

Role of Russia and China in the World's Politics through SCO

Zumar Zaman¹ Seerat Batool² Imran Wakil³

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: zzhunjra@gmail.com

² M.Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: seeratijaz1@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Government College University, Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: imranwakil@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT: The study details how the current international order is shifting from the previously unipolar form to a more multipolar form in which Russia and China have become the key players in international politics. The role of both Russia and China in the transformation of world politics will be explored, making a special focus on the interaction between them and cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It looks at Russia's attempts to hold on to its influence in Central Asia, foster regional security and multipolarity, and challenge western influence, alongside China's increasing economic, military, technological and diplomatic strength, and its world-class initiatives, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The study also examines aspects of the stances of Russia and China of cooperation and competition in the SCO. This study adopts the qualitative approach, which is a case study method, in which it uses secondary, documentary and published works such as academic book, journal articles, research reports, and official documents. The primary goals include an analysis of the strategic role and cooperation of the two Asian giants (Russia and China) in the SCO, examining their competition in this space, as well as assessing the impact of these two countries on the change of power relations in the world. Emphasis is placed on the political, diplomatic, economic and security aspects of Russia-China relations, especially in Central Asia and Eurasia. The research posits that since Russia and China share security and geopolitical concerns they are on good terms within the SCO, and the fact that both have economic power and compete for influence in Central Asia instigates tensions. Overall, the partnership provides a contribution to making the world be a multipolar world order.

KEYWORDS: Russia, China, SCO, World Politics, Neorealism, Offensive Realism, Defensive Realism, Multipolarity

Introduction

Russia had its share in the world politics since the time immemorial. From Tsars to Soviet Union to present day Russian Federation, this nation has impacted world events. Following the downfall of the Soviet Union in 1991, many were convinced that Russia would turn into a weak state. However, under President Vladimir Putin, Russia has become a factor again to reckon with in the international arena (Aksoy, 2024). The chapter also discusses the

Pages: 260 – 273

Volume: 5

Issue: 8 (August 2026)

Corresponding Author

Imran Wakil

✉ imranwakil@gcuf.edu.pk

Cite this Article: Zaman, Z., Batool, S., & Wakil, I. (2026). Role of Russia and China in the World's Politics through SCO. *The Regional Tribune*, 5(8), 260-273.

<https://doi.org/10.55737/trt/v-viii.421>

importance of Russia in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which is the central theme of this thesis. Shanghai Cooperation Organization was founded in 2001 and initially a small regional organization towards border security, however, overtime Shanghai Cooperation Organization became one of the largest and important multilateral organizations in the world (Honrada & Bokeriya, 2023). Now the SCO includes such big powers as the Chinese state, India and Iran and SCO includes a considerable part of world population as well as middle part of global GDP.

To Russia, it is an important tool to its grand strategy. It offers a way of making institutional its strategic alliance with China, preserve its conventional role in Central Asia and construct a normative variant to the Western-led rules-based order. By emphasizing the so-called "Shanghai Spirit" which attributes more significance to the mutual trust, equality and respect of other civilizations. In today's 21st century, one of the greatest political powers which influence the world politics is Chinese. China has, in 40 years' time, become a second large economy, military power and a significant military and political power. China is an important player in the world today in the fields of trade, technology, international organizations, regional security and diplomacy. China's ascent is seen as one of the most significant events in the twentieth century in international relations as this has created a shift in the power dynamics of the modern world. The conclusion of Cold War enabled America to become the master of a unipolar international order (Marples, 2011).

China's economic ascendance, technological advances and emerging assertiveness in the geopolitical sphere, however, have engendered a new order of power distribution which is at risk if the world we enter becomes the more multipolar world in which several great powers exercise power rather than a single, controlling super power (Zhao, 2015). China's foreign policy is rooted in mainly attempting to obstruct, by any means necessary, its nation's interests, the consistent growth of its economy, its own internal affairs and the extension of its footprints elsewhere. The mutual respect, non-interference, peaceful cooperation and sovereignty involved in international relations are emphasized in various ways than in many of the western countries and this is what China clings to.

China has spread its reach throughout Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East via trade, foreign investment, infrastructure investments, diplomacy and membership in international organizations. Another example is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that China has been advancing to increase its economic and geopolitical reach around the world (Hakim, 2014). Meanwhile, China has modernized the military, in China, the role of the country in the world governance has been modernized as well while China has become one of the leading actors in the current world politics. Among the regional and international organizations, the most prominent one is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO was established in 2001 by China and Russia along with five Central Asian States (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (Ratzenböck et al., 2023). Later, the organization spread to include India, Pakistan and Iran, and became a one of the biggest regional organizations in the world with the population and geographical spread.

The SCO has a number of significant roles for China. It aids stability in Central Asian region, safeguards the fragile region of Xinjiang, fends off terrorism and separatism, boosts economic ties and diminishes Western impact in Eurasia (Lie & Kim, 2008). The SCO also offers China a chance for close cooperation with Russia and to make up any rivalry between the two in a supervised manner a race in the middle of Asia. The chapter provides analysis about the re-shaping of the world politics of China such as the rise of China, China's Foreign policy objective, Hard Power and Soft Power, China's membership in the international organization, cooperation with Russia and the opportunity and challenge for China.

Literature Review

The article *“China’s and Russia’s plans for a new world order and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”* by Susanne Weigelin-Schwiedrzik elaborates that both China and Russia are considering SCO as an essential gear to challenge the prevailing west-dominated world and to build a new multipolar world order. The article argues that China aims to press for SCO to increase its economic role – something that would add luster to the organization’s activities in the Central Asian region, while Russia is looking to strengthen security and political positions in the region at the expense of NATO and the United States. As the article illustrates, while both countries shared the goal of a decrease in Western dominance, their understandings of the new world order were not always identical and over time, China accepted economic and institutional change without confrontation, whereas Russia sought for direct confrontation (Weigelin, 2026).

In the article *“Relations between Russia and China in the Context of the Formation of a New World Order”* by Albina K. Galimzyanova explains on how Russia and China change their attitude with each other in the course of how the changing world order turns into multipolarity. Both countries place the welfare of their citizens as their primary focus in their bilateral relations and respect and equality are paramount," reminds the author. They work together in various fields including political, economic and security fields, being non-aligned and aggressive to third parties. On the same story, the writer notes that thanks to extensive penetration by both countries on most international issues, the cooperation of Russia and China in multilateral formats, such as in the United Nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, APEC and G20, is strengthening. Their joint activities center on the multipolar nature of the world and "democratization" of foreign relations which helps to further consolidate the strategic equilibrium and stability in the world. This joint using Russian and Chinese is the most advanced stage in the history, and will also develop in the new era led by the state leaders, the author summarizes (Galimzyanova, 2024).

The article *“Grand Strategies of Russia and China: Common Trends and Potential Confrontation”* by Maria Eygenieyna Naydaeva thinks about the long-term strategic plan in both countries and finds time to consider where there is commonality and where there may be differences. In the author's view, there are at least a few common tendencies in the policies of Russia and China: they both desire the assumption of a challenge to the western order led by the USA, they tend to promote multipolarity and they wish to limit the presence of the West in global institutions. Sovereignty is also a priority for both states: they aren't to have foreign interference in their affairs and they want to put in place alternative economic and security models. Yet the article is not just a piece about "cooperation" but also indicates subliminally that there are actual dangers of conflict that must be faced. The priorities create tensions, especially in the Central Asian region where now China is pushing hard to assert its economic ascendancy over a power that traditionally has been at Russia's fingertips. The article also stresses that Russia isn't a China "son," and won't accept anything that makes it “dependent” on Beijing (Navdaeva, 2024).

In the article *“The Shanghai Cooperation Organization in New Geopolitical Realities”* by Shamil Enikeev and Dmitry Novikov explore the evolution of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its changing nature with the dynamics of global politics. The article suggests that the SCO is becoming more prominent as the main platform for the ties among China, Russia and some of the Central Asian countries. It looks at the role of SCO which has become a key security, economic and political integration actor in the region, with a particular focus on the newfound power dynamics in the region in the world as a whole. Typically, with the change in the power dynamics around the world, the SCO is stepping in as a new institution on the international scene, complementing the Western-dominated institutions, exerting a significant influence, not only within Central Asia, but beyond as well. Yet there remain obstacles to overcome, ranging from priorities of the member states to regional/ global ambitions

as well as dealing with internal tensions. However, SCO is one of the major elements which influence the geopolitics of the region and even the world (Enikeev & Novikov, 2024).

In the article *“Strategic Partnership of China and Russia in the Context of Realization of Their National Interests”* by Xiaoyu Zhou analyses the growing strategic partnership between China and Russia as well as the potential avenues for both to align their policies, and move towards a pathway to their national interest. The article discusses the growing cooperation between Russia and China, in various fields such as energy, trade and military security and the economic/political goals both countries aim to achieve. It refers to the many more intertwined ties between the two powers, despite this and other barriers to the west, namely the USA and NATO, who have led the way in challenging the world political status quo. The significance of the partnership with respect to regional security is also highlighted in the article, especially the security concerns in Central Asia, where both Russia and China want to sustain influence and guarantee stability in the region. This despite the fact that the China-Russia collaboration is seen as a key element in their efforts to change the world order and promote their own agenda by means of their own national success (Zhou, 2023).

Historical Evolution: Border Security – Geopolitical Bloc

Over the course of more than 400 years, history has negatively impacted Russia's significance in global affairs. The approach to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which focused on the importance of worldwide multipolarity rather than admiring regions, is another illustration of how Russian foreign policy has changed following the fall of the Soviet Union. This is because the five got to establish it initially for the Shanghai and began in 1996. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the governments of the Caucasian republics of central Asia and the Russian federation have been confronted with the old Soviet border issues.

That the five countries of Shanghai, first came up with their idea in an environment of practical forum and accomplished agreements on confidence-building measures (CBMs), as well as “military power withdrawal”, in peripheral regions. Looking at the Russian case, it was an era of the defensive school: after all Russia would have to ensure that it did not have the vast eastern and southern frontiers split, and was not embroiled in domestic economic and political turmoil (Mankoff, 2010). The mandate and strategy of the organization and Russia has changed qualitatively by the inclusion in the SCO Uzbekistan in June 2001. This Three Evils guideline of Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism got organized with the signing of SCO Charter in 2002 (Aris, 2011). The latter was very useful to Russia, which, at the time, was engaged in the Second Chechen War, and was very concerned with the radicalism brewing out of Afghanistan into the Central Asian republics (Allison, 2008).

The SCO was a multilateral security cover of Russia and gave it the opportunity to allow Russia to liaise counter-terrorism strategies to Beijing and the Central Asian capitals. Here Russia accomplished its goal of becoming the ultimate security assurer for this region (In this context both can assert their near abroad policy by improving through the SCO) (Cooley, 2012). From the mid-2000s, the role of the SCO in geopolitics started to be felt. The watershed moment was in 2005 when the organization issued a declaration at the Astana Summit, where they requested a timetable for withdrawing military bases by the US troops stationed in the member states of Central Asia. But this was an easy screen to be erect against the west, saying there is no more complacent Eurasia into which the western power can be projected anymore.

The organization of the SCO as an alternative to the West was emphasized even more after the Georgian conflict of 2008 and the Crimean crisis of 2014 when Russia appeared more disengaged with the West (Seidel, 2010). This development to include the states of India and Pakistan under their wings in 2017 and Iran in 2023 has also pushed

it to a higher status (Cabestan, 2013). In this development, Russia has been more of a bridge-builder as it tries to turn the complicated tensions of the members whilst trying to keep the SCO as the building block in its vision of a greater Eurasia.

Strategic Objectives of Russia

The regional goals of Russia in the SCO are fueled by a mix of regionalism, geo-political interest and the security issue. The main aim of Russia on regional level is to maintain the stability in central Asia that it considers its classical area of influence and significant buffer zone (Yuan, 2023). This is the medium by which the SCO is being used to convey a projection of security leadership out of Russia. RATS is a wonderful platform to combat three evils – terrorism, separatism and extremism that pose a threat to the region's stability, peace and security. In addition to other cooperation with the other parties, RATS make strides on the matter of drug trafficking or migration of humans (Azizi, 2024). By ensuring the Central Asian states will be ready for construction of security, the Russians use SCO to attempt to limit the effect of the other external forces such as United States and Turkey.

Russia, on the other hand, has been keen to use the SCO as an alternative to other security arrangements dominated by the West, most prominently NATO (Seidel, 2010). In Russia they think that opposites are opposites. The fact that SCO is non-aligned and inclusive as opposed to the bloc and confrontational attitude of the west. Russia seeks to create an "identity" of the collective security community not only on the guarantees of the west and to imbued among Eurasian powers the feeling of identity of the collective security. These exercises will have two objectives it would enhance the interoperability of these SCO forces and it would prove to be a powerful tool while combating the purported 'color revolutions' sponsored by the western powers. In addition, Russia uses SCO as a tool to shift the world law, normative towards a state-centric model (Allison, 2008).

The UN-centered world order, which attributes the paramount importance to the sovereignty of the state and not to international human rights standards and to the responsibility to protect, is one of the ideas strongly developed by Russia within the framework of the SCO. In this way, Russia lays a foundation for the other SCO members to value these ideals while Russia strives for a unity with the others against the diplomatic pressure and sanctions from the west. In the agenda of the SCO there is also a huge to-do list of Russia's actions in the post-Soviet region in the name of security & sovereignty of the region. However, in this geopolitically aligned world the alignments are not just about material power, they are also about battling for the narrative in the world politics that is slowly taking shape (Cooper et al., 2004).

Russia in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

As this study is about the role of Russia and China in the changing world politics with a case study of the SCO, it is important to focus specifically on Russia's role in this organization.

Why Russia joined the SCO

Russia has joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for various interrelated reasons that are based on its strategic interests. The first was that, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union (SU), Russia had security matters on its mind that concerned Central Asia (Matveeva, 2013). The Central Asian republics (Kazakhstani, Kyrgyzstani, Tajikistani, Turkish and Uzbekistan) were unstable due to their newly gained independence. They faced threats to their lives from Islamic extremism, trans-border terrorization with drugs from Afghanistan, and separatist groups. Russia is trying to protect her national interests in the process of adjusting to the new world

political landscape, so far as it can, via the SCO (Ambrosio, 2008). Russia didn't want any such instability to take root on its borders, especially its turbulent North Caucasus region.

Second, the reason for Russia's enrolment into the SCO was to fight China. When the Russian rulers realized that China a growing economy, with big investment potential, will soon outsmart Russia's economic influence in Central Asia, they decided that it is necessary to adopt an active stance related to China in Central Asia. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the giant infrastructure projects under it easily overshadow Russia's capacity to stay a lead player in the region which it traditionally considered as its 'backend'. Such a membership of the SCO ensured its involvement in any talk on Central Asia affairs.

Third, Russia exploited the fact that it uses the SCO as a way to counteract the US presence in Central Asia. After the terrorist attack on the US that took place on September 11, 2001, the US formed military bases in the Central Asia region Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan and Karshi-Khanabad Air Base in Uzbekistan (Kokoshin & Kokoshina, 2022). The "bases" were ostensibly for helping to combat guerrilla warfare in the Afghan conflict, but to the Russians meant as much as a continuous American presence in what they considered their "sphere of influence. Through the forum of SCO, Russia was able to organize with China and the Central Asian countries, in order to pressure the closure of these bases

Fourthly, and lastly, the combatants did not want to offend anyone standing on the sidelines, and Russia enlisted in the SCO to advocate its concept of multipolar world. There will be no "unipolar world" in which America is "the one and only power," Russia doesn't believe. The SCO is an indication that there are other centers of power, other models of international cooperation. Russia's attempt through the SCO exercise to have it recognized as a platform for non-Western games, run by NATO and EU based institutions. The very existence of such an organization with China, India, Pakistan and four Central Asian republics – by Russia shows the multipolarity of the world and that the West are not the only ones holding the key to rule the world.

Russia's specific Contribution to the SCO

Russia has a few elements in their favor to become a key member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), despite China being the largest in the organization.

1. The first one is the military force and the most military forceful country of SCO is Russia. It owns the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, a modern army and is able to extend its military prowess far beyond its borders, as it has done in Syria. It is Russia which takes the lead at organizing and conducting military exercises, including Peace Mission exercises in the SCO. The exercises include thousands of personnel from the SCO countries, and are aimed at countering terrorism activity, cooperation among various armies of different countries and quick response to security situations.
2. Second, Russia knows how to fight terror. Russia has firsthand and painful experience in combating terrorism, in the two Chechen wars (1994-1996 and 1999-2009) and in neighboring territories of the Northern Caucasus: Dagestan and Ingushetia (Kramer, 2005). The Russians, utilizing very modern means, have got quite adept at gathering intelligence, carrying out counter-terrorist operations in town and cities, sabotage and disruption of terrorist financing networks. Russia has been given this experience for it to be the head of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), which is based in the city of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, in the framework of the SCO. SCO's permanent mechanism of cooperation of the member countries in counter-terrorism is known as "RATS". It gathers and evaluates intelligence data, arranges for apprehension of suspected terrorists who cross borders and arranges for joint training.

3. Thirdly, Russia contributes the energy security to the SCO. Russia is among the biggest producers of oil and natural gas in the world. Along with this, Russia is also joining in the process of building energy infrastructure – oil, gas pipelines – with other SCO actors. For example, Russia has mentioned pipelines to China via Kazakhstan and she huddles with the central Asian members on energy exploration and production (Domjan & Stone, 2010). One of the main reasons for the interest in energy security is the fact that the greatest part of the members of the SCO are energy importers, China, which is the largest energy importer in the world. Now they have signed a new agreement with Russia and China, they are able to expand their energy purchase. Russia in the meantime, is given a market armory for its energy export.
4. Fourth, Russia gives politics support to the SCO members. China's position on any major issues is always supported by Russia in the SCO. For instance, Russia backs China's position on Taiwan's non-separateness and that Taiwan is inalienable part of China and it is against the official recognition of Taiwan as an independent country. In turn China backs Russia on issues which are Moscow's concern. China supports Russia in Chechnya, and is not in favor of Chechen autonomy. More significantly, China refuses to condemn Russia nor join the west's sanctions due to its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Oksamytna, 2023). China has not given military aid but they had maintained their relationship by trading with Russia and buying Russian oil, gas and not allowing Russia to be pushed out of any international forum.

Tensions between Russia-China relations in the SCO

Russia and China have close cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, although tensions of some sort have arisen that could have an impact on the future of the SCO. Largest conflict is the drastic economic differences between the two countries. The nominal GDP of China is about ten times bigger than the nominal GDP of Russia (Malle, 2008). In the SCO, most of the trade and investment projects and the infrastructure projects are not initiated by Russia, but by China. Chinese firms are involved in investment across Central Asia; they build roads, railways, ports and industrial zones. Russian companies, in turn, are much less represented. Such an economic imbalance puts Russia in the weak role when it comes to economic decisions. Behind the scenes, Russian authorities worry the SCO gradually could become a Chinese tool, and that like other regional organizations they may become subordinate to the larger powers.

Moscow has great concern that it will be subservient to China. The second tension is about BRI. The BRI is a massive infrastructure project by China aimed at building infrastructure, including roads, railways, ports, and pipelines, in Asia, Europe, Africa, and other parts of the world. Central Asia is an important area of BRI, and it is the link of BRI's so called Eurasian Land Bridge, the route which connects China and Europe. In fact, initially, Russia had doubts concerning BRI. Moscow was worried about building by China's infrastructure in Central Asia that could completely bypass Russia and weaken the position of the former Soviet republic in the region, thus turning it into China's economic satellites. For a few years, Russia was reluctant to back the BRI. Thus, the offer to converge the Russia and China jointly signed the declaration of BRI and EAEU (Peyrouse, 2017). In practice, this is the same as Russia accepting the presence of the BRI in Central Asia provided that Russian interests are taken into consideration and Russian companies participate in the projects to some degree.

China has invested in and built highways, tunnels, power plants and special economic zones. There is also influence from culture the teaching of Chinese language in the Confucius Institutes and CGTN (China Global Television Network) broadcasting in the region. So far, Russia and China have been able to operate closely together in Central Asia so that there has been no open conflict. They've been unofficially splitting the jobs, with its respective segments being security and military for Russia and economics and infrastructure for China. But this is a not a fixed

separation. Beijing might be listened to more by the governments of central Asia, than Moscow, on key matters, including water control, border issues or Afghanistan. But if the economy in Russia were to fall even further and the Chinese economy grow, then competition could go up. If it was China faced with Russia one-on-one without the SCO, then it would be stronger.

China's Emergence as a Global Power in the World

China is also the early originator with ancient civilization and for centuries served as a cultural, trading, scientific and political Centre in Asia. But during the 19th century, the situation in China deteriorated due to internal disaggregation, incompetence, financial crisis and foreign extremes (Darid, 2023). Imperialist nations in the west signed unequal treaties on China; invaded Chinese territory and installed significant ports and trade routes in China. Opium Wars and Taiping Rebellion and invasion by Japanese destroyed the state of China and its economy. This is referred to as the “Century of Humiliation” by the historians of China, as not only a significant part of the nation's international status but also its sovereignty was lost (Ajaz, 2024). Mao led China towards a socialist regime of central planning and controlling the economy.

Mao succeeded in uniting the nation, centralizing political control, but economic problems, political repression and social disconfirmation became serious problems, and the campaigns of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution which followed, left China economically unsound and relatively isolated for much of the Cold War era. Deng was convinced that the modernization could be realized in China only through opening the economy to the world through trade and foreign investment. In China, the government had Special Economic Zones (SEZs) on the coast, such as Shenzhen, and foreign business units had been permitted to enter and produce there. Gradually, China moved from a purely command economy to a mixed economy with a certain degree of market reforms and socialism. These changes brought about the remarkable economic development from 1980 to 2020 (Gao, 1996).

The World Bank estimates that China increased its GDP at an astounding rate and millions of factories proliferated, whilst over 800 million people came out of poverty. China was labeled the factory of the world because of its ability and capacity to produce electronics, machinery, textiles, steel and consumer goods. Chinese accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 also contributed to the economic growth by increasing foreign investment and market access to the world. The economic might brought with its Chinese influence in other fields, namely diplomatic, technology, and military fields (Khan & Altaf, 2022). Since the accession of Xi Jinping to power in 2013, China has been more active and ambitious on the political world stage

Through the BRI, China has known to fund roads, railways, ports, pipelines and energy projects in dozens of countries, augmenting China's global connectivity and political leverage (Jamali et al., 2024). At the same time, China has modernized its Armed Forces, focusing on enlarging its fleet, advancing on sophisticated missile development, investing in cyber warfare, artificial intelligence and space technology, and building up its defense spending. China is also a world leader in sectors like telecommunications, ecommerce, renewable energy and high-speed rail. The technological prowess of companies like Huawei, Alibaba Group and BYD are examples of China's growing capabilities. In the modern world, China's economic power, military modernization, technological advances, diplomatic prowess and growing presence in international organizations and international governance are major factors in making it a key player in the world. It has been a significant rewriter to international politics and a factor in the transformation towards more multipolar world order (Tahir, 2022).

China's Foreign Policy Goals

China's foreign policy is based on a number of key principles. The answers lie in these goals, which aid in understanding why Chinese foreign policy is like it is.

Economic Growth and Development

The economic development is still the primary goal of China's foreign policy as Chinese leaders view that the country has to develop economically to build other aspects of the country, including political, national unity, military and global influence. The principle of economic reforms since 1978 in China is that it will become a modern industrial and technological state (Holz, 2006). To carry on this expansion China must have free access to foreign markets and foreign, raw materials, high technology and energy resources. It is, for more than 120 countries, the biggest trading partner, and thus makes a large impact on the worldwide supply chains. China exports electronics, machines, cars, textiles, and telecom equipment and consumer goods to the world, and imports oil, gas, minerals and food products as well as high technology from the world (Storesletten & Zilibotti, 2014).

Chinese national owned companies and private enterprises invest in infrastructure, mining, banking, telecom and manufacturing and renewable energy projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. These economic connections enable China to lock up essential resources and markets, and increase its political and diplomatic leverage. The BRI, which Xi Jinping introduced in 2013, is one of the most important economic strategy initiatives. Connecting Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East with roads, railroads, ports, pipelines, industrial zones, digital infrastructure, and marine trade routes, BRI is one of the biggest examples of infrastructure and development in history. The project is divided into two sections: the sea Silk Road, which focuses on sea transportation, and the Silk Road Economic Belt, which focuses on land transportation.

Railways in East Africa and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are examples of projects that the BRI has financed and constructed (Brühl, 2024). These initiatives ensure energy supplies, increase trade, lower transportation costs, and open up new export markets and business prospects for China. Another long-term initiative is BRI, which intends to make emerging nations more economically reliant on China. Apart from the physical infrastructure, firms like Huawei and ZTE are investing in e-commerce, artificial intelligence, 5G technology, fiber-optic cables, and telecommunications networks as part of the Chinese government's investment in the Digital Silk Road. In the meantime, some Western nations and academics have criticized China's growing political influence, debt dependency, and possible confrontation with the BRI's current international economic system (Chen et al., 2022).

National Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity

China is a country that takes sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in people's affairs as its guidelines in formulating and conducting its foreign policy and international behavior. Chinese leaders state the principle of safeguarding the sovereignty is the most crucial key to national unification, political stability and resistance to foreign domination as the Century of Humiliation saw the Chinese history dominated by foreign powers (Kaufman, 2010). As a result, China reacts strongly to criticism and interference from outside in matters which it considers to be domestic. Taiwan is the most sensitive one of China's foreign policy. Taiwan is part of China according to the One China Principle and China is adamant against any action towards Taiwanese independence or Taiwan being recognized as a separate country by other nations. Beijing has always made it clear that reuniting with Taiwan is its national dream and has not ruled out the use of force should that become necessary. The Chinese also see foreign support for Taiwan as a security threat to the region, and a challenge to China's sovereignty (Chen, 2022).

China's position on territorial integrity also impacts its position on territorial claims with other countries including Japan, Vietnam, Philippines and Malaysia in the South China Sea and East China Sea (Dutta, 2005). To shore up its position, China has stepped up its naval patrols, constructed artificial islands, upgraded military bases and stepped up its coast guard operations in the disputed waters. But in other parts of the world, such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong, too, China is concerned that sovereignty could come with a price—political and security costs—that the government fears it could lose control of these regions and allow separatists to operate. They also determine China's stance towards international organizations, for example China is promoting the concepts of non-interference, state sovereignty and against separatism and extremism in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Song, 2014). By implementing these policies, China aims to defend its national interests and defy accusations of human rights abuses, democracy and democratic processes.

Security and Stability

Political stability and social stability are vital to the nation's economic growth and development. China attaches great importance to stability within its borders and in the surrounding regional environment. With China's large population, the ethnic diversity and sensitive border areas, stability is an important issue for the domestic sector (Raczka, 1998). The western Chinese province of Xinjiang has been a serious concern for Beijing's security as some groups tend to be separatist, extremist and terrorist. There are some countries in Central Asia bordering with Xinjiang, and China has close cooperation with all countries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in counter-violent terrorism, intelligence, border security, and fighting the three evils of violent terrorism, separatism and extremism (Lemon et al., 2025). China, in the meantime, seeks peace and quiet in the region where they promote trade, investment and infrastructure. So, Chinese foreign policy has been a policy of diplomacy, participation in multilateral organizations, regional connectivity, economic cooperation, and no direct military conflicts, and China remains committed to its military modernization to protect its territorial sovereignty and strategic interests.

Russia and China Partnership within the SCO

SCO center is the link between Russia and China. Much cited as a "strategic unity of a new type" this is an alignment that has to a great extent been beefed up within the structure of multilateral, strategic "the SCO". Russia is attempting to preserve its traditional influence in Central Asia, while China is eyeing to put more economic and strategic pressure on the Central Asian region (Cooley, 2012). For the Russians, SCO is the forum in which they are able to handle their close, and at times difficult, relationship with Beijing. There is a strong ideological fit between the two powers: one of mutually rejection of unipolarity led by the West as well as the commitment to a state-centered international system. This means in the SCO as well that there are no restrictions in mutual assistance, and that both partners give each other all the aids they need: to Russia in the sphere of security in the post-Soviet space, to China in the sphere of security of its territory and seas. The military cooperation is a basis of this partnership.

Peace Mission drills (conducted under SCO some consider them a dangerous component) have also been improved and featured strategic bombers, top-tier anti-aircraft defense, as well as joint command/control systems. The mutual cooperation in SCO - between Russia and China is an example for how two great powers can cooperate with each other in a way to strengthen their national security within the international system, and further their national interests (Enikeev et al., 2024). The exercises are a clear signal to the West that they can also synchronize the highest level of military exercises on the Eurasian continent – if not, then Russia and China can. Furthermore, on military side, both the countries coordinate their actions when it comes to foreign policies in the international

arena. There is a strong congruence across the voting patterns of the UN Security Council on the issues from North Korea to the Middle East between Moscow and Beijing.

They are doing well in the SCO on their own by raising joint statements condemning the introduction of unilateral sanctions and interference in the domestic affairs of the host countries, which attacks the foreign policy of the West. But, there are some tensions in the partnership. The backyards of old Moscow are being developed, and Russia remains worried about the growing presence of China in central Asia both in soft and hard power. To control this, Russia has been skillful in dealing decision making with SCO agreement so that Chinese economic project is not one sided-political control. Russia brought India into the club in 2017 as a full member, which demonstrates a desire for more balance in the forum, and to avoid an all-China forum (Cabestan, 2013). This kind of balancing game is a testament to the diplomacy skill of Russia; it may yet be the most important strategic ally of China, while maintaining its status as a great power in Eurasia.

Conclusion

The study finds that Russia and China are actively involved in transforming the world through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO has converted itself from a regional security association into an important forum for political, economic, security and diplomatic cooperation. The SCO is used by Russia as a way of keeping its presence in the region, boosting the security of the region, fending off Western influence and campaigning for a multipolar world. China, on the other hand, relies on the organization to safeguard its regional security interests, foster economic ties and bring growth to the Belt and Road initiative (BRI), while enhancing its diplomatically influence in the region. The study further reveals that Russia and China enjoy also significant strategic commonalities, especially in their view on a multipolar world peace, mutual respect for state sovereignty and are interested in curbing the dominance of the West. They have also co-operated in various fields like counter-terrorism, military exercise, energy, trade and diplomacy, adding to the importance of SCO in the Eurasian politics. But their relationship is far from conflict-free. China's expanding influence and economic power in Central Asia have raised concerns for Russia, who holds a quiet influence in the area with regards to its political and security power. Altogether, both Russia and China can be viewed as partners and competitors in SCO. Their cooperation has helped to build regional connectivity, regional security cooperation, and alternative centers of power. Meanwhile, turbulent economic conditions and multiple priorities among Central Asian countries could pose a problem in sustaining long-term cooperation. Realistic viewpoints hold that the primary focus of both states with the SCO is to safeguard their national interests and boost their strategic impact. In this regard, the SCO is an important instrument that plays its part in changing the world order from a unipolar system towards a multipolar one, which is the gradual process that is in progress now.

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