

**THE AFGHAN CRISIS AND SHANGHAI COOPERATION
ORGANIZATION POLICIES OF STABILISATION: A NEW
MANAGEMENT?**

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Abstract

Central Asia has become a geopolitical chessboard for the superpowers. There are few places as important to US national security as the tribal belt along Pakistan and Afghanistan border region. The region serves as a safe haven for a core group of nationally and internationally networked of terrorists and increasingly a hotbed of indigenous militancy that threatens the stability of not only to Afghanistan and Pakistan but the entire Central Asian Region. It is estimated that nearly one hundred Islamic extremist groups and jihadi organizations with cross border linkages are operating with impunity throughout South Asia.

In our paper we are intending to propose possible ways of strengthening and developing SCO's potential in solving security, political, economic problems in Afghanistan with ultimate goal of preserving regional security free from terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking that conducts to political and economic prosperity of all countries in the region.

Keywords: geopolitical chessboard, terrorist, extremist groups, jihadi organizations, "new great game"

Afghanistan has historically been an extremely strategic piece of land to hold, given its location in Central Asia. Afghanistan has been called the "Graveyard of Empires"! Since the beginning of time many have attempted to conquer Afghanistan and establish stability in the region. Alexander the Great invaded it in 330 BC, then later, the Arab Caliphate in the seventh century. The fierce Genghis Khan also invaded the region in an attempt to create the huge Mongol Empire (1219—1221). It is remarkable that Afghanistan was invaded twice by the British in the nineteenth century, but to no avail. From that moment on Afghanistan has won itself a renown!

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In our times, the Soviet Union came to support the new Afghan government after the Saur Revolution in 1978. And finally, a determined attempt to conquer Afghanistan was made in October 7, 2001 by the United States after the 9/11 terrorist attack.

The nation of what Afghan is today began to emerge in the late eighteenth century. It has always been ruled by a succession of monarchs whose consolidation of power was constantly undermined by civil wars and foreign invasions. The current borders of Afghanistan were delineated in the nineteenth century by the British, as a result of the "great game" rivalry between Russia and Britain. Britain exerted some influence over Afghan foreign policy from the late nineteenth century until the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919. Afghanistan joined the UN in 1946.

There are few places as important to US national security as the tribal belt along Pakistan and Afghanistan border region. The region serves as a safe haven for a core group of nationally and internationally networked of terrorists and increasingly a hotbed of indigenous militancy that threatens the stability of not only to Afghanistan and Pakistan but the entire Central Asian Region. It is estimated that nearly one hundred Islamic extremist groups and jihadi organizations with cross border linkages are operating with impunity throughout South Asia.

Central Asia has become a geopolitical chessboard for the superpowers. The U.S., Russia, and China, have much at stake in Central Asia. China engages the region in order to tap the vast amount of natural gas. Russia is increasing trade with many countries in Central Asia for military and strategic purposes.

Since their independence, security environment in Central Asia has been changing drastically, with changes in strategies and alliances. This region is acquiring more geostrategic importance due, among other things, to the situation in Afghanistan, to their natural resources, hydrocarbons specially, and their localization among Europe and Asia, Russia and China, India and Iran. This fight for gaining the complete influence in the region is known with the term "new great game". According to Emilian Kavalsk, the breakup of the Soviet Union changed the meaning of this region's independence not its geography. Central Asia's

significance in world politics is a matter of contestation, debate, and struggle with immense stakes¹.

None of the above mentioned attempts to stabilize Afghanistan have been successful and now Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) must attempt what others have failed to accomplished in order to maintain regional security. To be successful, SCO must also focus on Pakistan and create a plan that stabilizes both countries because if they do not then there will never be a secure and stable region. The SCO has a big potential of solving Afghan problems, but the member states understand well that Afghan problem could not be solved by military way. We would like to cite the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, a senior research fellow at the Center for East Asia and SCO Studies at the Moscow Institute of International Relations Vitaliy Vorobiev: "One should not forget that the SCO was created as a response to immediate threats of terrorism and drug trafficking from the Afghanistan conflict in the late 1990s. The SCO idea was born from a collective demand for a regional coalition to combat them"². Muratbek Imanaliev, ex-secretary general of the SCO said the same idea when interviewed in 2010 in Bishkek³: "Afghanistan is the main reason of the cooperation of the member states of the SCO and the problem for all the countries, the only subject of common interest".

The Central Asia Region countries have faced and will continue to face security challenges as a result of: the Afghanistan conflict, the rise of extremism, drug-trafficking, and radicalism of Islam throughout the Central Region. The increasing instability on the borders of neighboring countries, from which the international coalition withdrew most of its troops, "the Islamic state", the civil

¹ Kavalski, Emilian: "The Peacock and the Bear in the Heartland: Central Asia and the Shifting Patterns of India's Relations with Russia," Indian Journal of Asian Affairs, 1st of June-31st of December of 2010, XXIII, Nos. 1-2, pp. 1-20, Open Source Center, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia (Henceforth FBIS SOV), 24th of March of 2011.

² Vitaliy Vorobiev, «The SCO as a Rising Master of the Heartland», <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-SCO-as-a-Rising-Master-of-the-Heartland-15503>

³ Direct interview with Muratbek Imanaliev in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in 2010.

war in the Arab world, the Islamic radicals attacks in Europe ... "three evils" - terrorism, separatism and extremism, dangers facing the SCO countries, go on the offensive. And fourth danger is the growing Afghan drug trafficking⁴. What about Pakistan? Pakistan is facing serious security problem because of militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. The US has attempted to inform Pakistan's leadership that these groups, along with a network of radical madrassas and charity fronts, are exploiting the poverty in the country's Punjab province and turning it into a hotbed of extremism. In a series of cables sent over a period of two years, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad and the Consulate in Lahore documented the ways in which the madrassas recruited boys as young as eight, indoctrinated them into jihadi philosophy, and sent them to terrorist training camps, on the back of an estimated \$100 million flowing in from organizations from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

First of all, according to Nikolai Patrushev, the Russian Security Council Secretary, Afghanistan remains the main base of terrorists, including those lated to terrorist and extremist organizations whose goal is to destabilize the situation in Central Asia, topple the existing political regimes and create the Muslim Caliphate within its borders. Second, Afghanistan remains the main base for production of raw opium and also the main supplier of heroin and other drugs to global markets via Central Asian states. After the withdrawing of the coalition forces, the radicals began to feel confident in a number of provinces in Afghanistan, and in the north of Afghanistan there was established a bridgehead from which extremists penetrate into the neighboring countries of Central Asia. The drug trafficking threat has increased and during the time of the US operation "Enduring Freedom" opiate production in Afghanistan has increased by more than 40 times.⁵

On December 8, 2014, the ceremony of completion of the mission of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF) was held, which lasted 13 years. Following the

4 <http://inforos.ru/ru/?module=news&action=view&id=41400>

5 The speech of the Russian Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev, during the tenth meeting of Secretaries of Security of the SCO countries, Moscow April 2015.

withdrawal of the main forces of the international coalition in Afghanistan, the situation worsened, especially in the northern and eastern provinces. The terrorist group "Islamic state" strengthened its position and is competing for the control of the region with the "Taliban" movement. Afghanistan's government cannot defeat the militants without international assistance. Following the withdrawal of the US left Afghanistan ISAF contingent of 9.8 thousand people (in accordance with an agreement dated 30 September 2014) stayed in Afghanistan. In October 2015, US President Barack Obama announced the decision to maintain this number of troops before the end of 2016, and then reduce it to 5.5 thousand at bases in Bagram, Jalalabad and Kandahar.⁶

When US declared its intention to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, many experts estimated that it was time for SCO to act in Afghanistan, to show its supremacy as its members declare in each summit. On the other hand, the SCO member states never mentioned that it was a military organization. Richard Weitz noted earlier this year, the SCO's "future relevance will be determined by its ability to effectively address the continuing economic and security problems of neighboring Afghanistan."⁷ Just after its creation and especially after Astana declaration of heads of states of the SCO in 2005, most of western countries named SCO as the New Warsaw Pact, Eastern NATO, or Club of Dictators that was able to question western-led world order. But last times most of people called the SCO "Paper tiger", as the declarative, effective international organization. What is SCO? Need citation here.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the regional organization of cooperation which includes China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, **observer countries** - India, Iran, Pakistan, Mongolia, Afghanistan, **partners for dialogue** - Turkey, Sri Lanka, Belorussia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia and Nepal.

It was created in 2001 and nowadays it is the regional organization of political, economic, humanitarian and security cooperation. First, when it was created the SCO intended to fight

⁶ <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/2506254>

⁷ <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/afghanistan-the-next-shanghai-cooperation-organization-member/>

against terrorism, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking in the member countries. Contact group Afghanistan-SCO was established in order to fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, as this country is the threat for other member-countries of the SCO.

Since 2005, the economic component of SCO was the first component to evolve and then humanitarian sector. Don't know what you are trying to convey here? In the economic sector there are many documents that regulated economic activities of the member States. Policies and Programs that support economic cooperation have been ratified and accepted until 2020. China was ready to finance economic joint projects, but Russia was not interested in economic cooperation development within the SCO. Central Asian states also were afraid of possible Chinese economic expansion of the region. In this regard, Afghanistan was and stays as common concern to each country of the SCO; every country of the SCO is interested in solving the Afghan problem.

Afghanistan is a neighbour to many of SCO countries, and security in Afghanistan is very important to all countries. The cooperation between Afghanistan and SCO began in 2005 with the establishment of Contact group Afghanistan-SCO aiming at fighting terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. In 2005 Afghanistan was accepted as an observer country and invitee of annual SCO summits of Council of Heads of States. The main decisions concerning regional security, political and economic activities of SCO have been discussed in these annual summits of Council of Heads of States. For more than ten years Afghanistan has been participating in the meetings of heads of states and is considered as the most important country for members of SCO.

President Barack Obama intent was to withdraw all but 10,000 troops from the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan by the end of 2014. As a result, the region is bracing for a security vacuum that is primarily affected by a lack of cooperation and interstate awareness in the vicinity.⁸ The common view of members of the SCO regarding Afghanistan is that military decision of the Afghan problem is not acceptable, but the SCO states must help Afghanistan developed economically, politically and with the participation of Afghan people. Afghanistan

⁸ Amit R. Saksena, postgraduate scholar at the Jindal School of International Affairs, July 25, 2014.

is a neighbour to most of the SCO states, it is important for its members to help Afghanistan to solve security problems and establish peace in this country.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization must deal with terrorist threats in the region. All SCO countries possess Muslim population, including China and Russia, and Islamic State attracts young people from all these countries. Returning from Syria, these young people are trying to organize terroristic attacks in their countries. Citation here SCO can actively take part in solving this problem. Shanghai Cooperation Organization members have organized joint military exercises annually in one of its country since 2005, the Regional Anti-terrorist structure has its own data base of terrorist organizations and terrorists, meeting of military state bodies of SCO members is hold on annual basis.

In our paper we are intending to propose possible ways of strengthening and developing SCO's potential in solving security, political, economic problems in Afghanistan with ultimate goal of preserving regional security free from terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking that conducts to political and economic prosperity of all countries in the region. And to respond to question: if the SCO is capable of solving the Afghan problem and what should the SCO do in order to solve Afghan problem?

For a long time Afghanistan has been the threat source for its neighbour countries. He estimates that extremism and terrorism did not appear because of social problems, but because of lack of confidence between economically developed great powers like China, USA, Russia, India, etc. Also he can't accept that only some countries of the world be stable, and others suffer from their politics.⁹

Since the creation of the Organization, in each meeting of high level, heads of states, officials of governments and SCO permanent institutes, have been declaring that the SCO is a second large organization in the world for its dimension and population, highly important international structure that comprises stable and developing states with their political stability and economic prosperity. Even one of SCO Secretariat vice-director for political affairs in the 2010-2015 years declared

⁹ Hamid Karzai, speech at 13th Eurasian Media Forum, Astana, Kazakhstan, 21st April 2016.

that the SCO is an instrument to multipolar, fair world order. "Over 15 years of its existence, SCO has become a universally recognized and respected multilateral organization, one of the systemically important factors of the new multipolar world architecture, actively promoting security and stability in the region, as well as joint development of the SCO member states. SCO has turned into a powerful force in the vast Eurasian space, however, exclusively constructive in nature, focused on building new-type relationship," the SCO secretary general Rashid Alimov said¹⁰. But except declarations, most of people cannot see real results of the SCO.

1. History of SCO-Afghanistan cooperation

Afghanistan has remained a key security threat for Central Asia for many years. In 2005, the organization created a SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group, recognizing the near-and long-term importance of stability in Afghanistan to the SCO region. Afghanistan received observer status at the SCO in 2012. In 2009 the SCO member states organized the international conference on Afghan problems. The Afghan President was being invited to each meeting of high level of SCO states. All above means that Afghanistan has long been on the SCO's agenda. According to ancient secretary general of the SCO, Dmitriy Mezentsev, for SCO member states the security situation in Afghanistan is of central importance to overall regional security. Though the SCO has a mostly muted political and economic agenda, it serves as a regional coordination forum for counter-terrorism. The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) oversees member state cooperation against what the organization describes as the "three evils": separatism, extremism, and terrorism. "Cooperation with Afghanistan must be built not only on combating terrorism or drug trafficking but also in the economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres", he estimates¹¹.

Uzbek President Islam Karimov said on June 2015 it was important to resume peace talks between Afghanistan's central government and the Taliban movement, adding it was crucial that Russia took part in the talks. Karimov said: "There is a serious and

¹⁰ TASS on 25 April 2016 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement on Confidence-Building in the Military Field in the Border Area of the "Shanghai Five" countries.

¹¹ Dmitriy Mezentsev.

a real threat of instability spilling over into neighboring countries and regions. Russia has and always had its vital interests in this region," he said after talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. "We believe that attempts to resolve Afghan issue without Russia are unreasoned and precipitous."¹²

But today except some declaration on Afghan issues, we don't see any real collective actions of the SCO states. As Amit Saksena, researcher noted in his article "the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is more of a private club, with ambiguous organizational mandates and individual state-driven interests, rather than a competent collective body"¹³ that could potentially manage this looming regional instability. We see how relations between Afghanistan and Russia, Afghanistan and China have been developed, but the SCO members don't act collectively, but separately according to their national interests. For Russia it is important to support Afghanistan for security issues, supplying of combat helicopters, heavy weapons, recently shipped 10,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles and millions of rounds of ammunition. Also Moscow recognizes the impending necessity of training and arming local troops. The existence of Talibans and ISIS at the same time in Afghanistan is a danger for Russia and Central Asian States. Officially ISIS is present in 25 of 34 provinces of Afghanistan with more than 3000 fighters including those coming from Caucasus and Central Asia. Also Russia is afraid of Taliban-ISIS cooperation in Afghanistan. It will be a real danger to states of the region.¹⁴

China also defined the fields of cooperation with Afghanistan as following:

1. Policy coordination: concerning economic development and strategy of national development of Afghanistan.
2. Facilities connectivity: regional connectivity like railways, export of electrics (CASA-1000), transportation of goods etc.

¹² Reuters, July 10, 2015.

¹³ Amit R. Saksena, postgraduate scholar at the Jindal School of International Affairs, July 25, 2014.

¹⁴ Dmitriy Frolovskiy, Russia's plan for Afghanistan, www.thediplomat.com

3. Unimpeded trade: increasing the bilateral trade. China is a third largest trading partner of Afghanistan.
4. Financial integration: financial cooperation and including Afghanistan to the AIIB.
5. People-to-people bonds: cultural, educational, media exchanges. Scholarships for Afghan students. Also China intends to include Afghanistan to Belt and Road projects.
According to Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan for China Afghanistan is an important country along the ancient Silk Road, which used to be the traffic hub connecting Central Asia, South and West Asia.¹⁵ China is also a member of Quadrilateral Coordination Group on Afghan Peace and Reconciliation and is trying actively to resolve Afghan problem with other three partners USA, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
As for other members of SCO, Central Asian states are very passive regarding this problem. There is no collective statement of Central Asian States even the stability and security of Afghanistan is vital for these countries. Many politicians and experts in each meeting said the same “the Central Asian countries must actively participate in the resolution of Afghan problem”. The drug trafficking and extremists have a great impact on Central Asian countries. Three of five Central Asian countries have common frontiers with Afghanistan. But except declarations and intentions there is nothing tangible from the Central Asia within the SCO. Of course bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Central Asian states exist but it is only bilateral, not multilateral.

2. What should be done?

Terrorism is international. Terrorism is not a problem of one country, but is problem for all countries. Governments fail to cooperate against terrorism. Fight terrorism without double standards is indispensable. No country has immune from terrorism¹⁶. Turkey plays important role in Afghanistan.¹⁷ Next five-ten years international terrorism will be a problem for all. All

¹⁵ Official statement of Yao Jing, Chinese Ambassador to Afghanistan on 22.03.2016.

civilizations failed in fight against terrorism, and solutions lie in political institutions not in academic.¹⁸

According to Kairat Osmonaliev, Vice-rector of Diplomatic Academy of Bishkek, Afghanistan is a problem number one for all Central Asian states since the collapse of Soviet Union. Security belt number 1: the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan; security belt number 2: Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, but now there is no belt! Boundaries of security disappeared. The compromise with Taliban, reform of political life failed because of corruption in the country. There is a fragile peace in Afghanistan, and terrorism is coming to our boundaries. In the beginning of 2000s terrorists from Afghanistan entered to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and now it can be repeated. Only few numbers of Taliban are ready to cooperate with Kabul - official power. The problems like drug trafficking, corruption still exist. The potential of SCO and CSTO are different, but if they work together for the future of Central Asia, they can achieve some positive results. Afghan people must be interested in and resolve their problem.¹⁹ Also he noticed that Central Asian states must actively participate in solving Afghan problem.

Three of five countries of Central Asia have common borders with Afghanistan. There are problems like illegal border crossing, aimed at capturing cities in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan with the ultimate objective of organizing civil war in these countries. Three countries bordering with Afghanistan had chosen three different ways of protecting their borders with Afghanistan.

16 Metin Kylych, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Turkey to Kyrgyz Republic, speech during the international conference "Security policy in zone of geopolitical tension", Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic, 1st of April 2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

17 Kamer Kasym, USAK, speech during the international conference "Security policy in zone of geopolitical tension", Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic, 1st of April 2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

18 Hussein Bahci, speech during the international conference "Security policy in zone of geopolitical tension", Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic, 1st of April 2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

19 Kairat Osmonaliev, Vice-Rector of Diplomatic Academy, report, international conference "Security policy in zone of geopolitical tension", Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic, 1st of April 2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

First, Uzbekistan relies on national forces. They have good army that can protect borders with Afghanistan. Second, Turkmenistan believes to its neutrality status and the international institutions like UN can support Turkmenistan in their efforts. Third, Tajikistan relies on its national forces and the regional organizations like SCO, CSTO.²⁰

There are more 6000 fighters of ISIS in Afghanistan. At the end of 2015, ISIS is present in Afghanistan and getting more powerful. The ISIS members are revealed in 25 of 34 provinces of Afghanistan that also includes the citizens of Central Asian and Caucasus countries. Taliban is trying to found its regime in some places in Afghanistan and captured city Kunduz for some days. Militants' congestion is located in bordering territories with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan²¹.

The SCO countries, not only to discuss the round table the fight against the "three evil forces" - they operate on the practical field. In the last decade of the SCO RATS has achieved considerable success in the fight against terrorism. Thus, it was prevented almost 1,000 terrorist attacks, arrested about 650 terrorists; a lot of extremist organizations had been eradicated²². The SCO has repeatedly held joint anti-terror military exercise "Peace Mission".

"The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a useful forum for discussion and cooperation. However, its inherent organizational flaws, along with the national interests of its member states, prevent it from fulfilling its potential in the region. And for this reason, the SCO is unprepared to take over from the ISAF after 2014".²³

Especially China and Uzbekistan and of course other Central Asian states estimate that the SCO is not and never will become a

²⁰ Ivan Safranchuk, MGIMO, report, international conference "Security policy in zone of geopolitical tension", Diplomatic Academy under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyz Republic, 1st of April 2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

²¹ Grigoriy Karasin, vice minister of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation, interview to newspaper "Kazakhstanskaya Pravda, 8 April 2016.

²² <http://inforos.ru/ru/?module=news&action=view&id=41400>

²³ Amit R. Saksena, postgraduate scholar at the Jindal School of International Affairs, July 25, 2014.

military organization. The SCO will never send their soldiers and army to the territory of Afghanistan. The SCO members declared many times that the problems of Afghanistan would not be resolved by military ways. But they are ready to help Afghanistan to improve its political life and economic development.

3. The reasons of SCO's inactivity regarding Afghan problems

What are the reasons of selfishness of state members of SCO and what are the internal problems of the SCO that don't allow to take part SCO as a whole in the resolution of Afghan crisis? The security of the SCO countries, especially the countries of Central Asia is inextricably linked with Afghanistan. For the centuries Afghanistan was a part of Central Asia, and there are Tajiks and Uzbeks who live in the territory of Afghanistan. Without stability in Afghanistan, we can't dream about the security and stability in Central Asia, China and Russia. Other members like India, Pakistan, Turkey - observer states of the SCO, are also strongly interested in stability, security and prosperity in Afghanistan. That's why SCO as a whole organization must take part in stabilization of situation in Afghanistan, if not the SCO will remain the declarative "club of dictators".

As many other regional organizations, the SCO also has its internal and external problems in achieving its goals.

1. Absence of common policy due to the Russian-Chinese contradictions regarding SCO and indolence of Central Asian states

It is not secret that the main problem in the SCO is Russian-Chinese contradictions in many questions. Only these two states define the future of the SCO, in this regard Central Asian states are not active, even indolent in the SCO. China and Russia constantly accuse Central Asian states for its indolence and called them as the "consumers of Russia-China money in the SCO".

The Russian and Chinese visions of the missions and future of the SCO are different. Russia wants the SCO to be an organization of security; China sees it as the organization of economic integration. Concerning Afghanistan the same problem exists. As we mentioned above, Russia support Afghanistan militarily, China wants to extend economic cooperation between two states. What about Central Asian states? No initiatives, no

actions, fair of responsibility, or Central Asia has their own problems that they have to resolve.

2. Ineffective internal institutions and decision making process

The SCO has two permanent institutions: Secretariat and Regional anti-terrorist structure, but both serve only to coordinate, to inform or to execute. None of these structures take a decision by the name of states of SCO. Heads of states takes the main decisions during the annual summits of Council of Heads of State-members of SCO. In reality only two heads of states like China and Russia make decisions. There are also other Councils like heads of governments, national coordinators, national forces, etc., but they serve mostly to prepare the summits of heads of states (in reality). The decisions in the SCO are made by consensus that complicates this process. That's why all declarations and intentions stay in the papers. To facilitate it, the SCO must give more power to permanent structures to make decisions in some questions. Also SCO does not have a mechanism of financing the common projects. Every year China and some Central Asian states intend to create Bank or Fund of SCO, but Russia does not want. The member states of the SCO have their own views concerning Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan initiated its "Bishkek Initiative" to create a centre based in Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan to solve Afghan problems like drug trafficking, terrorism and extremism. Uzbekistan proposed its own project 6+3 formula of solving Afghan problems, 6 it's the neighbour countries of Afghanistan, 3 - USA, NATO, Russia. After the refusal of Uzbekistan to participate in Contact Group Afghanistan-SCO, in 2008 this Contact group stopped its activities. Turkmenistan, not a member of SCO, but one of Central Asian state initiated to organize interafghan negotiations in Ashgabat, as it had a big experience and success in organizing Tajik reconciliation during civil war in Tajikistan in 1990s.

In our opinion it is necessary to establish a permanent body on drug trafficking.

3. Competition between "Great powers" in Afghanistan

The Ex-president of Afghanistan notes that it is not secret that Afghanistan was a victim of the interests of great powers. Being in the heart of the Eurasian continent, first in the 19th century was between the British and the Russian Empires and in the 20th century between the Soviet Union and the USA. In the 21st century Afghanistan is again a victim of great powers after September 11, 2001.²⁴ We are witnessing the resumption of the “Great Game” in Afghanistan. The SCO does not cooperate with international actors like the European Union, USA, NATO, and other states. The SCO support only the UN and cooperate with this universal organization and the SCO members estimate that the UN is the only legitimate actor in Afghanistan and must resolve the Afghan problems, especially the problem of drug trafficking.

4. *Individualism and selfishness of member states of the SCO*

The countries of the SCO pursue their national goals in participating in the SCO. The SCO is afraid of responsibility for the future of Afghanistan because of the bad Soviet experience in the 20th century and the failure of the NATO-US politics in Afghanistan, and Afghan people see any foreign military intervention as occupants that violate the Afghan sovereignty. Also SCO does not possess the force structure that could intervene militarily. In this regard the cooperation between CSTO-SCO will be fruitful.

In 2009 the Kyrgyz expert Orozbek Moldaliev said an idea that the SCO is a China-led organization and it serves only to interests of Beijing. There are no problems with separatists in Central Asia but Beijing imposes it upon little states to solve this problem (three evils: terrorism, extremism and separatism). The problem of drug trafficking is very important for Central Asia and Russia, but not so important for China (there is a death penalty in China for drug trafficking).

5. *Domination of bilateral cooperation of the SCO members with Afghanistan*

There is not multilateral SCO-Afghanistan cooperation. As we mentioned above, China has its own politics regarding Afghanistan, Russia has its own, and the Central Asian states have

²⁴ Hamid Karzai, speech at 13th Eurasian Media Forum, Astana, Kazakhstan, 21st of April 2016.

no politics regarding these countries. The multilateral cooperation does not work within the SCO.

6. How to help?

Kirill Barskiy, Special envoy of Russia in the SCO, said that the SCO was not prepared to assume the responsibility of ensuring security in Afghanistan itself, but the SCO will work on terrorism, drug trafficking²⁵. In order to help Afghanistan to deal with its security, political, economic, social problems and effectively cooperate to maintain the regional security, it is vital to grant Afghanistan full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO and Afghanistan have had long term of cooperation, in each summit, meetings and Forums of the SCO, the member states stated that Afghanistan had been a very important invitee for the SCO members.

During the meeting with the China's Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi on January 2016, the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani said that he appreciated the valuable cooperation of China with Afghanistan in different sectors and asked for China's support for Afghanistan's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and also discussed the importance of Afghanistan's strategic position in becoming a transit route in the Silk Road project. Wang stressed on the commitment of his country in the rehabilitation and developing of Afghanistan in different sectors and welcomed the request of Afghanistan's full membership in the SCO and membership in AIIB and promised serious cooperation in this regard²⁶.

The only thing we can do is to reinforce the security belt along our borders with Afghanistan collectively within the Collective Security Treaty Organization and, perhaps, the SCO.²⁷

Brief recommendations to develop activities of the SCO regarding Afghanistan:

25 Infoshos.ru

26 <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/23484-afghanistan-asks-china-for-full-sco-membership>

27 <http://infoshos.ru/en/?idn=10424>

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1. To grant full membership in the SCO to Afghanistan to legitimize its activities in this country;
2. The Necessity of internal changes of SCO: to establish a Fund for financing common projects and anti-drug trafficking structure.
3. The Necessity of cooperation with other international actors in Afghanistan (like EU, NATO, USA, CSTO, etc.) Particularly it is important to cooperate with CSTO in maintaining security and to fight drug trafficking in the region.
4. The SCO must take part in the Quadrilateral Coordination Group on Afghan Peace and Reconciliation (China, Pakistan and Afghanistan are already in this Group). As the SCO is not able to negotiate with Talibans, it will be good if they join QCG.
5. Every state of the SCO sees differently the resolution of Afghan problems according to their external politics. As mentioned above Bishkek Initiative proposed by Kyrgyzstan, 6+3 group proposed by Uzbekistan, neutrality status of Afghanistan according to Russia, China sees it as economic partner and doesn't want to solve security problems. There is no common view and common policy in the SCO regarding to Afghanistan. The Contact Group Afghanistan-SCO stopped its activities after the refusal of Uzbekistan to take part in the activities of this group. It is vital to minimize the Russian-Chinese contradictions in the SCO, at least regarding to Afghan problems. These two main states must realize common policy in Afghanistan in all spheres: economic, social, military, and political.
6. To move from declarations to real actions and do something tangible in and for Afghanistan. The SCO is seen as a declarative organization, as a paper tiger. For instance the SCO can finance joint projects, finance improving infrastructure of Afghanistan, lower trade barriers, develop economic cooperation, finance Afghan government to fight drug trafficking. To do these things the SCO needs to establish Bank or Fund of the SCO and to do it via AIIB.
7. To conduct military exercises "Peace mission" in the territory or with the participation of Afghan militaries.

The SCO's activities regarding Afghanistan have been limited essentially to issuing joint declarations and sharing information about drug trafficking and Afghan terrorists. It is time for SCO leaders more actively support their Afghan neighbours.

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