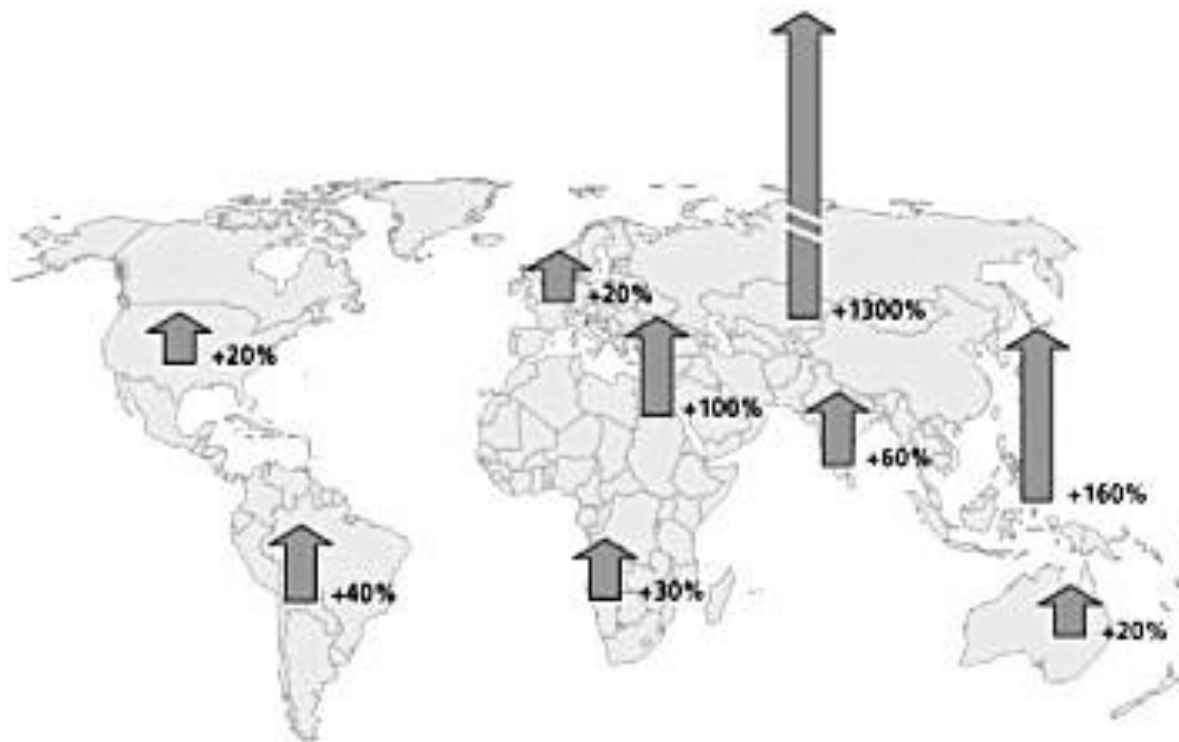
Map: Trend in HIV infection among young people, 1996-2008
[*Source: UN AIDS/WHO, 2008*]

The following graph shows the HIV/AIDS infections newly diagnosed rates per million populations by some specific countries of CSA.
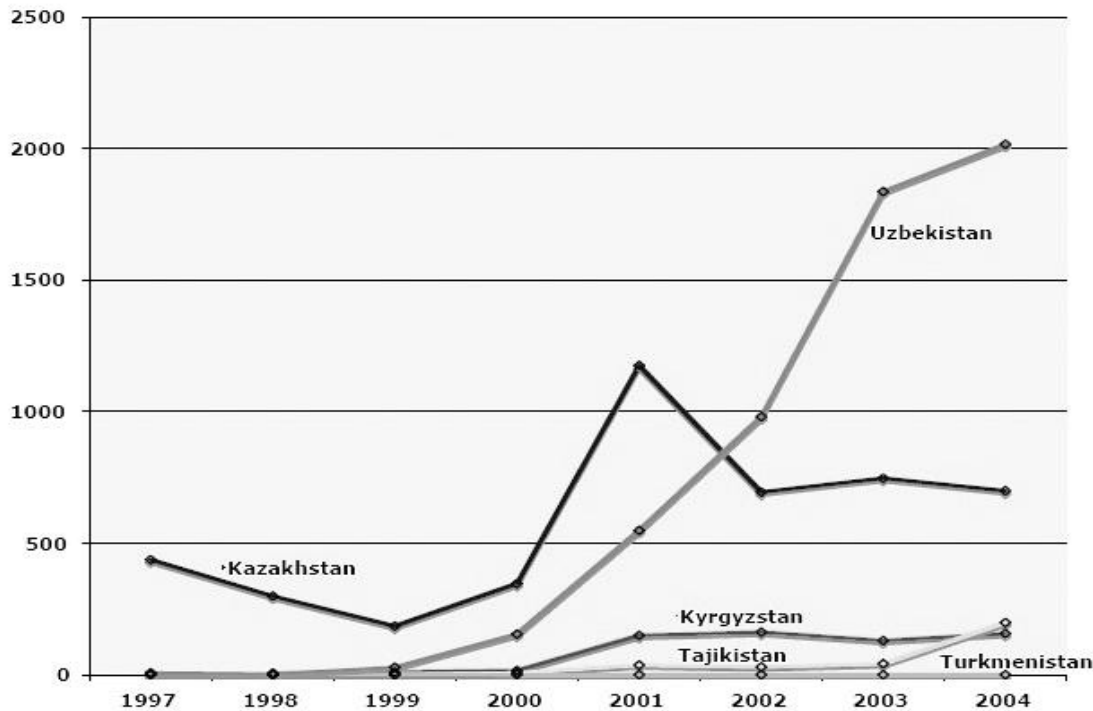
Graph: HIV/AIDS infections newly diagnosed rates per million populations
[*Source: UN AIDS/WHO, year wise report*]

Since HIV/AIDS affects the young and the most productive group of people, it deprives the nation of the much needed human capital. Poverty and fewer employment opportunities drive the young sections to indulge in criminal and illegal activities for survival and recreation purposes. Physical and emotional violence are by-products of such activities. Socially disadvantaged women often become victims of human trafficking and sex slavery making them more prone to the increased risk of HIV infection and subsequently further transmission to others. Thus HIV/AIDS erodes human capital and restricts it from replenishing itself. To sum it up, the negative effect on every strata of the society has the potential to disintegrate families which is a base of a strong society.

The untimely death of adults and children means that local regional and national development goals may not be reached. Absence of proper awareness programmes makes the disease self – perpetuating. Shifting of the scarce resources to deal with this threat to security is not a priority for CAS. Growing stigma and dissatisfaction can lead to violence against the state further endangering the fragile nature of polity in CAS. Not only that economically, the basis of labour force i.e. human health, which is human health is depleted. Slow economic growth because of fall in productivity, leaves the states with minimum resources and political willingness to look after the sick and

affected victims of HIV/AIDS. Lack of benefit package leaves the ailing on its own. Following figure shows the domestic spending.

Domestic funding of total HIV Spending
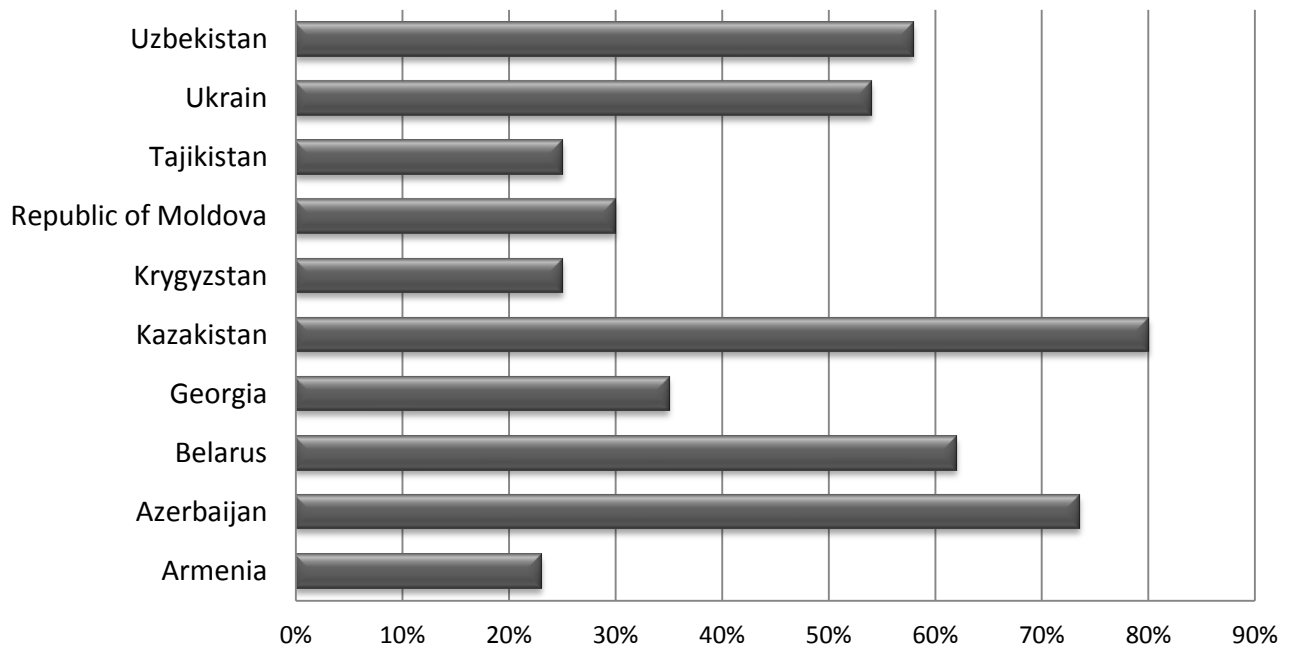
Source: global AIDS Response Progress Reporting 2014. Data is for 2013 (Except Ukrain(2010)

In an agricultural society, ailing labour force may lead to a shift in less labour intensive crops, while many may shift from cash crops to growing subsistence farming. In countries such as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan which rely mainly on cotton exports to earn foreign exchange, may get affected. Since the CAS are interdependent in terms of regional economy, decline in one's economic growth might lead a chain reaction.

In terms of political consequences, it has negative fallout on the nascent democratic processes in CAS and also on the civil society processes. Instead of focusing on issues of political and economic nature, emphasis will be on how to deal with the epidemic. Catering to the infectious disease, the CAS, while providing for social security measures and health infrastructure, may resort to repression against the population.

Burden on exchequer will affect the decision making abilities and policy formulations. Unstable political, social and economic scenario also discourages any foreign investment. Thus, it will rob the CAS of the much needed aid and assistance. Chances of state failure in case of repression by states are very high and that is what this threat has potential of.

Militarily, it depletes the regional defence capabilities; conditions of stress, lack of awareness about HIV/AIDS, peer-pressure, etc may drive the young recruits to unprotected sex and use of injecting drugs. This phenomenon is quite common in the developing parts of the world. With weakened immunity they are not able to participate in the combat operations. Thus it limits the defence capabilities of the CAS.

The CAS as a region of multi-ethnic groups, and diverse regional and tribal factions and low development growth has an important task in front of it to deal with this Non-Traditional Security threat. The transnational impact and regional security make it imperative for CAS to come together on a common platform assisted by regional and international agencies. A comprehensive pro-people approach and political willingness are pre-requisites to defeat this menace.

ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Human history in CAS dates back to thousands of years. The Central Asian Region has always been strategically very important as it links Asia and Europe. It has always been regarded as single geographical and historical unit. The region thus shares coming ecological issues and concerns. The CAR has witnessed large scale ecological degradation and degeneration of environmental resources. The region has been facing ecological disasters in form of drought, increasing salination of river water bodies, depletion of natural resources, contamination of land and water bodies by nuclear wastes. Since these disasters have wide reaches and implications are to be felt by the adjoining reasons, the resolution calls for cooperation among the member of states along with support and participation of the international community (Hilton 2009:84).

The most challenging environmental threats in the CAS are as follows:

- The harmful wastes arising out of open mining and uncontrolled and unregulated disposal of these toxic wastes, the toxic radioactive wastes on agricultural lands and in river bodies pollutes these natural resources making them unsuitable for human use.
- The uncontrolled mining of radioactive minerals without any regulated set of guidelines is increasingly harming the natural environment and causing severe disease problems.
- Anthropogenic activities are also creating threat to environment in form of eco-terrorism. Sensitive ecological sites are being populated by people and commercial infrastructure thus leading to massive environmental problems.
- The crisis in the Aral sea is bound to effect many nations in the region.
- Irrational water usage and construction of heavy irrigation projects and huge dams in the sensitive zones impact the environmental stability
- Irrational and over exploitation in the region around Kumtor gold mines area.

- Inefficient ecological monitoring of the south eastern part of the Issyk-kul lake.

Since the Soviet period the massive over exploitation of uranium mines in the CAR from theMailuu-Suu in the Kyrgyz Republic, in Taboshar region in Tajikistan and at a number of closed uranium mines in the Ferghana valley, pose a severe threat in form of chemical and biological disasters (Srivastava 2011:32).

In 1996, an attempt was made to resolve the Kara-Darya issue under the guidance and supervision of the International Foundation for Ecology and Health (ECOSAN) with the participation of representatives and experts from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Kazakhstan.

The river is polluted by radioactive wastes which enter into the Syr-Darya river. The region regularly faces the problems of landslides and mud flows damaging houses and causing losses to people and governments. Melting of snow from the mountains leads to these problems when temperature rises. Incidents of mudflows also lead to toxic radioactive wastes and nuclear fissile material to wash into the river water bodies in the region like the Mailuu-Suu river (Krugman 2009:42). Following map shows the radioactive, chemical and biological hazards in Central Asia.

Radioactive, chemical and biological hazards in Central Asia

[Source: http://www.unisdr.org]
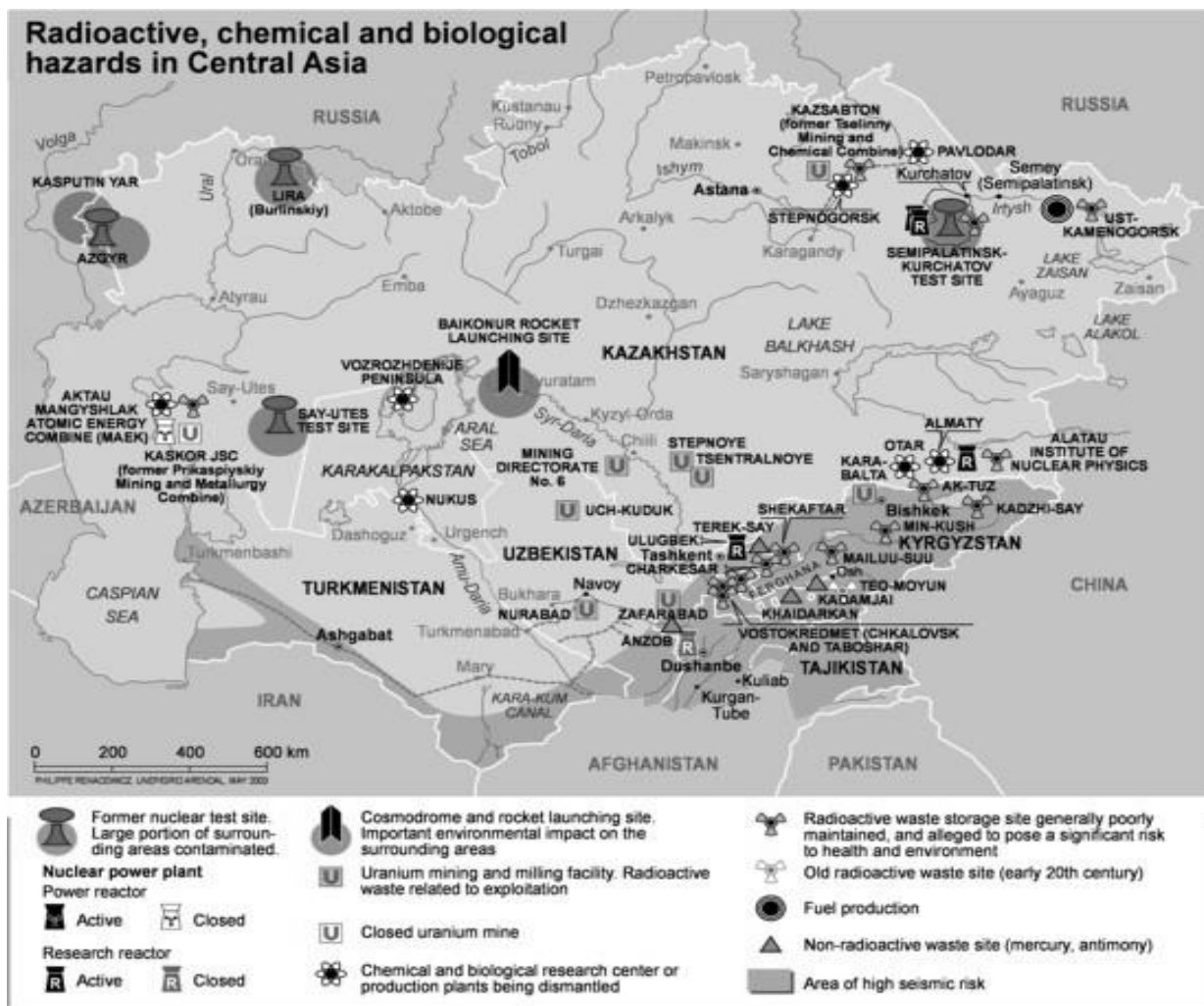
According to a UN report which found that Central Asia is particularly vulnerable to desertification, and thus it requires all the nations in the region to urgently work out some joint strategy to combat this Non-Traditional Security threat (Dash 2005:62). With rampant exploitation of land and unsustainable irrigation practices soil degradation is another important ecological concern.

In the context of CAS, man made threats to the environment in form of ecological terrorism has gained significance. Terror groups eyeing to harm the life and health of people in the region have found new ways to do that. Potential targets to cause a havoc on the CAS include the destruction of natural dams in the high-mountainous lakes of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. If radioactive wastes and toxic uranium get into the waterways of Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, the polluted water will also be circulated throughout the territory of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Such a situation can cause irreversible damages not only at the local level but also at the regional level (Sengupta 2009:330).

Most of the Central Asian region lie in an arid climatic zone with soaring temperatures, frequent droughts and characterized by low annual rainfall. Analysts agree that unsustainable land use, deforestation, excessive grazing by animals and poor coordination of water use has made the region prone to massive risk. Areas surrounding the Aral sea suffer from soil salination as well as desertification (Evans 2008:25).

Industrial waste comes up as another set of environmental concern for CAS. The improper and inappropriate waste disposal system accelerates the problem. By 2005, hazardous industrial wastes amounted close to 4 billion tonnes (ADB 2005: 45). In Kazakhstan where industries are located in its eastern part in proximity to natural resources present there, the problem of hazardous waste disposal is quite palpable. Human security is at great risk threatened by contaminated surface and groundwater by heavy metals. Environmental problems may accumulate and lead to decline in life expectancy, large scale emigration and widening gap between socio-economic liberties and a reactionary political regime.

Deforestation in the region has increased annually between 1990 and 2000 by 2.6 percent (FAO 2000:67). In the border region of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, people are extensively using the territory for animal rearing, grazing and cultivation of crops. Small settlements have been built by people as well. These human settlements are causing elevated pressure on environment and a creating a risk for conflict. Deforestation is leading to scarce water resources and food shortages. The Ferghana valley and the upland part around the valley have emerged as the centre of environmental degradation with immediate socio-economic consequences. The region has huge problem of non-availability of safe drinking water supply and issue of space crunch for settlements.

These risk factors are increasingly endangering the lives of the people living in the CAS. Thus the CAS need to do a regional assessment and risk analysis as the precarious domestic situation and common boundaries require regional cooperation. The situation is so grim that the problem can only be solved if all the CAS work together. Each state will have to introduce proper land use methods and regulate grazing while cooperating on farming technology, forestry and water management.

There is a strong and immediate linkage between environmental degradation and security. Environmental degradation and uneven distribution of resources accompanied by struggle to get hold on to resources actually form a complex web of causality in which numerous socio-economic problems like population pressures, instability, large scale migration, ethnic tensions, etc are

enmeshed all together. Scarcity of natural resources and ecological crisis are both the causes and consequences of these socio-economic issues. In fact, in many cases they get intensified.

Depletion and pollution of ground water and rivers, loss of natural vegetation, global climate change, rise in sea levels, etc are all outcomes of unsustainable usage of natural resources and human led transformation processes. These negative environmental changes are a result of excessive and unregulated consumption and resources wasting system of production which expose national and regional and in many instances international security to substantial risks. Environmental stress thus can be catalytic in its impact.

Since environmental degradation accelerates already existing development dilemmas, it has definite impact on basic human needs and sustainable livelihood of people, and can become a substantial threat to human security leading to unfavourable socio-economic conditions.

POLICY ORIENTATIONS AND ROLE OF SCO IN MITIGATING NON-TRADITIONAL THREATS IN CAS

Members of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation have evolved strategies in multiple fields related to Non-Traditional security threats in existing in the region. Theses involve maintenance of peace and stability in the region, confidence building processes, annual summits, departmental meetings, joint action against terrorism, extremism and organised transnational crime, disarmament and arms control, coordination and sharing of water resources, promotion of regional trade and investment and information sharing in areas which are important for dealing with threat to security.

The organisation is active in the field of confronting both internal and external challenges as the CAS recognize the transnational nature of these problems. Internal disparities aside, resolutions of these challenges require cooperation in framing and effectively implementing these policies. The doctrine called 'Shanghai Spirit' forms the core of the philosophy of SCO (Jaiswal 2009:362). It focuses on harmony, decision making through consensus, respect for ethno-cultural diversity, non-interference in states domestic affairs and principle of non-alignment.

The acknowledgement and common understanding among the CAS regarding the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism is working well in their favour. The SCO's 'Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism' was signed in 2001. In the Convention these terms were particularly defined and highlighted how these as violence or intimidation against people or governments in an attempt to change behaviour, border and regimes. Chinese foreign ministry described it as a successful example of Beijing's 'new security concept', a late 1990's

initiative to promote security and stability through negotiation and multilateral cooperation (Novotny 2006:32). It aimed at fostering mutual trust and benefits for all the parties involved.

The standing bodies of SCO: the Secretariat located in Beijing headed by a Secretary General serving for a three year term, and the Regional Anti Terror Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent are actively involved in dealing with these three evils. The councils of heads of state, heads of government, high level ministers, etc meet throughout the year and prepare for the annual summit for the heads of state. They compile the agendas and issues to be discussed which are prepared on a consensus basis. These summits and regular meetings primarily keep counter-terrorism measures as foremost priority.SCO has played the role of providing a platform for addressing complex and emotionally-charged issues through dialogue processes.

The SCO has expanded itself in terms of formal ties with other nations and multilateral groups in dealing with these threats. In 2015, SCO granted membership status to India and Pakistan. The SCO has reached out to multilateral organizations including the UN, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), etc. SCO has got the observer status in the General Assembly of the UN in 2004, and then signed a Joint Declaration on Cooperation between with the UN in 2010. SCO also concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the ASEAN in 2005. In 2006, an MOU was signed with the EurAsEc and with the CSTO in 2007. The SCO is enhancing ties with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. SCO gives significance to EU and OSCE forums related to the Central Asian security issues (ADB 2010:34). Though the organisation has quite evolved in last 15 years but the development has been uneven. Significant developments have been in security cooperation which includes security exercises, counter-terrorism measures, narcotics and cyber security.

Since security exercises are the focus of the SCO, its efforts with regard to counter-terrorism measures and counter narcotics have gained recognition in last few years. The efforts gained ground especially in the context of its linkages with Afghanistan. Senior US officials participated in a SCO sponsored conference on Afghanistan in 2009. Other participants included Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, U.N. Secretary General, NATO Assistant Secretary General, OSCE Secretary General, and also representatives from the EU, G8, etc. This is important as being a nascent regional organisation; SCO could attract such dignitaries on the threats to regional security. The conference was an achievement also because the unanimously adopted declaration from the conference gave the much needed legitimacy to the SCO consisting of the highly fragile and unstable Central Asian States.

The declaration stated that 'The participants also noted that the SCO was one of the appropriate forums for a wide dialogue with participation of partners on the Afghanistan-related issues, in the context of joint efforts of the international community and Afghanistan, and for practical interaction between Afghanistan and its neighbouring states in combating terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime' (Rashid 2011:8).

RATS, the counterterrorist arm of SCO has been actively involved in to achieve broader counter-terrorism goals. Their activity involve advising several nations on operational training, helping in the draft formulation of international legal documents to combat terrorism and has created a database of terrorists and suspects of extremist activities for the organizational use of SCO members. RATS has also participated in the drafting of the action plan on the implementation of the U.N. Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in the Central Asia (Yermukanoy 2009:52). Its executive committee also has plans to cooperate with ASEAN members in counter-terrorism activities. The activities of RATS can be acknowledged by the fact that it has been giving advance warnings about terror groups leading to arrests in many cases. During the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and 2011 Asian Winter Games, RATS assisted with security measures.

To counter narcotics issues in the region, SCO has made significant progress. RATS signed a Protocol of Cooperation with the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) in 2010. It was aimed to combat trans-border drug crime, drug trafficking and the interlinked terrorist related financing through these channels. CARICC is a joint drug control effort set up in 2006 whose members include Russia, CAS, and the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). An idea originally proposed by Tajikistan regarding establishment of a regional anti-drug training centre was finally given a shape in 2009 (Andrionov 2013:42). The centre is now based in Dushanbe. The officials from member states counter drug agencies meet regularly to discuss the strategy and prospects of the joint efforts. Under the auspices of Russian Federal Narcotics Control Service, there is a three tier system set up within the SCO which includes leadership, expert and departmental level meetings. Set up in 2009, the system has provided a mechanism for exchange of information and decision making.

Regarding the threat of 'Information Terrorism', which is actually related to cyber security? SCO has been in the forefront. This is quite commendable as the threat is one of the most challenging source of instability not only in the region but throughout the world. In the age of globalisation and internet facilities available in every corner of the world the threat is real and needs a wide range of cooperation among states.

SCO approved a cyber agreement proposed originally by Russia, which defined, 'Information war' as an effort by one state to undermine another state's political, economic and social systems. In the health sector, SCO aims to improve the basic living conditions and provide health infrastructure to the people living in the SCO region. Numerous initiatives and programmes have been undertaken under the leadership of the organization. In 2007, the business council of SCO has promoted a small sector health project which involves doctors, experts, pharmaceutical companies, public health ministries. It was aimed at delivering advanced and quality medical aid and assistance to the people living in the remote parts of the region. The programme could take shape only with the cooperation between member state's heath and rail ministries. The initiative was funded majorly by China and Russia. The initiative was also viewed by scholars as one of use of soft power by China and Russia to allay the financial and security fears of CAS (Azanova 2010:44).

Regarding the threat of environmental degradation and following repercussions, SCO has taken important steps in disaster relief measures. Such cooperation efforts also legitimise the group in the broader public view. The Disaster relief measures are aims at ensuring regional economic and security cooperation to prevent social unrest. To ensure transparency which is a rarity in the CAS polity, the SCO came out with a detailed accounting of all the SCO members' monetary aid, supplies for relief, rehabilitation; etc after the earthquake hit the Chinese province of Sichuan in 2008. The disaster relief mechanism in the following years has includes approved annual action plans which provides the framework for assistance during emergency situations. A detailed action plan is laid out for communication, training and information sharing during emergency (Igushev 2012:78). The emergency measures focus on border areas which is vulnerable to disasters.

Though there have been incremental steps by the organization, it has been marred by many challenges. Establishing broad networks among the member states and arriving at consensus on important issues have proved to be hindrances. They have often led to a logjam in policy formulation. The desire among CAS for regional stability and the organizational mandate of non-interference in each other's internal matters have led to roadblocks. Simultaneously CAS have to deal with diverse national aspirations and conflicting bilateral relations that threaten the decision making process through consensus. Moreover, SCO has nascent bureaucratic structures and mechanisms for cooperation are still evolving.

It has been generally seen that in any multilateral body, the initial decision to work together has been an easier process than actually overcoming the challenging hurdles. Thus, SCO members may take much time to consider, ratify and sign SCO agreements; it does not prove that the organization is weak and ineffective. Rather the end result is still awaited, since the organization is still

evolving and has not reached the peak of its development. There is enough opportunities and avenues for cooperation among the member states of the SCO.

CHAPTER 3: ROLE OF SCO IN FIGHTING THE THREE EVILS OF CENTRAL ASIAN REGION

For the States in Central Asia maintaining regime and state security is the topmost priority. Their domestic and foreign policy give particular focus and attention to threats emanating from Non-Traditional Security sources. In the context of CAS these threats acquire a significant position as these regimes share the same security dilemmas which include uncertainty about their territorial and political integrity. National security and regime legitimacy have been important components of the security dynamics of these countries. Thus any kind of challenge be it ideological or physical it acquires a high profile in the security architecture of the Central Asian States.

CAS face the problems of unequal distribution of wealth, absence of constitutional rights and fundamental rule of law, poor governance, suppression of civil and political rights and suppression of political opposition. These countries have traditionally been considered the security hotspots as the region provides fertile ground for radicalisation of youth living there. The radicalisation process has manifested itself in the form of Terrorism, Religious fundamentalism and Political extremism, which are also known as the three evils of the Central Asian Region (Mihalka 2006:151). Thus to suppress these threats the CAS have invested a lot of substantive intellectual and material resources. The common security dilemmas have led the CAS to come together on the platform of SCO to counter these threats.

These threats are looming large as a recurring feature in the political discourses about the CAS. These threats are real and gradually the whole world is experiencing these challenges, especially the threat of terrorism. In this context it becomes important to analyze the role of SCO as a regional mechanism to counter these issues at different scales. The origin, evolution, structural and institutional bodies etc of the SCO are geared towards dealing with these threats, especially counter terrorism measures.

THE MANDATE OF SCO

SCO's official mandate is to 'strengthen mutual trust, good relations and friendship among the member states'. It also directs the member states to develop cooperative frameworks and maintain security, stability and regional peace. The SCO charter based on the principles like the equality of states, respect for independence of each other, respect for principles of United Nations, decision through consensus and the rejection of hegemony and coercion in the international arena. Though the organisation has expanded the issues to combat under its ambit, the main priorities which remain are the security challenges: Terrorism, Religious fundamentalism and Political extremism. They always occupy the agenda on any political debate about the CAS. To counter and contain the threat of terrorism and religious fundamentalism, RATS (Regional Anti Terrorist Structure) was

established in 2004. SCO has adopted the agendas which push the joint struggle against the non-state menaces to the forefront and recognize the significance attached to a characteristically 21st century conception of security. SCO prioritizes activities to deal with the on-state antagonists and pursues a common approach by the CAS. The modern day notion of multidimensional security is reflected in the needs, policies and capabilities of the member states of SCO. Through its mandate, SCO seeks to have a direct and inherent impact on security (Baran 2006:145).

An analysis of the mandate thus presents the SCO as a multilateral interstate mode of cooperation created and set up for shared security concerns. It is a forum with legitimate moral authority in the regional security architecture.The mandate gives it a legitimacy and wide powers to influence the regional politics. The organisation reflects the viability of creating a regional order to address the shared security concerns which are non-military in nature. It has created a forum for development of security infrastructure and actual coordination and cooperation among the CAS and arrives at decisions through consensus building (Cornell 2006:96). The principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs however does not leverage much power to SCO but it helps to maintain the domestic status quo in the CAS.

The SCO does not have a mandate for peacekeeping measures. The organisation does not have any guarantee of collective security to its members. The mandate is clearly focused on the security matters which in reality majorly related to Non-Traditional Security threats which includes counter drug measures, information sharing and exchange on terror groups, etc. although the organisation has established a rapid reaction capacity in case of any regional crisis, there is no commitment for providing collective defence to its member states. It focuses more on dealing with regional issues rather uniting against an external adversary.

THREE EVILS IN CAS AND ROLE OF SCO

The membership and mandate of SCO establishes its position as the most prominent and inclusive multilateral organisation with a security dimension. It has filled up a unique niche in the Eurasian security structure as a coherent and relevant organisation in the Asian heartland. Among the most prominent Non-Traditional Security threats are Terrorism and Political extremism (Spechler 2008:72).

TERRORISM AND RADICAL ISLAM IN CAS

Terrorism is a highly contested and amorphous concept in international scenario. Countries have different set of criteria for assigning any act of terror as a terrorist activity. United Nations still has not accepted any one definition of terrorism and terrorist activity. The narrow definition of terrorism refers to the use of violence to intimidate public, governments etc for advancing a

political, ideological and religious cause. The focus thus lies on the use or threat to use violence by non-state actors for fulfilling their political ambitions. However, the CAS have adopted a broader definitions to present a coherent definition of Terrorism.

Kyrgyzstan defines Terrorism as 'acts of arson, explosion or other actions which are a threat to public and lead to people's death, causing damages to them along with other deadly consequences undermining public security, pressurising the authorities and threatening people. Other regional definitions in the CAR generally have a very little demarcation between the use of or threat of violence and spreading radical ideas which are non-violent and between political violence and general criminal activities. Uzbekistan's 2000 draft bill on Terrorism defined terrorism as an act of wrong doing which is socially dangerous (Pomfret 2006:98). Uzbekistan in its Criminal code defines Terrorist activities comprehensively as the activities of religious groups, movements, organizations, sects etc which support and have linkages with terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking. Kazakhstan has drafted its terrorist proscription list taking cue from UK, USA and Russian Federation legislation. The definition does not include HT (Hizb-Ut-Tahrir) under its ambit but Kazakhstani officials have acknowledged that it is likely to be included in the list since the group has been linked with terrorist acts committed in the country at different times. Thus there is an inability and unwillingness to provide a coherent definition of Terrorism and in many cases it has been kept broad to include extreme ideological but non-violent and violent threats. Such approaches to keep the definition amorphous and arbitrary provide governments to reap political benefits.

The terrorist organisations in the CAS are the main sponsors of radical activities. The rise and growth of radical islam in CAS were sponsored by the infiltrated terrorist organisations. Terrorist groups like HT, Al-Qaeda. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), etc. Their ideas, recruitment and propaganda activities find volunteers in these terror groups. Rise and growth of in the 1980s following the weakening of the Soviet rule, the CAS attracted the Islamists who had centuries of interests in the region owing to its history and strategic location. On the one hand ties with the traditionalists were renewed in the CAR on the other hand the region was opened for internationalisation and secular ideas due to modernisation. The post Soviet crisis was accompanied by greater interactions with the western world. However the grip of the radical Islamic organisations remained strong over the population. Islamic revival activities gained ground among the terror groups. Ferghana Valley located at the crossroads of three CAS i.e. Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan provided fertile ground to such militant outfits. Since these two of these three CAS share boundary with Afghanistan the issue becomes more problematic and complex. This also explains the high presence of radical Islamic activities. The convergence of Great powers in CAS in fact was justified in the name of anti-terror activities in retaliation to such militant outfits.

The radicalism which originated in the 1970s organised the Muslim Brotherhood, consisting of Muslim students from Jordan, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. They wanted to set up local cells secretly at prominent Central Asian universities. After Taliban in Afghanistan came to power during the 1990s, these cells multiplied and declared themselves publicly.

Post 9/ 11 terror groups which made themselves public and came out in the open are are Adolat (Justice), Baraka (Blessings), Tauba (Repentance), Islam Lashkarlari (Warriors of Islam), Hizb-ut-Tahrir, Akramiya, Hizb un-Nusrat, Uzun Soqol (Long Beards), Tabligh Jamaat, Lashkar-i-Taiba, Hezbollah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA), and the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG). These terror groups have a shared vision to overthrow the secular governments in the CAS and set up an Islamic state or Caliphate as per the norms of Sharia. These groups differ in their tactics (violent vs. non-violent) as well as their goals (overthrow of existing government vs. becoming a viable opposition party). While the immediate aim is to create an atmosphere of terror, their ultimate goal is to conquer the world and establish the Caliphate (Gunn 2005:76). To gather support for radical Islam and opposition to regional governments into action, several organizations have been formed in the CAS. These radical groups are very aggressive in their propaganda and find resonance in terrorist activities to create panic and fear among the people and governments.

Since mid 1990s their activities have escalated with mounting casualities. These groups have been regularly involved in offensive jihad against non-Muslims in general and particularly against Americans and Jewish people. They openly declared that fight against all non-Muslims is an act of righteousness. HT is most vocal about such an ideology.

Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT) is the party of Islamic liberation. It is one of the most well known Islamic Movement in the CAR. The organisation has huge support base in the ethnic Uzbeks. Recruits from other communities include among Tajiks, Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. HT main aim is to overthrow the secular governments of Central Asia and establish in its place an Islamic Caliphate across the whole of Central Asian Region which will be exactly in line with the empire established in the region in seventh century, following the death of the Prophet Mohammed (Brower 2008:12).

HT does not support violence to achieve its objectives. This way it differs from IMU which uses violence as a means to bring political change. HT does not have any specific agenda to govern the Caliphate. Rejection of violence however provides a broader base than what IMU gets because of its support for violence. In 1995 since its inception in the CAR, the militant outfit quickly spread its ideas in the Ferghana valley where it has gathered enough support base. Headquartered in Uzbekistan, the radical group has expanded to include parts of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. By 2007, the group boasted of thousands of volunteers and members from all the CAS (UNDP 2009:116). Its support base mainly draws from Uzbeks. The educated urban Uzbeks helped in

drawing support from the rural areas as well. The ethnic loyalties and traditional social networks have played its part as well in the CAS. Familial and clan networks have helped to spread the ideas and recruit members from the youth population. Participation was encouraged among the clan members in such group activities. Information circulation and ideological influence have increased its membership. However HT has gained support more by becoming a voice of political opposition in Central Asia which has a repressive political environment.

The Central Asian governments have responded with heavy hands on the HT activities seeing the rise in popular support to HT. The organisation has been banned across the region and hundreds of its members have been arrested from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Chalk 2010:95). However the arrests have not led to shrinking in the number of volunteers for HT, especially in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. It has not been as successful in Kazakhstan as it has been elsewhere in the Central Asian Region.HT messages have become increasingly more militant. Since it has not been directly involved in violent activities it does not come under the radar of western vigilant groups however the local governments believe that it secretly incites violence and has the potential to become a stepping stone for the disenfranchised population. They can be attracted towards more violent Islamic radicalism. Demand for reforms by these organisations might promote the use of violence in the region.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

Among the most notorious Islamic groups in Central Asia carrying out terrorist activities, IMU names prop up top on the list. The IMU has received perhaps the most attention. IMU is known to have close ties with Taliban in Afghanistan. It was also rumoured to have set up bases in Afghanistan. The group was designated as a foreign terrorist organisation in 2000 by the U.S. state departments (Boas 2007:185). The group was found to be involved in violent attacks on the governments in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The IMU was set up by ethnic Uzbeks in 1998 who were dissatisfied with the moderate leadership of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) in Tajikistan. The initial objective of the IMU was to overthrow the Uzbek leadership but it expanded its mandate to include the toppling of all the regional secular regimes and replace them with the rule of Sharia or the Islamic law. It also proposed to form a state in the prosperous Ferghana valley which was to be developed as a centre of Islamic traditionalism for centuries (Hentz 2006:254).

To remove Uzbek President Karimov from power, the IMU led terrorist attacks against the Uzbek government in 1999, 2000, and 2001 from its bases in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In February 1999, the Tashkent bombings were attributed to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, another radical militant movement. In 2001, IMU joined forces with the Taliban and Al Qaeda, in an

attempt to counter the American campaign. Though following the campaign many of them fled and hid in other neighbouring countries. Currently they are less in numbers but still capable to fight and launch surprise suicide attacks and other terror activities (Smith 2010:78).

Thousands of its members are committed to the organisation. They carry out attacks against the ruling regimes and spread their ideas. It was reported in 2001 that the IMU was planning to form an umbrella organisation with the intention to expand its reach in China's Xinjiang region (Posner 2003:117). After the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan its activities were restricted. After the withdrawl of U.S. army it might rise again. Most analysts however argue that the IMU does not possess strength to carry out attacks in the region. Although the IMU is no longer active in Afghanistan, it continues to maintain its ties with the IRP, which still remains active in Tajikistan.

Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP)

It was set up as an outcome of Gorbachev's reforms to protect the Islamic identity of the Muslims in the erstwhile Soviet Union. The objective gained popularity in the region. Many strategists and scholars also supported the cause as it was related to the protection of Islamic identity. It adopted awareness programmes to increase understanding of Islam and Muslims in the Soviet Union within the communist framework. The party however was not united as its regional branches remained fragmented throughout the region.

From 1992 to 1997 the organisation gained huge success, particularly because of its involvement in the Tajik civil war (Abishev 2010:44). Support for a moderate, nationalist version of Islam and becoming part of an anti government coalition during the civil war helped it to establish itself in the CAR. The anti-government coalition remained active during the civil war. The organisation according to many scholars is fundamentalist in nature. Contrary to it, another section of scholars do not label it as fundamentalist since it worked for unification of clans during the civil war and it did not manipulate them to work for setting up of an Islamic state in Tajikistan. An exception among the rest of religious groups and sects, IRP is the only legally recognized religious organisation in the CAR. It also entered into a peace agreement with the Tajik government to end the conflict (Lilis 2009:142). The party has thereafter tried to keep its commitment to not indulge in anti-constitutional activities. It has confined its work within the constitutional framework of Tajikistan. The party still supports religious traditions and values in the regular state activities and political life but also supports the existence of a secular polity in Tajikistan. Some of the office-bearers in the organisation give example of Turkey which can serve as a model to other states in the region by adopting and incorporating these values.

In last few years the position of IRP has weakened. Its control on the ruling elite as a voice of opposition has declined. The ruling regime has increasingly consolidated power in its hands. Their

Although IRP has entered the Tajik government, its position as a voice of opposition has been weakened. Many in the ruling regime find the views of the party too Islamic to be part of a secular polity. The party has also been at the forefront of criticism by the Radical group who accuse it of not abiding by its original ideology and selling out to the state's interests. Some analysts credit IRP as a successful example of a religious party working within the Tajik coalition government and that it should be followed my other governments in the region. Leaving an approach of apprehension and incorporating them in the governance can go a long way in establishing much needed peace in the region. This way there can be a change of perception in how the rest of the world views Islam and the threat of resurgent political Islam perceived by the west. This view has few buyers. Majority of academics and scholars believe that that the legacy of civil war still weights heavily in the Tajik polity and the strategy of ruling elite to keep the regional elites at bay and not engaging with them has led to the revival of radical Islamic activism. Since 2009 this trend can be observed where people are reclaiming themselves to these groups. Clan of warlords are organising themselves and carrying out attacks. In 2010 such an attack killed 26 Tajik soldiers (McCauley 2012:76).

It is also true that not all Islamic movements are terrorists. Manu have moderate demands limited to lobbying with the business communities and spiritual boards and demand the right to practice and propagate Islam freely. Demand for Islamisation of society and opposition to the secular polity in Central Asian states is prominent. But the CAS governments especially Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, have came on them with heavy hands fearing rise of radical Islam. Arrests, detention and trials of suspects have increased in the recent years.

Currently in Central Asia there is an atmosphere of re-emergence of traditionalising customs, valorising radical Islam, religious practices in the daily life, etc. governments even fear a peaceful process of Islamisation which centres on morality in personal and social life, even those ideals which are not part of political agenda per se. Thus, it is important that an amalgam of faith, radical Islamism and terrorism should not be allowed to hold the ground in the CAR. The CAS should check that they are not using these to legitimise their authority. Islamism is not necessarily violent. The terrorist activities are carried out by militants to serve their own parochial local social and political vendetta. An authoritarian regime which does not allow religious freedom may cause further antagonism among the public which only aggravates social tensions. Thus a comprehensive solution is requires to deal with terrorism, religious extremism and radical Islam in the CAR. These are a deadly mix which can severely destabilise the CAS. Blaming each other and denying religious freedom will not solve their problems.

It is also important to point the nexus of criminal groups, drug trafficking, poverty and many other social and economic issues (omelicheva 2011:49). In any society any disruptive occurrences and

trends can increase only if they find resonance and support in the public arena. CAS have socio-economic and political difficulties which are ubiquitous in nature. High rates of unemployment, poverty, decline in welfare measures by CAS, coupled with a lack of opportunities and poor governance, provide a breeding ground to develop radical Islamic movements. Economic stagnation and social dislocation also provide sufficient conditions for manifestations of such groups. However political distress and poor economic conditions do not necessarily lead to spread of radical Islam and terror groups. Relatively developed societies and well off communities also face this kind of threat.

In CAR, rise of Islamist movements have been both from poorer sections of society who are politically and economically deprived as well as those from the well off and educated sections of communities. According to the data from World Bank, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan have lower development indicators than those of Uzbekistan which is relatively developed in the CAR but Muslims in Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan have been generally less prone to religious extremism than Muslims in Uzbekistan. The prosperous Ferghana valley, particularly the Uzbek part has become a hotbed of terrorism and radical Islamic movements (Allen 2007:98). Thus, it is time for the CAS along with the international community to pay attention to the social background of Islamism as well, and not only to its ideological side.

SEPARATISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Separatism in Central Asia is not as much a threat as is the threat of Religious extremism and Terrorism. Given the fact that these states are newly independent countries, two decades old, any separatist tendency is a threat to their territorial integrity. CAS have tried hard to keep their territory secure and devoid of a feeling of secession or separatism. In this scenario, while some groups are openly militant aggressors, others have their focus on ideological propaganda. But they share similar goal and use the intrinsic weaknesses of the governments. The CAS have the apprehension that the radical groups are secretly planning to bring all the terrorist groups under one umbrella, the underground Islamic Movement of Central Asia (IMCA). They suspect that all the terrorist organisations are connected and want to topple the secular governments in the region. The IMCA is believed to be an amalgamation of Tajiks, IMU, Kyrgyz radicals and Uyghur separatists from neighbouring Xinjiang province in China (Pomfret 2010:87). Uyghurs are fighting for creation of a separate Turkistan in the Xinjiang province in China. They have founded the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and have reportedly admitted Afghans, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Chechens and Kazakhs into their group. These separatist factions have the common vision of the creation of an Islamic state in Central Asia. The Central Asian factions are clearly identified by the CAS while the groups in Caucasus are fragmented and unidentified. Their loyalty lies with their ethnic warlords leading their groups.

China has its own share of separatist movement. The problem is aggravated by the fact that it shares boundaries with the CAS and finds sympathetic relations from people across the Chinese borders. China thus tries to incorporate the CAS in its strategy to keep a check on any rise in such tendency.

Role of SCO thus becomes important for China for keeping a tab on any rise in separatist activities and terror attacks. Uyghurs are becoming increasingly violent and thus the province is susceptible to terror attacks. Although there is no clear idea about the organisation purpose and goals, but most of them demand a separate state of their own called Eastern Turkistan or Uyghuristan. Since Uyghurs are a separate ethnic group and majority of them are Muslims, China perceives them as source of double threat: on one hand separatism and on the other hand religious extremism (Allen 2010:114).

China also fears the domino effect in the way that it might percolate down to Tibet and Taiwan. Thus China has acted harshly on them and used repressive measures to keep dissent under the wraps. China incorporated the principle of three evils of SCO for its fight against separatism. The Shanghai Five mandate has been helpful in implementing cross border mechanisms among the SCO members. Cooperation among them has also improved the economic situation in the border province of China. Increasing linkages within the SCO network has helped to end frequent instances of violence in the troubled province of China. The neighbouring countries of China with whom it shares boundary have expressed concerns over the Uyghur separatists collaborating with Uyghur minorities residing in their territory (Jackson 2010:34). They have also set up camps and training in terrorist activities with other radical groups in and around the CAS.

The Eastern Turkestan Islamic Party has been declared a terrorist organisation by the UN in 2002. It was claimed to have relations with Al-Qaeda. Years prior to it, it has been engaged in bombing of Chinese consulate- general and Chinese embassy in Turkey. SCO has affirmed its priority in dealing with this organisation and expressed faith in winning the fight. In 2009, following a riot in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, SCO member states expressed their concern on this issue and decided n to increase their cooperation to tackle the three evils of separatism, terrorism and religious extremism. They decided to focus on ensuring trans-border security as was promised in the 2010 SCO RATS meeting regarding Islamic extremists.

REGIONAL ANTI-TERRORIST STRUCTURE (RATS)

RATS is the operating SCO body located at Tashkent in Uzbekistan. Set up in 2004, it was created to assist in the interaction and coordination of the member states in their struggle against terrorism,

separatism and extremism. It was created for the purpose of combating the three evils in the CAS. It has been given the status of a legal entity. It has the authority of concluding contracts, acquiring and disposal of real estate. It can file claims in courts and judicial procedures. The Heads of the State Council is tasked with appointing an Executive Committee Director to lead RATS. The tenure is for three years. RATS is the primary vehicle for the implementation of security cooperation among the member states of SCO. It works for coordinating the activities of SCO states' law enforcement bodies and providing specialised services. It is notable that the decisions within the SCO are made by consensus.

The operating procedure of all bodies of Shanghai Cooperation Organization was formulated and accepted in 2003 during the Moscow summit. But the fundamental structures of the organization have been officially functioning since January 2004. RATS was set up through the Shanghai Convention and the SCO charter signed in 2002. The Shanghai Convention was developed in accordance with the Dushanbe Declaration of the Heads of states of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Tajikistan in 2000, in which the parties indicated their determination to conclude multilateral conventions and agreements on cooperation in combating such threats as terrorism, separatism and extremism. The mandate of RATS was decided to combat the acts of these three evils (Kantarci 2009:45).

Currently, RATS functions to coordinate , provide information and analytical support for the agencies under the SCO. It provides materials and relevant information to combat the three evils. RATS has an institute of permanent representatives along with its two key units: the RATS Council and the RATS Executive Committee. The RATS Executive Committee started functioning on January 1, 2004 and the official opening of the RATS office in Tashkent also took place in the same year.

The RATS Council has been designed to serve as a powerful unit, instrumental in securing overall security cooperation of the member states of SCO. It is significant that the RATS Council is made up of top officials of the national security organisations of the SCO member states. It recommends a candidate for the position of RATS executive committee director who then is voted upon by the Heads of State Council. The Council is also empowered to determine the functions and fundamental objectives of RATS. It prepares resolutions on all important matters including the financial issues. It is notable because these resolutions are mandatory in nature. It reports directly to the Heads of State Council.

The RATS Executive Committee is the main centre of coordination of all the operations and date exchange among the SCO member states. The committee consists of representatives from the member states. The structure of the committee can be categorised into five sectors:

- Operational and coordinating activities

- Information sharing and analysis

- Legal support based on regional and international laws and conventions

- Administrative and financial tasks

- Security and staff

Its main functions relate to establishing and operating SCO RATS data bank, maintenance of contacts and information exchanges on the issues of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Its primary activities are to establish and maintain operation of the SCO RATS data bank; to maintain contacts and exchange of materials on the issues of combating terrorism, extremism and separatism with other states, international organisations, etc (Alimove 2008:12). It is in-charge of information and analysis of information reviews on the problems of three evils. Cooperation on combating terrorism, extremism and separatism is carried out both at the regional and global scale.

In addition to the 2002 RATS Agreement, in the year 2005 , RATS operations were further consolidated through the adoption of a Concept of Cooperation between SCO Member States in Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism (Concept of Cooperation of the SCO Member States), which focused on the shared goals, common objectives, principles, forms of cooperation and new avenues for the member states to cooperate and help in combating Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism. It also determined the mechanisms for its implementation. They discussed on concerted preventive activities, joint counter terrorism measures, joint search and investigative actions, exchange of information and forensic information, conducting joint anti- terrorist exercises and personnel training. Academic research and data collection on these issues were also decided.

The RATS Council has regularly organised programmes and meetings for strengthening of cooperation among the members in the fight against Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. These regular meetings provide RATS the basis for conducting its activities during specific years like the first 'plan of organizing cooperation', for the 2004-2006 period, was approved on April 30, 2004. Many Programmes of cooperation were subsequently adopted for the 2007-2009 and 2010-2012 periods. The contents of these programs of cooperation, however, have not been made public.

RATS has been often been criticised for not being open to public and restricting the accessibility of its documents (Oldberg 2007:81). However it is no doubt that the body has evolved in due course of time and has become the major hub of information exchange and data sharing on counter terrorism measures and combating the three evils in the CAR. Thus RATS has been institutionalised to tackle the problematic three evils of the CAR. It has emerged as the primary

body within the SCO to counter these Non-Traditional Security threats in Central Asia (Aris 2009:71). RATS has developed its structures to integrate the whole CAR for combating these threats. Since the CAS are individually not capable to counter the challenge as they are cross-border and transnational in nature. They also need aid and assistance of international community which they can get through SCO.

In recent times, SCO has been new challenges and threats. Terrorism has manifested itself with involvement of nationals from SCO member states who are participating in conflict zones abroad, particularly in Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. RATS is now facing a renewed challenge in form of incitement to violent extremism, terrorism with new vigour through abuse of religious ideologies, cross-border organised criminal activities, nexus of drug trafficking and weapons smuggling. Proximity to West Asia exacerbates this threat as impact of ideology of ISIS can be felt among the radical groups (Singh 2009:61). The region has been attracting world attention because of its involvement in the terror financing through opium channels and illegal narcotics trading. In this regard, RATS has already found out it main areas for its to resolve the problems and has got already got some positive results. Some of the examples of the result achieved by it are following: the executive committee of it has found out the information of fighters who actively participated in the arms conflict in the region of Syria and nearby. They have listed all these people in its secure database.

In order to tackle the problem due to withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) from Afghanistan, RATS has concentrated on further collecting data, studding and making analysis of the situation. It has also approached its member to find out the mechanism to boost collection and exchange of data of related terrorist groups and militant in the region of Afghanistan. In order to secure the areas of border and to stop the illegal cross-border illegal activities, the RATS has established the border defence co-operation mechanism. It has also exchanged data of intelligence report of use of the internet within its member states. It has helped to find out the group responsible for the promotion of the radical ideas within the CAR. After the adoption of Security Council resolution 2178 on 24 September 2014, the members of the Counter-terrorism committee acknowledged and praised the efforts taken by RATS in the CAR and highlighted the importance of cooperation between the committee and related regional organizations.

In accordance with the 'Cooperation Programme to Combat Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism in 2013-2015', the RATS Council set up a cyber expert group on September 20, 2013, to strengthen the cooperation and coordination of the member states of SCO in the fight against online activities of terrorism, separatism and extremism (Javaid 2014:69). Terrorist groups are

actively taking help of social networking sites to radicalise the youth and mobilise support for their terror activities. These social networking sites have emerged as the recruiting ground for the terrorist groups.

To further enhance mutual trust and strengthen law enforcement cooperation in the field of cyber counter-terrorism, the RATS Council passed the Resolution No. 386 on April 10, 2015 and decided to hold cyber anti-terrorism exercises in the Chinese coastal province of Fujian. 'Xiamen - 2015',the online counter-terrorism exercise, jointly hosted by the relevant authorities of member states was successfully held on October 14, 2015, in the south-eastern Chinese coastal city of Xiamen in the Fujian province. This is significant as it is the first joint online exercise hosted by the SCO to counter terrorists. The framework of the exercise is an international terrorist organization which publishes information of terrorism, separatism and extremism on websites, forums and social networking sites of the SCO member states to stimulate extremists lurking in member states to participate or carry out violent activities (Allison 2016:18). To eradicate this increasing threat of cyber terrorism and ensured regional security, the RATS Council launched the joint operation against online terrorism by coordinating member states in identifying and cleaning online terrorist incitement information and by keeping a check on terrorists lurking in member states territories.

The main purpose of the exercise was to improve the cooperation mechanism which can be used to identify and prevent the use of the internet for terrorism, separatism and extremism among the SCO member states. The exercise also has the objective to develop organizational and technical activity, exchange and sharing of legal information, awareness about the legal procedures in the domestic territory of the member states and ease of workflow in counter terrorism measures and to combat terrorists who use the internet to conduct activities of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

During the exercise, authorities of the SCO member states identified the incitement information which were published by suspected terrorist organizations on websites and social networks to lure the youth by mobilising them. Under the organization and coordination RATS Council, the authorities identified the suspects through joint action in a timely manner. In accordance with their respective laws and regulations and procedures, the member states exchanged terrorist information, identified the information of publishers and the event venue, arrested all the suspects and finally eliminated cyber terrorism threat.

Such exercises fully reflect the important role of RATS Council in coordinating joint action among member states. The exercise examined the effectiveness of online counter-terrorism cooperation mechanism under the framework of the SCO. Such exercises play an important role in enhancing the mutual trust among SCO member states. This exercise will further improve the level of cooperation understanding in the field of combating terrorism and effectively safeguarding regional security and stability. Delegations of relevant authorities of SCO member states and SCO RATS Council collaborated for joint participation in this exercise. Zhang Xinfeng, director of the SCO RATS Council, acted as the chief commander of this exercise.

SCO ENGAGEMENT WITH THE UN

The SCO has tried to integrate the "Three Evils" based approach as mentioned in the Shanghai Convention in order to counter terrorism into the international framework. The UN has also responded favourably.

UN-SCO collaboration are following:

- Granting of General Assembly observer status to the SCO in December 2004 (UN 2005:48).

- A memorandum of understanding between the Secretariats of the SCO and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, signed on January 21, 2008.

- Two General Assembly resolutions, adopted in 2009 and 2010, regarding cooperation between the SCO and the UN.

The above description of the practical steps taken by the SCO RATS reflects that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, unlike the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) or Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), was able to create a serious and effective counter terrorist structure with a real intent to eradicate extremist and terrorist organizations in the Central Asian Region. For assisting the RATS, the SCO created a mechanism of regular meetings with the ministers of Defense and Foreign affairs of the member states, heads of law enforcement agencies, and others. Along with that, for coordinating the RATS's activity, the heads of the SCO member states' National Security Councils regularly meet within the framework of the RATS to discuss the strategy and counter terrorism measures (Mcdermott 2013:101). Also, the RATS Executive Committee has set up information exchange mechanism with the anti-terrorist centres of the CIS and CSTO, and the Counterterrorist Committee of the United Nations.

SCO member countries include Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. India and Pakistan are set to join the grouping this year. Belarus, Afghanistan, Iran and Mongolia have observer status while Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Nepal are dialogue partners. With the grant of membership status to India and Pakistan at the annual summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization concluded in Ufa, Russia on 10th July 2015, SCO has expanded itself. It has also expanded the observer states and dialogue partners participating in the annual SCO summits at the Ufa summit. The summit launched the process of accession for India and Pakistan and adopted the Ufa Declaration on SCO Development to 2025. This move is important as the grant of membership to these two South Asian members will consolidate SCO efforts to counter terrorism. India has well developed mechanisms in counter terrorism efforts and thus can collaborate with RATS SCO to deal with the threat on a much bigger scale. The SCO has emerged to become an emblematic club of like-minded members on the issue of threat of Terrorism.

Scholars point out that SCO expansion is a risky business that could erase the importance of Central Asia and other more urgent matters. It could change the original structures and concept of the organization (Blank 2015:14). They also underline that CAS will find it difficult to solve their own issues and cooperate on regional problems. Even though, the focus of the SCO's geopolitical agenda is considered to be Central Asia as of now, the inclusion of the South Asian agenda may lead to better information sharing and coordination on a larger scale.

Coming together of two nuclear powers in Central Asia, which has been a recognised nuclear weapons free zone is a new configuration for the CAR. Thus, it can not be denied that it has led to a rethinking of this concept. This participation by the South Asian countries along with the Central Asian countries on the platform of SCO will certainly revamp the effectiveness of SCO particularly in the security dynamics. This is so because the issue of security is actually transnational in nature. Countries can not keep themselves isolated by sealing the borders from cross border threats. In this era of Information Technology, a close cooperation in the field of Cyber security is required. Thus a much broader multilateral support and participation by countries is indispensable. In the context of CAR, the Afghan factor can serve as a touchstone particularly when the U.S. forces in the country are withdrawing (Aris 2014:59). Measures to bring peace and stability in war torn Afghanistan have always been considered very important given its proximity to Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia. Countries and international community are wary of the support and involvement of the Taliban in causing non-traditional security threats. The region bordering in and around Afghanistan are facing chronic issues of drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, terrorism financing, organised crimes, online recruitment, fund raising, etc.

Also with the widespread propaganda and support emerging for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) ideology in the radical youth of South Asian countries and the CAS, it is of utmost importance that countries must be actively involved in the de-radicalisation of youth. The growing threat of extremist terrorism which has been unleashed by the Islamic State (ISIS) is perceived as a clear threat by CAS. CAS are deeply concerned about it as thousands of their young citizens are travelling to Iraq and Syria to join IS. The threat of IS taking root in these countries is real (Howe 2013:72). Here, RATS can engage these countries in a deeper conversation on counter-terrorism and look for solutions together. Information exchange and coordination among intelligence agencies among the countries of the region can be helpful. RATS can play an important role as it has had successful innings in dealing with terror threats. Thus, SCO can serve as an important platform for that cooperation as RATS SCO is the prominent body to deal with these threats in the CAR.

During its 26th meeting in Tashkent, member states of RATS highlighted their concern that ISIS is a dangerous group and all RATS members should take the treaty seriously and implicitly that they should cooperate militarily, especially with Russia as it has the strongest military force among the SCO member states. They also pointed out and agreed that Islamism is a serious threat and that no country in Central Asia should take its security for granted.

They rightly expressed their joint concern that ISIS seeks to infiltrate CAS and already has a considerable number of fighters recruited from the region, including from Kazakhstan, which is a secular nation. Some of the fighters in ISIS from CAS have been identified as perpetrators of horrific acts of violence. Then there is also the danger of increasing ISIS influence in Afghanistan, causing a spill over effect all over the region.

The notorious terror group, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has already sworn allegiance to ISIS and is reportedly preparing for a new terrorist campaign in Uzbekistan. Thus directly or indirectly all Central Asian governments acknowledge the threat of Islamism and agree on the potential risks and threats arising out of the ISIS. Analysts point out that unlike the Taliban and other radical extremist groups in the region which are largely parochial in nature, the ISIS has global ambitions to create an Islamic Caliphate and thus an interest in spreading its jihad to Central Asian Region (Sorkina 2015:176).

Again, at the 14th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Prime Ministers' Meeting, in Zhengzhou, Henan province of China, held in December 2015, the member states of the SCO agreed to work closely and act together to fight the security threat from ISIS. They also urged to draft an anti-extremism treaty to be negotiated among the member states. Currently there is no UN sanctioned unified force in the world to counter ISIS and there has not still been any such push

from the UN. In the Zhengzhou summit, China expressed the possibility to launch an anti-terrorism cooperative mechanism under the SCO framework. China is worried as its domestic separatists groups have enough reasons to tie up with the ISIS.

This reflects that the increasing concerns among the SCO member states over the militant ISIS is gaining lot of ground. In recent times, SCO has been coordinating its anti-terror mechanisms more sincerely and closer security cooperation because of the proximity of SCO members to areas where the ISIS has been conducting terror attacks. In the summit, many resolutions were passed, especially focusing on the issue of counter-terror measures e.g. to strengthen cooperation and implement the Border Control Cooperation Agreement, sign an anti-extremism convention, strengthen the drug control mandate and support national reconciliation in Afghanistan. The leaders of the grouping have agreed to hold the 15th SCO prime ministers' meeting in Kyrgyzstan in 2016.

With the experience and assistance of SCO, the CAS can build strong and cohesive cooperation on security, leaving no flaws for violators of regional stability and representing a reliable guarantee to SCO member countries in ensuring political security and social security (Haas 2015:17). With the expansion of SCO and inclusion of India and Pakistan as full member states, it is a turning point in the SCO's history of development. SCO is many times bigger now and has moved beyond the Central Asian region include the problems of South Asia. The member states agree that the SCO should provide a reliable and impenetrable barrier to security threats to them, particularly from those coming from terrorists.

In the backdrop of growing activities of international terrorist organisations, a spirit of mutual benefit and cooperation is indispensable. In general, it can be concluded that the fight against terrorism within the SCO framework is a major task of the member states but not the SCO itself. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization unifies the efforts of the member states in their struggle against the 'three evils' and it is, so far, one of the most successful directions of partnership within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

CHAPTER 4: ADVANTAGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN SCO'S EVOLUTION AS A SECURITY COMMUNITY

The process of gradual regularisation and institutionalisation of SCO has strengthened its role in the CAR. The guiding principles have acted as safeguards for the member states. The diverse programmes of activities and agenda have led each of the member states to find something which serves its interests. Discussions and debate among the member states have institutionalised the process of resolving difficult issues through compromises and consensus. SCO has shown enough adaptiveness and flexibility in its evolution. In view of the changing needs and circumstances it has created new networks and mechanisms to address those issues. Its rapid growth can be linked to its focus which is geared towards its priorities. Overall the input-output balance of the organisation can be seen as positive. With its recent expansion and willingness of other countries to join the SCO can be taken as the proof of its increasing influence and further growth.

However this growth and evolution is subject to the fact that the member states are able to contain their interstate differences and mutual mistrust. There are constraints in the evolving cooperation and cordial relations among the member states of SCO is constrained by inter-state disputes over water, environment, treatment of ethnic minorities, illegal migration, etc. there are internal and external factors impeding the cordial relations among the member states. There are bilateral and regional issues which can hamper the smooth evolution of the institution.

As argued by Gennadii Chufrin, the evolution of SCO can be described in three stages of its formation. The initial stage was focused on the settlement of the China and Central Asia borders. The second stage was aimed at countering terrorism and extremist activities and the third and current phase is related to and is particularly linked to the events in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan over the issue of how to contain or prevent conflicts in the CAR. These conflicts are mainly inter-states disputes among the CAS (Cottey 2006:90). He further argues that SCO has been actively working in the current stage to contain or sublime the mutual mistrust and armed conflicts in the CAR. SCO has been also working to promote regional security, democracy and establishing positive military cooperation. Combating Non-Traditional security threats is the topmost priority though.

Overall one can sum up that the SCO has been able to reduce the risks of open conflict among the member states. Also presence of two superpowers in form of Russia and China has led to some kind of power balance in the organisation. Most importantly, SCO as the premier regional security architecture has been able to create channels for addressing or at least loosening of inter-state, intra-regional tensions through discussions and active dialogue among the member states. SCO has

consolidated the CAR as a region with engaging member states and hostility and mutual suspicion have been reduced. The principle of non-interference among the member states has also helped in easing of tensions (Huasheng 2014:41). SCO major plus point for having a positive and reliable image in the CAR has been that it has never characterised itself as a traditional military alliance like that of NATO. Rather it has played an important role in confidence building measures and disengagement among the member states sharing boundaries. To reduce mutual hostility reciprocal bilateral inspections have been carrying out among them.

CHALLENGES FOR SCO AS A SECURITY COMMUNITY

SCO has to face numerous challenges for its successful functioning and rapid growth. These challenges are in form of border disputes, treatment of ethnic minorities, illegal migration, inter-state disputes over water, environment, etc. SCO has been playing an important role in containing these hostilities by evoking cooperation in the arena of Non-Traditional security threats. However the member states are wary of the risk potential that these issues carry with them in case of any escalation (Guang 2013:162). Mutual cooperation hinge heavily on these bilateral and regional issues which need to be contained and sorted out through dialogue and conversation.

WATER AS A SOURCE OF DISPUTE IN CENTRAL ASIAN REGION

Water has a special significance in the context of Central Asia. At over four million square kilometres, the Central Asian States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan and are home to roughly 60 million people. The majority of fresh water in the region comes from run-off from the high mountain ranges of Pamir and Tien Shan lying in the eastern part of Central Asia, which are the source of the two main rivers of the region, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, flowing west and north towards the Aral Sea. As the CAR lies in the arid and semi-arid global vegetation zones, agriculture is made possible only by irrigation, which demands sophisticated water distribution systems.

Water management in CAR has always been a complex issue rather a controversial one. Distribution of river water is characterised by rivers crossing international borders and intertwining of water and energy production. Dispute over water sharing in the region has become a source of potential conflict. Post disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, water management has been the source of serious disputes in the Central Asia because of the differences arising out of the conflicting needs and priorities between the upstream and downstream countries in the region, thus disturbing the regional stability and security. In terms of the distribution of natural resources, we can divide the countries in the CAR into two groups: energy-poor but water-rich upstream countries (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and energy-rich but water-poor downstream countries (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). While the first group needs water for energy,

downstream countries are in dire need of water for agriculture. Thus, in Central Asia, natural resources distribution have emerged not as tools for facilitating regional cooperation but as a source of conflict.

Growing water and energy needs are provoking military conflict among the Central Asian States. In 2012, a dispute over water resources lead to an impending military conflict among the former Soviet republics because Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were planning to dam rivers for hydropower projects (Fazal 2014:32). The dispute over Tajikistan's Rogun Hydropower Plant Project presents an example of the water-energy-food nexus in the CAR. As tension between upper riparian Tajikistan and lower riparian Uzbekistan escalates, it is posing a serious threat to peace and stability in the region. Uzbekistan which is the Central Asia's most populous country depends heavily on the rivers that rise in its neighbouring countries to irrigate its land. Thus it has been opposed to plans to revive Soviet-era projects to build dams upstream. Also political rivalries are putting immense stress on the efforts by CAS and SCO to solve the issue (Dwivedi 2012:52). This may lead to conflict among the CAS which will hamper cooperation within SCO. Increasing tension over this is sure to take a toll on efforts by SCO to encourage cooperation.

Ferghana valley in Central Asia is facing the brunt of acute water shortage on shared birder areas. The three riparian states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are increasing facing water shortage issues which make the region volatile (Feng 2011:314). Analysts argue that the water dispute in the CAR might increase the risk of people taking route of radical alternatives to get away from the existing systems they live in. There is possibility that if the domestic governments fail to resolve their water issues the Central Asian economy will stagnate and the foreign relations among the CAS will worsen.

The Soviet era arrangements for water sharing are the only water sharing agreements governing the issue, which are clearly not working. These three riparian nations: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have different priorities for water use. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan want to build large hydropower plants which will need large reservoirs of water. Uzbekistan has objections to these projects because it fears that Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan will withhold water, either out of necessity to make these projects work or on political whim (Grainger 2011:183). Uzbekistan largely depends on these rivers for irrigating its farmlands and cotton fields. Cotton sector is the backbone of its economy. Thus Uzbekistan has livelihood issue depending on these rivers. Since Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan want not only to produce for domestic consumption but also for exporting the electricity produced, Uzbekistan protests against these projects.

In Central Asia, water is not scarce but it is badly managed, as it is a case in every developing country (Crosston 2010:93). Large amount of water are wasted because of obsolete farming practices and irrigation methods. Infrastructure is not that advanced for sustainable use of water. The dispute over water sharing among these three CAS is acute as it is about money whether water is used in the energy sector of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan or for the agriculture sector in Uzbekistan. Cotton is the main cash crop in Uzbekistan and Uzbek government relies on it to earn much needed foreign exchange. Similarly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan the possibility of producing enough electricity to export is one of the very few opportunities in open for it to earn hard currency.

Kyrgyzstan is a politically unstable country and the vast majority of citizens are poor. The living conditions are worsening in the country which is clear with the growing dissatisfaction with the government. There is acute power shortage in the country. Along its borders ethnic tensions are increasingly raising its ugly head. Osh, a city lying in the southern Kyrgyzstan faces winter with power cuts and no gas (Cohen 2013:71) . Growing scarcity might take a violent turn escalating in conflicts. The Kyrgyz government has been trying to maintain authority and control over its southern part but given the inhospitable environment and dilapidated social sector it is hard to do that.

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are all weak states in different ways. The other thing which they share is poverty and political instability. There is political disenfranchisement in all the three countries. Since the basic services are in disarray and people are suffering in myriad ways, it is quite possible for the citizens in these three countries to seek radical alternatives from the existing regimes they live under.

Conflict over water also has the potential of sparking chain reaction in the CAR. Water dispute may take a toll on border conflicts which are increasingly militarized. The Ferghana Valley region which is hotbed of ethnic diversity is likely to be the site for any serious confrontation. Conflict in this area would certainly impact each state, and none of them have the capacity to deal with the potential fall out. Thus ultimately people will be suffering. Given the poor living standards and shortage of basic necessities, it is important that these CAS come together and work out a solution through a proper plan. Modernisation of infrastructure and improving irrigation techniques can help in a big way. The centre of dispute: Rivers Syr Darya and Amu Darya should be the subject of separate agreements. These agreements could eventually form the basis for a regional agreement. As a short term measure to reduce hostilities, the countries need to de-escalate tensions on their borders. SCO can be used here as a medium to improve on confidence building measures. It can bring a common development strategy for the energy and agriculture needs of these CAS. Also

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan should chalk out a plan to manage these reservoirs in a way that is beneficial to everyone.

The CAS have come out of the centralised water management system of the Soviet era but the current organisation remains weak (Daoudy 2007:56). The water management system in these countries are marred by major weaknesses. Since these States never had any experience in independent water management during the Soviet era, post independence the local authorities had to face problems for effective management. In such instances resolving water disputes becomes all the more difficult. Also these CAS are focusing in self dependence in terms of food and energy production and thus are desperately following policies to maximise the use of existing resources for their national development. The administrative competency combined by political indecisiveness also work as hindrance in the path of good governance. Malignant corruption and insufficient resources for monitoring and control of use of these resources also underline the mismanagement issue in the CAS. A suggestion often made by scholars has been that if independent monitoring and assessment units are established with the help of regional and international institutions, it can help to promote much needed cooperation for shared river systems (Waterbury 1997:9). SCO can be that regional institution here to help the CAS in creating a platform for cooperation. With this initiative SCO can remove a major hindrance in its path to bring cooperation on issues other than terrorism.

Treaties, recommendations, etc laying down rules, process, specific procedures and provisions, mechanisms will provide an agreed ground for all the signatories to follow them and will further lead to easing of tensions (Hamner 2000:73).

International conventions such as 1997 UN Watercourses Convention and other internationally approved law principles should also be taken into consideration for resolving such water disputes which involve international river basins. In 1991, an agreement was signed by the water ministers of the five CAS to maintain the Soviet era allocation of water which was formalised in 1992 under the Almaty agreement. The agreement outlines the use and conservation of water resources. It sets its primary target to cooperate in the field of water management. It focuses on equitable water usage along with the equal responsibility of all the signatories for sustainable utilisation and conservation of the water resources in the region (Klotzli 1997:64). Moreover, it highlights that each of the signatory has the obligation of preventing actions in its territory which can hamper the interests of the other signatories and can result into damages for them. This principle is based on the Helsinki Rules (1996) and the UN/EC Helsinki Convention on the Protection and use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and International Lakes (1992).

The Interstate Commission for Water Coordination (ICWC) which consists of the water ministers of the five CAS was established for facilitating the smooth implementation of quotas and to monitor and control the activities of the river basin systems. ICWC is also entrusted with a Scientific Information Centre, training of staff for water management and operating a comprehensive database that can be accessed by the member states of ICWC. The executive bodies of ICWC, the Amu Darya river basin water management association and the Syr Darya river basin water management association are tasked with the monitoring of implementation of quotas with associated right of scaling up or down by fifteen percent.

Water issue as a source of inter-state conflict in the CAR also include the problems of Aral sea basin. In 1993 the Interstate Council for the Aral Sea Basin (ICAB) and the International Fund to Save the Aral Sea (IFAS) were set up. In 1997 these two organisations were merged together to resolve the problems arising out of the Aral sea. It was set up to provide socio-economic and other assistance to the people living around the sea and depending on it for their livelihood. The purpose of the organisation was to facilitate the coordination among the Central Asian States. The water ministries in these States were made in-charge of water management. However this could not fructify as there was no agreement to set up water quotas which could be acceptable by all. Consequently numerous bilateral and multilateral arrangements to regulate the water flow of shared river basin had to be negotiated. The original central planning done to regulate the water flow has not yielded any effective result for the CAS to avoid any conflict for water sharing (Mosello 2007:89). Rising tensions over water resources is escalating further due to the inefficiency of current management system.

Scholars point out that what has thwarted the drafting and implementation of a concrete regional approach to water disputes, the incapacity to acknowledge that post Soviet Union disintegration the new CAS were not satisfied with the economic roles that they were previously assigned. Another obstacle is the lack of any source of reliable data on the water flow in the two river basins. The average annual flow of water of Amu Darya is more than the average annual flow of water in the Syr Darya river. However the amount of flow varies from year to year and season to season. Also the decay of many hydrological posts in Tajikistan because of the civil war there and lack of funds in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have made the process of data collection very cumbersome and tedious. Thus in the absence of data on water flow in the two river basins, it is extremely difficult for hydrologists to come up with any precise estimate. Thus the very basis to set quota for all the water sharing countries is not available. To sum up, all the reasons which are causing failure of agreements on water sharing and leading to inter-state conflict in the CAR can be categorised under five heads:

Limited mandates

Initially the river basin organizations in CAS were expected to work on particular areas like technical areas including data collection, monitoring river flow across all the nations, etc. Their mandate was very narrow and limited and thus development of a system beneficial to all could not have been possible till date. Such broader system of water sharing is required for cooperation in basin wide social, economic and ecological challenges. Further improvement in this field is bound to have a trickle down effect in other sectors as well, e.g. economic, bilateral relations, etc. the mandate of ICWC is very restricted which is focused on water division only and thus is not allowed to deal with sectors which consume most of the water like agriculture and energy.

Constrained autonomy

ICWC and the IFAS have emerged as the centre point for interstate conflict since they constantly face disputes about country representation and staff pattern. Also these two organisations have been accused of corruption, unaccountability, lack of transparency and absence or under-involvement of non-government bodies, civil society groups, environment activists, international experts, local bodies and other stakeholders in the decision making process. Critics often term ICWC as a 'club of water officials who take no real decisions' (ADB 2009:287). Also it has been accused of biasness since both the ICWC and IFAS have headquarters located in Uzbekistan, thus it raises concerns over a certain degree of biasness towards the host nation.

Weak institutional capacity

Poor and inefficient staff, lack of modern technique, poor execution of programme designing, etc are some of the features of water management regimes in the CAS. These are the factors leading to mismanagement in this area. The Soviet legacy of no independent water management system and centralised control by Moscow has resulted in non-experienced staff and officials. Thus these issues are now raising their heads and causing inter-state conflict in the CAS. Since the decisions in the ICWC and IFAS are taken by consensus, it often results into policy paralysis when the interests of the CAS conflict among each other.

Insufficient financing

This is one of the major obstacles in the path of negotiation for water sharing issue. Since balanced negotiations are costly because they require technical data and expertise and extend over long periods. The process of negotiation for the development of effective water management is thus as important as the outcome. IFAS was initially set up as a funding mechanism for implementing the Aral Sea programmes. However it failed to serve the purpose. It could not raise funds and contributions from the five CAS. Unstable and volatile economic situations in these five CAS limited their ability to elicit adequate contribution to the funding programme. The precarious

economic situation in these five CAS has not let it achieve much since its creation. Also there is absence of political commitment to these water organisations. According to the data revealed by the ICWC only Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have been able to pay up their share of funding to the ICWC and IFAS. The funding problem is exaggerated by lack of recognition for a collective maintenance arrangement. Also funds from external sources has been centred around the issue of Aral sea ecological disaster and the cause of better management of the water flow in two river basins have been generally neglected by the international community.

Lack of enforcement

This is another obstacle as enforcement of agreements is very important if one plans to make the programmes successful. Inability in successful enforcement and implementation also weakens the credibility of governments and does not create any incentive for compliance by the authorities or by the public in general. After years of dispute among the CAS, two agreements were signed in 1996 and 1997 with an aim to arrive at equitable water sharing solution and to use the water flow of Syr Darya to produce energy. Absence of compliance and inefficient enforcement is also a result of administrative problems in the institutions of these CAS. In all this implementation suffers. There is no supervisory authority to keep a check on maladministration, no surprise inspections, no imposition of fines if implementation not done properly. No real power has been provided to water bodies for monitoring.

Given the entire dispute related to water sharing we can sum up that this has been a bone of contention among the CAS, thus prohibiting a concrete foundation for close cooperation on any level, be it bilateral or regional. Interaction at multilateral institutions like SCO gets hampered by such disputes. Dispute in one core sector ultimately leads to suspicion and mistrust in other areas as well. This is the dilemma faced by the SCO with regard to CAS. Although water dispute may not be the cause of armed conflict in Central Asia in near future given the understanding among all the five CAS to maintain stability, water is an important issue dominating the lives of all the people, directly affecting people, society, economy, strategic interests, etc. Thus, rights and control over water has come to acquire a very important place in the domestic politics and foreign relations of the CAS. Not only nationally and regionally but locally as well it has emerged as a major cause of conflict. Cooperation at the level of SCO is related directly with water dispute as water shortage directly inhibits economic growth of the CAR especially in the rural areas where it restricts the already limited opportunities. Much greater effort is required for better management and efficient utilisation of water by all the five Central Asian Republics. This is urgently required not only to enhance cooperation but also because their survival depends on this.

Scholars have suggested many fundamental policy recommendations to improve their situation and how to go about an agreed plan. First and foremost, they emphasise on management of bilateral relations in accordance with the international law and conventions. This is an approach which benefits every nation in the region in an equitable manner without trying to harm any other in the region. A sustainable and inclusive decision making process and dispute resolution mechanism will require all the CAS to come together without any inhibition towards each other. Another recommendation is that they can follow the best practices in the world regarding international river basins and water sharing methods. This will result into achieving similar the Central Asian context.

Ideally, the process of a cooperative framework should first start at the national level in form of setting up domestic water regimes, water bodies, etc. CAS should take into account that there will be intersection with the other system in the region from other CAS. To achieve this agreements and treaties will ease up the process which will encourage the states to coordinate and harmonising of laws and policies and joint research and development along with information exchange procedures. This process can be associated by many other steps like joint work for data collection, management decentralisation, training to staff and other professionals for integrated water management. Such activities will act as confidence building measures among the CAS and will also enhance the institutional capacity of the two water bodies, the ICWC and the IFAS.

Involvement of other stakeholders like NGOs, Civil society members, experts will enhance the credibility of these plans for regional cooperation. While taking a look at other successful water agreements, the case of Mekong River Commission, since 2002, exhibits that selected representatives from civil society have been invited to the joint committee and other related meetings over the water body. They further contribute by giving their own perspective on the decision making process. A similar case of the Nile International Discourse Desk reflects that promotion of participation by civil society groups and NGOs in such initiatives results in positive outcome to the whole process of arriving at decisions. Unbiased and expert recommendations enrich the mechanism. These models could be looked at by the ICWC and the IFAS to arrive at some agreement viable for all the CAS.

A sincere involvement of NGOs and Water Users bodies will also give a voice to the needs and concerns of all the stakeholders of water management in the CAR. Benefits from a well- structured institutional framework consisting of Heads of states, high level ministries, top officials, advisory bodies and setting up of national offices will go a long way for negotiating solutions. Some form of a permanent water commission meeting at regular periods will also be helpful as it will determine the best use of water flow in the international river basins. Production of electricity as well as use of water for irrigation by the CAS can be shared through proper and equitable allocation of water

which will be arrived through dialogue and discourse among the CAS. Also environmental impact assessment can be done such commissions thus a comprehensive solution can be arrived at (Lindermann 2005:32).

Such multi-track approach on one hand aims at securing food security and energy production and on other hand aims at enhancing river water management by strengthening their capacity. Such arrangements will greatly enhance the relations among the CAS over water sharing by shifting their focus from parochial interests to wider socio-economic goals and environmental threats. A shift from the traditional focus on specific technical areas to much complex overall impact is required to understand the complex hydrological situation in the CAR. Till now only technical projects have been approached by the CAS for joint participation and negotiation which has not resulted in a major outcome. A successful regional cooperation can be possible only through development of coordinated policies and projects which will bring assured benefits or reduce damages to all the member states.

Technical investment by all the CAS and assistance by their neighbouring superpowers and international community will empower it further. Institutional reforms and appropriate national policy will make the process more comprehensive.

Lifting the limits from the capacity and enhancing of autonomy of existing water bodies and organisations will solve the fundamental problem that hampers the current regime of regional cooperation on inter-state disputes in the CAS. Full autonomy in the area of financial, technical and administrative decisions can make these institutions more effective. A long term strategy can be devised to monitor and manage water availability and water quality.

A credible regional solution to the problem will be arrived at only if these institutions look beyond narrow national interests and act as source of rational and sustainable advice on water management. Competing national interests must not dictate the decision making process.CAS has been unable to develop strategies for environmental challenges and socio-economic issues due to the lack of financial and political support. This is true at least at the national and local level. At regional level with the help and assistance of institutions like SCO they are coming around these issues, cooperating with each other. Contribution by every CAS and their neighbours, aid and assistance by regional and international institutions will reduce such difficulties. In fact if these CAS come together at multilateral forums and express their concerns in one voice, they might get attention of international community. This is possible only if mutual inhibitions are shedded by these countries.

These Central Asian Republics need to recognise the interdependence among themselves on such issue. A long term support will be based on this recognition and common understanding among themselves (UNDP 2006: 228). Any support even from outside will be dependent on how these CAS present their problems to them. External donors will be more interested to help if they find that these countries are doing their bit to address their problems. Fostering regional cooperation will be a step in that direction. A genuine participatory approach and coordination will thus be very significant.

If all the five Central Asian States recognise that the Aral sea is a common regional resource and that its degradation will be catastrophic for all of them to the same effect, then the water discourse in the CAR can be effectively addressed. It could thus finally be de-securitised, which will be helpful in creating a concrete base for cooperation among themselves. This should be addressed in an urgent manner as the environmental degradation in the CAR is too serious to delay any action in this regard.Cooperation seems to be the only way out in such situation. It is the only viable strategy towards effective and sustainable resolution of the conflict. Cooperation on this issue will serve as a legacy for other contentious areas as it will serve as a confidence building measure.

This issue always emerge as a hindrance for close cooperation on regional forums like SCO. Lack of political will restricts the level of cooperation among the CAS. To make these solutions a reality, political will is more important than technical know-how and financial availability. The CAS present the case where managing shared water can either be a basis for peace or for conflict. It depends on how the political leadership act and which course do they choose (UNDP 2006:203).

It is not only the dispute over water sharing about the relations between these three states are also shaped by factors like border tensions and domestic issues of poverty, corruption, etc. Since SCO works on the doctrine of non- interference, it is reasonable that these countries utilise such a platform where they have achieved good results. If the water dispute is resolved and a solution is worked out it is quite possible that mutual goodwill will reduce to some extent the existing tensions between the states along the shared borders, and bring stability in the region. SCO will be strengthened if its member states share cordial relations.

ISSUE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CENTRAL ASIA

Soon after the independence of Central Asian States it was widely anticipated that the newly found independence would fall victim to ethnic based violence in the CAR. Though these CAS have withstood the test of time these nations have been victims of small scale tensions over resources that has a peculiar ethnic form. The Central Asian people identify themselves on the basis of ethnic based group identity. Following map shows the ethnic group of central Asia.

ETHNIC GROUPS

Kazakh	Tajik	Russians/Ukrainian
Turkmen	Karakalpak	Uighurs
Uzbek	Kyrgyz	Sparsely populated

Source: Le Monde Diplomatique/Unep/Grid-Arendal

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These artificial definitions can develop into competition or even conflict over limited resources along the lines of ethnicity when the conditions are ripe for it. Since any conflict over the issue of ethnicity has the potential of escalating into a civil war like situation, it is thus important to consider while analysing the challenges to cooperation among CAS. On a platform like SCO such hostility will always act as a barrier for genuine cooperation among themselves.

Post-Soviet Central Asia faces two distinct types of ethnic problems: conflict between Russian-speakers and the titular ethnic group, or that part of it that exercises state power, a potential racial conflict, and conflicts between titular ethnic groups and other Central Asian groups. The prosperous Ferghana valley in the CAR is often taken as the source of ethnic conflict in the region. This region was considered to be the most prosperous region lying in the heart of the Central Asia.

After the disintegration of the USSR, the region and its resources fell with different groups vying with each other, often against each other for control of resources and political power. The issue is of grave concern for causing instability in the region. The southern Kyrgyzstan has already witnessed ethnic based violence in 1990 and 2010. These clashes were between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks residing in the country. In Kyrgyzstan 14.4% of its population are of Uzbek ethnicity and are mostly concentrated in its southern part. In Kyrgyzstan, regionalism, ethnic rivalry, and growing Islamism coexist, but a relatively open political system has provided an outlet that seems to have prevented lapses into violence. But the recent trend is one of increasing regional rivalry between southern and northern Kyrgyzstan which poses a greater threat to the stability of the country. There have been numerous instances of violent suppression of demonstrations in the country mainly directed against the Uzbek community. But not all these incidents are a result of domestic conflict. Some are the outcomes of penetration of IMU units in the region as they are fighting their way to Uzbekistan part of Ferghana valley from the bases set up in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Many analysts blame the extremely rigid and closed political system of Uzbekistan for the growth of violence by groups originating in the country. Kyrgyzstan, where social and economic conditions are in some respects worse than Uzbekistan, has to bear the brunt of the growing Islamism and assertion of ethnic identity in its neighbouring country.

Apart from these clashes, minor clashes regularly take place in the valley. What is unique about these conflicts is that these are a result of competition over scarce resources and disagreement among the minority groups over their role in local politics. Thus these ethnically motivated tensions are not actually because of some irresolvable ethnic hatred. Thus this ethnic tension is actually form of group competition that takes the form of ethnic conflict when the state is not upto the expectation of the people and in unable to deliver services and resources to its citizens. In view of such issues it is generally helpful if there is more accountability in the decision making processes at the grassroot level. This will enhance administrative performance and sustainable use of scarce resources which is the main reason behind these clashes.

Other parts in the CAR are equally prone to ethnic rift and conflicts. This issue assumes significance as they play disruptive role in the security and stability in the CAS. Maintenance of social order and state security is indispensable if a nation want to carry out bigger role in regional politics or at international level. Similarly, cooperation at the SCO will be directly affected if ethnic minorities concerns are not addressed by the CAS.

The Central Asian States are ethnically interrelated. In Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Uzbek and Tajik communities live together mixed with titular nationalities. In Uzbekistan, Tajik minority constitute around 20% of the population, concentrated in the Bukhara and Samarqand provinces. Tajiks

living here claim Bukhara and Samarkand as their lost homeland and have their grievance related to language and education issues. Them being less in numbers and the weakness of Tajikistan have prevented this issue from developing into a major one, despite the fact that Uzbek government has been criticised by its minority Tajik population for its harsh treatment. In border regions, where citizenship remains an ambiguous concept governments as well as people sometimes treat ethnicity as a proxy for citizenship. According to some reports, Uzbekistan has deported around 20,000 Tajiks on the charge of being illegal immigrants, but others claim that they are legal citizens of Uzbekistan. Quite ironically, in all other Central Asian states, the main issue is that of the Uzbek minority, which is the largest Central Asian non-titular group in every other state, is mainly concentrated in areas bordering it in all of its neighbouring countries.

While in Tajikistan, Uzbek constitute around 30-40% of the population, residing especially in the north. Uzbeks are proportionately largest in Tajikistan, where at some places they even predominate in the rural areas. The civil war in Tajikistan exhibited a clash of both ideologies and regional clans. On one side, groups formerly allied with Soviet power from Leninabad, Kulab, and Hissar posed a united group and the group at the other side consisted of Gharmis and Pamiris, who wanted to reconfigure a nationalist state power in Tajikistan. The nationalist group included both 'democrats' and 'Islamists'. What is important here that they formed a united front of Tajik ethno-nationalism. This civil war   pitted an entirely Tajik group against a Tajik-led coalition which also included Uzbeks and Russians.   In Tajikistan, the situation turns complex when many of those who are registered as Tajik also speak Uzbek. This population data raises concerns as both the nations possess aggressive nationalist ideas that present their own community and ethnicity as superior to the other, both culturally and racially. They cite historical evidences to prove their superiority over the other.

The Central Asian states, in relation to its minority Russian speaking population adopted the 'Zero option'. Every citizen of the erstwhile USSR who was legally resident in these states on the date they became independent was entitled to citizenship. None of the CAS imposed any kind of linguistic or other culture-based test for providing citizenship status. Hence since the very beginning, citizenship in CAS was defined on a legal and civic basis. The term "Russian speaker" in Central Asia was taken to denote ethnic groups of non-Central Asian origin, including Russians, Ukrainians, other Slavs, Ashkenazi Jews, Tatars, Germans, and others. Russian speakers in the CAS are mainly concentrated in the cities and urban spaces. These Russian speaking population are of the view that indigenization of the state machinery creates difficulties of employment for them. They are critical about the feeling of exclusion from the mainstream. Their demands can also be seen in the context as they are the formerly dominant sections of population and many of them were part of state apparatus before the disintegration of the USSR. Some of the pockets of this

population have expressed their desire that they would feel more secure if the northern Kazakhstan merged with its Siberian neighbours as they have their sympathizers across the border. One of the least noticed factors preventing violent conflict between the Russian speaking population and the CAS has been the role played by the foreign policy of Russia. It has been largely unnoticed but this has undoubtedly been a stabilizing factor in Central Asia Region.

There have also been instances of the misuse of ethnic linkages in the CAR. This is a threat to regional security and it can be understood in the way that Uzbekistan has used cross-border ties to militias with ethnic Uzbek affiliations in both Tajikistan and Afghanistan when it has felt its interests were threatened. In fact it supported joint operations by these militant groups: the one which was led by Dostum in Afghanistan and another one, led by Mahmud Khudaiberdiyev in Tajikistan. This misuse of ethnic ties by Tashkent was however pragmatic rather than nationalist or ideological. It used Khudaiberdiyev to exert pressure on Dushanbe and Moscow over the presence of IMU in Tajikistan. The IMU originated as a movement led by the Uzbeks from the Ferghana valley, sometimes including followers from other groups as well, with the objective of fighting against the regime in Tashkent and launching attacks on them from the bases set up in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Uzbekistan alleged that Russia was providing aid to this radical group to pressurize Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan also used Dostum in Afghanistan to secure its border with Afghanistan and parts of the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border used by the IMU and drug traffickers for infiltrating into Uzbekistan. In return Uzbekistan supported Dostum's demands for a kind of autonomous region in the north. According to analysts, here ethnic and sub-ethnic or regional identities played a significant role in mobilization for these conflicts but ethnic issues per played little role.

Such policies serve the interests of the national regimes in gaining legitimacy in domestic territory. This puts the real question at the backseat. The main question of ensuring economic security to their citizens including the national minorities thus is not addressed. Thus a recipe of violent ethnic clashes is always ready in the CAR when the radical notion of racial or national superiority mixes with the grievances over scarce resources and share in power. The individuals from different ethnic groups unite to advocate group interests and increase their chances to gain control over the sources of relative economic prosperity. The situation is like playing with fire, in which both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are involved. Thus ethnic conflict is far from unavoidable in CAR. The threat might still be in nascent stage but later it could become all too real.

One of the success stories of CAS has been in the field of avoiding violent inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. None of these ethnic issues, however, has sparked mass violence since independence. But this can not be exaggerated since most of them have experienced political violence even if they were not directly related to ethnic conflict. Among the other issues affecting relations between the

minority ethnic groups and the titular nationality in the CAS have been citizenship, language, education, and state employment policies. Affirmative actions for the titular nationality in different areas have been an issue becoming important bone of contention among these groups.

Policies of conflict reduction are required to solve this problem whether by bilateral or regional cooperation. Since all the five CAS are entangled in this issue they must act on a regional platform. Thus, role of SCO here becomes very important in this context which have successfully engaged CAS on security aspect.

Highly diverse societies in the CAS make the nature of conflict ethnic. When countries have ethnically diverse population and they have differential access to different sorts of resources then political conflict may be organised on ethnic lines. Things get worse when identity differences coincide with unequal socio-economic status resulting in exclusion or racial discrimination. These make inter-group conflicts unavoidable. Competition over resources intensifies the sense of revenge and differences among the ethnic groups. Scholars accept the view that absence of ethnic diversity does not necessarily reduce the likelihood of political conflict. It only makes it less likely that it will be organized around ethnicity. In CAS conflicts along tribal, factional, regional, ideological and clan loyalty is linked to parallel and competing interests in drug trafficking and other form of criminalized economy. Thus organised crime, drug trafficking, etc are clearly linked directly to ethnic unrest and a sub-problem within the bigger task of reducing or managing political conflict. As trust develops the exchange of strategic, security, counter-narcotics and anti-money laundering intelligence will also aid in the fight against transnational crime (Hong 2011:63).

In a nutshell, it can be argued that ethnic clashes in the CAR are transnational in nature. Factors both internal and external in nature impact such conflicts. In fact some of the rift among ethnic groups which were entirely internal in nature developed transnational linkages as a result of the spread of conflict. Competition over scarce resources and political will add fuel to the simmering fire of ethnic differences in the CAS. The CAS are developing nations, some of which are at low levels of socio economic indicators. All the effort is being put at developing the economy of the country. Thus neglect at the social sector is bound to happen. Mobilisation of regional and ethnic identities becomes easier in case of socio-economic grievances. These ethnic rivalries become more complex when there are transnational linkages as in the case of CAS, which happen through migration flows, labourers, warriors and traders. These shape and change in many ways the political and ethnic landscape of their regions. Thus the issue of identity politics in the CAS is much more than diversity within these states. Ethnic identities link groups in these CAS to trans-border linkages. These linkages form the characteristic underpinnings of the regional parallel economy and regional warfare. Non- state actors come into play in such scenarios and engage with

the state in covert warfare thus threatening the stability of the state. In CAR, cross-border identities have served the efforts of non state actors and militant groups to create armed militants that also operate across borders, like the Taliban, the IMU,etc. Other consequences involve illegal activities like drug peddling, smuggling of goods, narcotics, organised crime, etc that can either generate black money for illicit activities or generate capital and institutional frameworks, eventually, hampering regional economic interests.

In such scenario role of regional forums assume significance ground when they provide a platform to discuss a collaborative approach to such threats undermining their borders and sovereignty. These identities are mobilised by non-state actors to act against the states destabilising them. Thus the CAS need to come together to act in the interests of their own and the other states in the region to prevent such parochial understanding of identity from debilitating them.

SHARED VALUES ACTING AS AN ADVANTAGE FOR THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Common values are extremely important in the context of cooperation in bilateral or multilateral forums as they act as glue which binds all the member states with diverse interests. As the SCO has evolved, one can notice that the initial passive approach of the member states have given way for taking values more seriously. The 'Shanghai Spirit' reflects the SCO values and are significantly different from those of the earlier allies of the CAS, be it the USA or any other power. The Shanghai as defined by the then Chinese Premier Jiang Zemin in 2001 is based on mutual trust, equality, mutual benefit, negotiation and discourse, respect for each other civilisations and shared notion of prosperity.

The motto of Shanghai spirit provides an inward looking emphasis by member states to work together in a constructive and productive manner. At the same time an outward looking emphasis on challenging the philosophical and strategic unipolar nature of the international arena (Bailes 2007:6). However SCO has been more productive in its inward looking goals.

The mandate of SCO emphasises on common state interests that make a concrete ground of good and harmonious relations. Thus it does not emphasis on ideology or nature of regimes for establishing close contacts among the member states. This approach ensures stability and interaction among the member states over the long term. This approach of SCO is valued by the member states as it forms a precondition for predictable political and economic relations with other countries in the region. SCO places emphasis on non-interference in internal affairs of its member states however it also recognises that any instability whether occurring out of internal factors or external factors will cause chaos and will definitely harm the cooperation efforts. Thus SCO has

been pushing its member states to shed inhibitions against each other and work together in resolving the inter-state disputes over water, environmental impacts, treatment of ethnic minorities, etc. since these concerns act as barriers in the path of the regional institution, it is imperative that the SCO encourage its member states to utilise the shared values aspect to address their concern (Zhao 2007:160).

The culture of affinity and bonhomie will result in treatment of others as equals, respect for their autonomous political choices and avoidance of indiscreet remarks and criticisms. Scholars argue that deepening of unity and coordination will prepare grounds for a bright future in Peace and harmony hold the highest value (Guang 2007: 48). There has been history of non-interference in each other among of all SCO member states. This was clearly seen in the reaction for the events in the Andijan in 2005. It was mainly supportive of the action of Uzbek leadership to suppress the revolt. It can be also seen in the reaction of the members in the riots in the Tibet region in China in Match of 2008. The crackdown in the Tibet region caused deaths of dozen of civilian. During the crackdown in the Tibet, Chinese authorities were within the main objective of fighting against three evils: terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

SCO members also believe in the assertive and strong central state. This is another proclaimed value among the members of SCO. They believe that strong and assertive central state is the most effective tool to stabilize their respective country. They have common belief that such method is primary condition for regional stability. One the characteristic of the neighbouring states in CAR is to support the regime and suppress the dissident groups. All members show this authoritarian kind of internal politics, although there are variations among SCO states. Therefore, the national politics of member states of SCO has gradually shifted towards uniformity. All of the SCO members, somewhat, believe that violent suppression of opposition is a tool to maintain status quo.

The leaders of SCO members have fear of growing internal opposition. This common fear has pushed SCO leaders to become partner and sync their policies on threats to their security. A strong evidence of such understanding comes in picture during 'colour revolutions'. The protest demonstrations deposed the ruling regimes in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). The protest demonstrations were believed to be supported by external forces. The Kyrgyz leadership, which came to power because of 'tulip revolution', tries hard to separate itself from this legacy. China also had experience of popular protests in the capital on Tan Yan Myn Square in June 1989 and it shares the same threat perception.

Anti-Americanism is another feeling shared by the member-states. Opposition to the role of USA in international arena and their presence in Central Asia can be understood when in the SCO

Astana 2005 summit statement called on to limit the presence of troops from outside the region in Central Asia. This prompted the US military withdrawal from its base in Uzbekistan. This statement led the US observers and critics of SCO to interpret it as an anti-Western organisation. Nonetheless, SCO has still not formulated a collective and definite response towards the US policies. It has been ambivalent about it. Anti-Americanism as a foreign policy stand has been on rise globally and it reflects in the leadership and population of the SCO member states. However, the formation of SCO and its goals are not Anti-American which can be seen in its agenda. Its formation has been a result of enhancing mutual cooperation on regional issues especially threats to security. Moreover, the work of SCO on the Non-Traditional Security threats has garnered much support and acknowledgements from the world over.

Individual SCO member-states also have interests of their own in being part of the organisation. For Russia & China, it offers a vehicle via which they can co-ordinate their respective activities in Central Asia. For the Central Asian States, the SCO offers high-level attention from two P5 members and, as they see it, a mechanism via which they can pursue their respective 'multi-vector' policies.

Culturally and socially the CAS share same characteristics. Though ethnically very diverse, mixed population act as a common ground of cooperation. Their infrastructural connections are also acting as a link among the member states. Communication and transportation are part and parcel of successful regional grouping.

The values of non-interference, isolationism and suspicion in relation with the outsiders are shared by all member states of SCO to a certain degree. These values can be harnessed in a conducive manner to hold a united front on a global arena than facilitating collective action in the region itself. At the same time, there are concerns over internal stability in the CAS especially Kyrgyzstan and over possible regional implications of a crisis if the situation in the country gets out of control. Such a crisis might act as the litmus test for the SCO on whether to act politically or militarily, and will test the limits of the non-interference principle. Scholars argue that if stability in Central Asian States is jeopardised by sharpening disputes and inter-state conflicts or the domestic political volatility relating to issues other than terrorism, the SCO would have a hard choice. It will be important for the SCO to intervene diplomatically or as the measure of last resort, militarily if a threat is posed to the security and stability of the entire region or if the matter in question is internationalised (Zhao 2006:57).

LIMITATIONS

Scholars argue that institutional reforms within SCO will make its work process more efficient and so the agreements which take a lot of time to get finalised can be arrived in short span of time (Bin 2006:54). Currently agreements within the SCO require further extensions due to long periods of consensus and negotiations which cause delay and that compromise with the quality of agreement implementation. Thus it will be advantageous for the member states to manage their interstate disputes and bilateral conflicts that act as hindrances for measures which seek a consensus based approach (Julie 2011:512). Divergent national goals and individual agendas impact the extent of multilateral co-operation and trust development between members (Yousef 2011:22). In the case of CAS, historical grievances do restrict the level of cooperation. However it is also important that they act wisely and take cautious steps beforehand, since the region is not built on a bedrock of trust or quality corporate governance and thus proceeding with caution is a pragmatic approach (Yuan 2010:188).

Since the governments in the CAS having significantly different political mandates, internal and foreign policies, these restrict the much needed motivation to act together and enforce the implementation of collective decisions. Although declarations and agreements may be signed, implementation of these is limited sometimes because of the lack of commitment or available resources (Guang 2005:34). Another restriction of conscripted budget also put up a challenge for them to work together effectively and implement the decisions in a timely manner.

SCO needs to develop its policies and procedures in a cost efficient manner. Also they need to define their agenda and purpose in the wake of changing global scenario in a more succinct manner to aid the progress (Yuan 2010:67). Since member states in the SCO are not democratic makes it more difficult to implement the policies and decisions (Fazal 2008:95). Implementation must be done in a flexible and pragmatic manner with more emphasis placed on achieving timely concrete outcomes.

To boost the cooperation efforts and harmonization process, SCO needs such laws and policies to complement its activities. To continue to grow, SCO needs to derive a midway between addressing all the security threats arising in the region and working with a variety of levels of corporate governance. Since the CAS are relatively poor, imposition of a penalty in from of financial cost is not a viable option and this will further cause difficulties. Presently, more funds can be sourced only through international community which should increase their aid and assistance (Iwashita 2008:16).

Greater engagement and cooperation among the members will bridge the gap and generate momentum and confidence (Gentry 2006:72). Above mentioned improvements and reforms will surely make its organizational texture internationally more attractive (Grainger 2013:89). At the same time the biggest criticism of SCO has been that there are very few feats achieved by it in securing regional economic pacts. In fact, member states have many a times acknowledged the stagnation in the economic arena.

PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE

In terms of ensuring security to the CAS, the SCO has been playing a commendable job since its establishment. Also it undoubtedly has provided a scope for Russia and China to divert the focus from bilateral conflicts to areas where they can mutually benefit. Apart from this, SCO has generated interest for itself on account of many reasons. Security analysts argue that SCO has broadened the scope of cooperation in the CAR which is not only among the CAS but also between the Russian- Chinese relations. SCO presents a significant platform in the context of Russia-China cooperation in security arena, especially the Non-Traditional Security threats (Bin 2006:12).

SCO has provided the most appropriate forum for the CAS to carry out their respective multi-vectoral foreign policies. Thus the CAS should utilise this forum as a means in their foreign policies. SCO has still lot of potential to contribute more actively and in much intensively on the issue of Non-Traditional security threats e.g.Counter-terrorism, drug trafficking,etc the issues where the international community has huge interests to invest and cooperate for.

In this backdrop, following measures can help the SCO members to enhance their strength:

- **Address the concern of Unilateralism:** Since the CAS are very critical of unilateral actions of the US as they are apprehensive of a unipolar world which they feel is not conducive for global peace. They are also reluctant of any non Central Asian nation interfering in the Central Asian security dynamics. SCO has emerged to have an influential voice on international issues and has the potential to act as a medium of counterweight balance in the CAR.
- **Reducing Regional Instability:** CAR and its extended neighbourhood including South Asia, West Asia are in a phase of constant volatility for quite a few years. Starting with the Afghanistan war, leading to subsequent numerous civil wars in the region and in the present situation the rise of radical ideas of ISIS, stability has eluded Central Asia. Recruitment of volunteers for ISIS army from the CAS has also added to the instability

and violence in the region. These are seen as causing long lasting consequences for the entire region. Such situations call for a better coordinated stand by countries in the region.

- **Balance within the Organization:** SCO provides China and Russia, its member states to resolve a number of disputes they had been entangled in the past. SCO has helped them to address their disputes peacefully and come closer. The presence of both the powers in SCO helps not only in bringing stability and peace to the region but at the same time it also provides a balance within SCO.

- **Potential for socio-economic Cooperation:** In CAS poverty is widespread and social indicators are not very satisfactory. Even though the CAS are developing economies, they possess unmatched assets in its human and natural resources and share strong historical linkages among themselves. An immense potential therefore exists for strong regional cooperation.

- **Presence of energy reserves:** The SCO member countries have huge reserves of natural resources, Russia, Iran and Kazakhstan in particular being rich in energy reserves. Since the CAR includes the two most populous countries of the world, which are eyeing for rapid economic expansion, as well as other fast-growing developing economies, including India's, the energy sector can be an important ground for cooperation and leveraging the demand and supply principle. The Central Asian Republics are not in a position to develop untapped reservoirs of energy on their own. They need foreign capital, technology and expertise on a large scale. Unless the relatively well-developed member states of SCO i.e. China and Russia, move forward and help them in exploiting these resources, these resources will be untapped. The recent expansion of SCO membership can be seen in this context where India can also collaborate and come into picture for exploration and export of huge energy reserves. Its strategic implications are far-reaching. Energy is forms an important base for promoting development through regional cooperation in all the sub-sectors, like investments, exploration, extraction, technology, and transportation, whether by road or through pipeline.

- **Infrastructure Development:** The regional topography of the CAR is very complex and somewhat problematic and acts as an obstacle for close cooperation among the states with the rugged mountains of Korakoram, Hindukush and Himalayas making physical contact, communications and infrastructure development far more difficult than normal. The tough conditions mean that huge capital resources, cooperation and strong political will are entailed. Lack of funds and border disputes also act as barriers. In order to realize the goal of infrastructure development to foster closer cooperation, it is all the more important to work together for developing this sector for bringing long-term peace and stability to all parts of this region. It will not only prove an effective check on cross border crime,

smuggling of weapons, goods and narcotics, etc but will also provide employment to the large sections of unemployed youth in the region.

- **Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism:** The instability caused by the repeated wars in Afghanistan and rise of ISIS have led to a phenomenon of extremism and revival of radical outfits which has hampered the progress and development of the region. A vicious cycle has set in of poverty, unemployment, radical outfits, illegal economic activities, repressive use of force by governments, etc which discourage an environment of goodwill and trust among the states. In this scenario, non-state actors are always keen to use terrorism, extremism and separatism to their own advantage. Non-state actors are also gaining strength in the prevailing environment.

- **Chaos in Afghanistan:** In the last two decades, the nation has been virtually destroyed with little infrastructure to maintain peace, stability and order in the society. Chaotic conditions prevail all over the country and warlords remain supreme in its most sensitive areas. Despite involvement of USA peace still remains elusive. Such chaotic situation in a country surrounded by sea of CAS is not favourable for their own stability. Since many radical outfits like the IMU etc have set up their bases outside the CAR and carry out violent attacks in the CAR. So such an atmosphere of commotion and turmoil is in a way a breeding ground for Non-Traditional security threats. Also menace of drug trafficking is flourishing because of continued violence and instability and unchecked growth of poppy cultivation in the region. Thus, all the countries of the region need to work closely to address these issues.

MOVING FORWARD

SCO is motivated by a well thought out approach to cooperation and need for a shift in the understanding of international relations, i.e. shift from looking for making simple gains from conflicting national interests to level of mutual relations which are based on non-interference, mutual respect and mutual benefits. With such an approach towards the international relations, SCO is therefore leaping forward to play an influential role in the global affairs in the decades to come. While working for fulfilment of regional needs and interests in the CAR, SCO will have to simultaneously take the challenges head on from various fronts. Such challenges can range from international pressure to regional rivalry. It is important for much needed sustainable, durable and multifaceted regional cooperation.

SCO in its emphasis on security dynamics in the CAR and playing an important role to bring countries together (who otherwise do not share much cordial relations) on important issues of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism has presented a new paradigm for international relations. It is a great initiative. These issues are raising their ugly heads in the western countries as well. Thus

in this regard SCO assumes great significance. SCO has evolved mechanisms and institutional structures for continued thinking and closely coordinated work to promote the shared vision and make it truly operational.

SCO is focusing on the provision that it will have immediate consultation on any emergency arising in the region to protect both SCO and its member states. Thus a comprehensive position on issues of vital importance affecting the Central Asian region as well as including foreign interference, should be adopted at SCO level.

For SCO, the goal of sustainable and maximum all-round regional cooperation can only be accomplished if all the participants including the member states, observer states and dialogue partners have enhanced opportunities to play pro-active roles. The expansion of membership to India and Pakistan is in this line.

On the topic of terrorism, it is beyond doubt that it is an evil force which negatively impacts the peace of the world. So are the other two evils of extremism and separatism. Yet, it is a fact that doctrines like 'War against terrorism' has resulted in more violence and increased terrorism without eradicating this menace. Instead of following such policies, SCO has adopted a more balanced and realistic approach towards the whole issue. A consensus on the definition of terrorism will go a long way in boosting the synchronisation of counter-terror measures.

Drug production and trafficking is a great menace for all the CAS. All the countries of the region are facing its effects in one way or the other. It is thus required by these nations to address the issue in close cooperation with each other, and not in isolation. Drug peddling has a direct relation with instability and increased violence. A poor law and order situation provides fertile ground to criminals. Moreover, it needs to be noted that drug trafficking is essentially a demand-oriented problem. Thus the rational approach should be to shift to control demand rather than simply curbing the production and supply of drugs and narcotics. SCO should develop a more relevant and efficient comprehensive strategy in this regard.

Although SCO has its own share of media attention, it should work for a strong presence in the global media. Considering the importance of the role that the media is playing in current scenario, SCO must voice its agenda and framework of action to a wider audience. This is particularly important to promote and create awareness about what SCO regards as a new norm in international relations.

As it is a fact that strong economy is the backbone of any country well-being, thus concrete steps should be introduced to tap the potential for greater economic and commercial cooperation among the SCO countries for the region's prosperity and well-being of the people. Economic development has direct linkages with meeting the needs and aspirations of people. Realizing the goal of economic cooperation demands that the SCO prioritize the building of strong communication linkages. Besides, greater efforts for closer people to people linkages among the member states of especially the involvement of students, scholars, NGOs, think tanks, cultural events, etc is required.

In this regard, measures can be taken to improve the relations and coordination in the fields of culture, art, student exchange programme, school trips, academic conferences, etc. Organising trade fairs, sports competitions, etc will also act as a part of people to people exchanges. Involving people from the different parts of the region from the member states will spread goodwill and lead to reduction in mutual distrust. This will have a two pronged approach on addressing the concerns of the CAS as on one hand it will economically benefit them, on the other hand it will encourage closer ties among the nations, necessary to counter the feeling of mutual mistrust.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This final chapter sums up the discussion on the role of SCO in countering Non-Traditional Security threats in Central Asia. This chapter will basically summarize the key findings and the arguments to test the hypotheses which have led to this dissertation. SCO and its role in the Central Asian States has been immense in the security arena. As it gradually developed, SCO has been focusing more on dealing with these threats and evolving strong institutional and structural machinery. The 'Shanghai Spirit' has brought these CAS within SCO much closer on shared notion on common threats and security dynamics. The biggest success by SCO has been in creating a consensus on these threats not only among the CAS but also all the member states of SCO. In its 15 years of existence SCO has come very far and has much scope to reach to its zenith. It should be noted that this progress has not been without any hurdles, rather many obstruction lie in the path of close coordination among the member states, especially within the CAS group. However it is also true that regional cooperation needs a high degree of understanding among the states on negotiable issues without interfering in the domestic issues of one another. SCO has been a platform whereby all the member states give a lot of primacy to the doctrine of non-interference in internal affairs. There is lot of prospect for SCO to gain much concrete ground in the Central Asian Region by inculcating an environment of goodwill and genuine concern for regional and national interests. Common values shared by the CAS provide an incentive to these states to shed mutual inhibitions and hostility.

Undoubtedly, SCO has emerged as one of the remarkable regional organisations in the Eurasian space especially in the Central Asian region, in the post cold war period. Recent SCO meetings and annual summits have seen the participation of high profile guests from all over the world, including top leadership from USA and European powers. Global media attention brings SCO into limelight which has profound impact on international balance of power. SCO is being viewed by many scholars as a mature security organisation playing an important role in the regional sphere of Eurasia. The SCO declarations and joint statements have a deep diplomatic impact on international power structures. In 2013 at the Bishkek summit agreed to address their differing stands on the issue of strengthening the institution. In the Beijing summit of SCO, the member states made it clear that the status of Observer states need to be more engaging within the institution thus paving way for a broader level of cooperation.

In the last fifteen years (2001-2015), the cooperation among the member states in the SCO in diverse areas have been more visible. The SCO released a document on 'Good neighbourliness: 2013-2017' in the year 2013 which stresses on mechanisms for the important SCO projects which will enhance transportation, communication, military cooperation, regional security, inter-state border disputes, augmenting friendship and regional prosperity, etc. SCO has been taking steps to

strengthen mechanisms which are beneficial for the whole region. The efforts of SCO in dealing with the Non-Traditional Security threats in the CAR has drawn global praise and has enhanced its global prestige. To widen its efforts SCO last year granted full membership to India and Pakistan. These countries are at the acceding stage currently. Since both the nations are facing the brunt of terrorism and extremism, issues where SCO gives its maximum attention, it was a step in the right direction. The transnational nature of these threats provide tangible ground for granting membership to these countries and involving them in counter-terror efforts. The hypothesis in the proposed thesis is that the common concern regarding the three evils in the Central Asian Region acts as the binding factor in the working of SCO. This realization has led to evolution of SCO as a successful platform to deal with these non-traditional security threats. Also an equal threat to their domestic and regional security has provided the member states of SCO to come together in the interests of each other to counter these threats which have transnational linkages. The hypothesis is proved by the fact that RATS, the premier security apparatus within the SCO has proved be an effective and efficient body in the area of countering the threats arising from non-traditional security sources.

The second hypothesis in the proposed study is regarding the constraints in the path of successful coordination within SCO relates to inter-state disputes related to water sharing, illegal migration, treatment of ethnic minorities, etc. The member states of SCO lack a cohesive approach regarding resolution of these disputes. These mutual mistrust and suspicion often block a comprehensive outlook to non traditional security threats. Lack of an agreed set of principle to arrive at a mutual consensus pose a limitation to the efforts led by SCO whereby the member states need to first develop certain amount of mutual trust before launching an all out attack on the threats emanating out of non traditional security sources.

SCO has thus widened its scope to include the interests of nations beyond the Eurasian space. Currently, Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia are its observer states. Regional organisations like ASEAN and CIS regularly participate in its summits and meetings on important issues. Such interactions and expansion in membership has actually boosted the image of SCO internationally.

In the wake of globalisation and other regional and global developments in multifaceted areas, the organisation extended the scope of its mandate through the 'Tashkent Declaration' in 2004. It gave a multidimensional role to play to SCO which confront the SCO members at the regional level. Though it gave economic cooperation an important place in the components of future programme, this area has not been a forte of SCO. Development in the economic sector has not been a brighter side of SCO. The declaration however also included cooperation in foreign policy issues, fields of culture and environment, etc.

Subsequent conventions after Tashkent Declaration have reiterated the resolve to intensify an all-round cooperation on important issue and to develop an environment characterised by goodwill, with lasting peace and common prosperity. The member states have developed an understanding that inter-state hostility must be reduced to develop and improve on the mutual relationship. There is an immense focus on building harmony in the region as they face same challenges and the CAS in particular are not capable to address them on their own. They need support and assistance of their superpower neighbours, Russia and China, as well as improved relations among themselves. Threats they face have cross border linkages so interaction in an environment of peace and stability is imminent.

SCO through its Shanghai spirit and principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs has developed a vision of equality, mutual trust, consultation, recognition of the region's immense cultural and civilizational diversity and respect for the other member's values, model of development, nature of polity etc. These two principles are central to its institutional mechanisms. In this regard, SCO also called for making the UN a stronger and more efficient institution while talking about the countries interfering in each other's internal affairs.

Cooperation in the domain of defence and security comprises security policy concepts and agreements, military drills, counter terrorism activities and armament deals. SCO initially started as a security organisation has grown from merely being an institution for confidence building measures at the borders to an institution leading anti-terrorist activities. The head of states at the annual summits of SCO, top officials and security analysts have always claimed that security is the foremost priority of the institution. However they have also denied that the SCO would develop into a full-grown security organisation such as NATO. They have denied apprehension and allegation of SCO developing into a military alliance. Though they engage in a certain degree of information exchange and intelligence sharing through the RATS, they majorly focus on Non-Traditional Security threats, the three evils of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism. The annual 'Peace Mission' which they run is a military exercise aimed at improving coordination in response to terrorist attacks within the SCO members.

Thus any hard security role of the SCO has been limited, as evidenced by the complete absence of any important role played by the SCO in the mass inter-ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan in 2010. Thus in the security arena also SCO has well defined areas where to step up. Also SCO has not taken up the role of mediation in the region. Inter-state disputes over shared water management, hydro electric projects, etc have not been addressed by it.

The agenda of security issues in SCO includes combating terrorism, extremism and separatism countering information security, drug and weapons trafficking, illegal immigration, financial security, internet-based and organised crime.

In CAR, members are wary of each other and as a result a variety of levels of trust exist. Inter-state disputes are one such area which has become an important limitation on the scope of SCO as a regional body. In light of that, maintaining clearly delineated borders between neighbouring states is one action that will definitely improve the level of trust among the members and the process of information sharing between them. In the background of increasing cyber threat and cyber crimes, increasing a cyber based security presence via a database for shared and usable knowledge could assist in clamping down on sophisticated networks that misuse cyber space for illegal activities. Closer cooperation between member states's police and intelligence institutions will help in tightening up on the transnational linkages between the organised crime and illegal smuggling of goods and narcotics.

Other proposals to advance the counter terror measures include creation of a rapid response joint military team to deal with terrorist situations quickly and the establishment of a dedicated SCO police unit to focus on internet based crime. These are not only sound and effective checks on illegal activities going on but they are also very important confidence building measures to enhance the ties. Counterterrorism drills and the physical joint exercises have aided in the boosting of relationships between government officials at senior levels. Advancing of these relationships form the core of a security alliance in the CAR which consists of complex political and legal structures. Proper funding and availability of enough resources will greatly increase the capability to combat and eliminate cyber crime and narcotics trafficking.

Regional cooperation within the SCO differs from the regional cooperation in western countries. Since western countries are mostly democratic and so regional cooperation could be enhanced by relevant regional laws. In case of SCO, all the six member states, in current scenario are non-democratic governments. So, enforcement of strong laws is a challenge here.

 Stability in the CAR is threatened by violent repression of demonstrations in Uzbekistan, revolutions in Kyrgyzstan and porous borders throughout the region. These emanate out of a complex mix of internal and external factors. These threats compounded by the lethal mix of terrorism, extremism and spread of radical ideas cause havoc on peace and stability in the region. CAS with their scarce resources need aid and assistance by external sources. SCO provides them with such an opportunity, apart from China and Russia, SCO also gets funds from other international institutions, though there is always the problem of resource crunch.

China and Russia need the cooperation of CAS since they themselves are victims of extremism. In case of China, its western border, in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, has been great concern for its government and for Russia, the Chechen question complicates matters. Other neighbour of CAS, Afghanistan has its internal conflict gradually spilt over into the CAS that surround it including Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In 2009, the leaders of the SCO agreed that they would need to step up to keep the regions security up to standard. They set the primary goal of improving the border security to curb illegal immigration and assist in dealing with other border control issues such as drug and weapons trafficking. Unfortunately, even after fifteen years of the birth of SCO, terrorist acts continue and security concerns remain in the region.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF SCO

SCO was set up in 2001 as a regional organization with regional security cooperation at its core. The organization in subsequent years accepted nations outside the Eurasian region as its dialogue partners and has also granted observer status to some countries to broaden its activities. It has helped SCO to present itself as an open, cooperative and transparent organization evolving in tandem with the changing international scenario. Meanwhile SCO has also established relations and partnerships with other regional, international organizations like UN, EU,ASEAN, etc. in the United Nations General Assembly , it enjoys the status of an observer.

SCO members are better placed than they were 15 years ago in terms of securing themselves from threats to security. Principles on which SCO functions have helped China to solve border issues with its neighboring countries like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia. They have started coordinating on multilateral forums as well on various regional and major international issues. Foundation of SCO lies on protecting the strategic mutual interests and seeking political cooperation among the member states. SCO main agenda is to protect the key security interests of its member states.

As their degree of cooperation on key security issues deepen, the member states of SCO have put in lot of efforts and resources in the defense and law enforcement via agreements and treaties. The initial agreement started in 2001 with the Convention on "Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism". Several large scale anti-terror armed drills on a multilateral and bilateral level , joint exercises have been organized within the supervision of SCO, which has helped its member states to respond to such threats. In last few years, SCO has emerged as a strong organization with sound

operational structure. SCO have emerged as the key institution safeguarding the member states' security and social stability.

SCO has indeed improved good neighborliness and mutual trust in the CAR, since it directly addresses the need of practical cooperation among its members to deal with common threats. Thus as a regional mechanism for sustained regional cooperation SCO has proved its worth, nonetheless much is left to achieve even now. SCO provides enough space to the member states for safeguarding their self-interest with the help of the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of member states. Thus, the member states sometimes use the platform to their own advantage. Sustainable and common regional development demand that the states to think beyond parochial self interests.

China wants friendly relations with CAS to help fuel its huge requirements for energy while Russia exercises significant military influence over the CAR and sees it as a buffer zone between itself and the Middle East. As there are certainly different reasons and motivations for SCO members to be part of it, the emergence of cooperation between these countries where such patterns of interactions did not earlier exist expresses a growing unity among members.

Throughout its existence of fifteen years, SCO has consolidated its position as a regional security architecture and has assumed the role of main security provider in terms of Non-Traditional Security threats in the CAR. Sometimes SCO also assumes the role of a counterweight against NATO in the CAR e.g.when the USA extended its presence in Afghanistan, SCO members mainly Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Russia tried to utilise their alliance for economic cooperation as a counter strategy to restrict further escalation of the situation. The act showed resistance to the presence of Non-Central Asian in the region and eventually they succeeded in evicting the USA forces from their military base in Kyrgyzstan. After the withdrawl of USA, the SCO members agreed that they had to grow their own military presence in the region to secure themselves and be self reliant. They made it clear that they will be more responsible in building their own security architecture. This proclamation was criticised by many scholars who questioned the ambition of SCO. Some scholars even termed SCO as an anti-west alliance formation.

SCO thus has to some extent negated the need of any cooperative multilevel mechanisms in the region while dealing with the Non-Traditional Security threats as it is doing a commendable job on its own among many obstacles. As a result the SCO has rejected the influence of western countries inside their borders and shown external powers the limits of their authority in Central Asia by creating the SCO. It can also be claimed that SCO has secured its position as the first international security alliance that is outside the extent of western influence.

Central Asian Region has always been very important from a security perspective and after the discovery of abundant energy supplies Great powers have been eyeing its resources for securing their energy need. The member states at the 2007 summit highlighted that Central Asia can maintain stability and security by depending on regional and not external influences. In this context foreign funding becomes important as it will be difficult to realise the full economic potential of the SCO region without the participation of more wealthy nations in its development. Even carrying out joint military exercises and counter terror measures require huge investments. Lack of funds explains that neither developed economy is ready to make an investment to enhance any of the smaller SCO members development and status particularly the CAS. Allowing other wealthier countries to join may help to speed up the process of institutional development of the Organisation. It comes with a drawback for China and Russia as it would weaken their influence on the member CAS.

In the backdrop of spread of ISIS and its radical ideas in the CAS, these countries are in a critical situation of stepping up their counter measures against them. The SCO needs to intensify its efforts to manage security in the region. Also the revival of Taliban factions in Afghanistan requires SCO to assist it in rebuilding its society and create a stable economic environment.

CONCLUSION

Cooperation in the SCO has obliterated the Cold War thinking and has transcended ideology, providing a good example of harmonious coexistence among nations of different religions and cultures. Member states of SCO have population who are adherents of Taoism, Buddhism, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Hinduism and Islam. SCO has high profile members in form of Russia and China who occupy two of the five permanent UN Security Council seats. The organization is poised to play an increasingly important role in guaranteeing regional security as well as promoting regional economic development and cultural cooperation. SCO is poised to continue to help boost economic development in member states and the region at large given the subject of its concern. It is important for Central Asian member states, not only because it gives a shape to their multi-vectored foreign policy but also because they share a platform on an equal footing with Russia and China. The SCO also provides them with a premium platform to conduct independent diplomacy and promote economic growth. The SCO is of strategic significance to both China and Russia as well.

While analysing the success of the SCO since its inception and its potential for brighter prospects, the following arguments can bring some clarity. First, cooperation and coordination among the SCO members have to be continuously institutionalized in accordance with the global and regional laws and regulations. Also, discrepancies and ambiguity over laws and regulations at the domestic

and the regional levels require a cautious approach. Second, regional security cooperation must be guided by pragmatism and comprehensive outlook to security. Emphasis must be placed on the Non-Traditional Security threats in combination with Traditional Security threats, leading to a complete view on security. Third, in case of the CAR, regional security and stability are both a pre-requisite and a source of guarantee for devising a genuine approach to cooperation in the other aspects of bilateral relations. Such an approach will definitely pave a concrete foundation for political and security cooperation.

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