

## Chapter 3

# The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Afghan Crisis

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Shanghai cooperation organization (SCO) is the largest regional organization in the world, holding 42% of the world's population, 20% of its area, and 25% of the GDP. Afghanistan has been the least peaceful country for eight consecutive years. The SCO countries surround Afghanistan, and Afghanistan is an observer in the organization. Afghanistan is in crisis due to internal and external factors. Millions of people are internally displaced; many fled to other countries, and two-thirds of the Afghan population need humanitarian assistance to survive. Afghanistan remained a source of cross-border terrorism and drug trafficking. The hasty withdrawal of the U.S. forces, the non-recognition status of the Taliban government, and the sanctions have complexed the matter. Neighbouring countries are worried about the spillover effect. If the Afghan issues are not addressed, it would worsen the security situation in the region. Can SCO play an active role in solving Afghan problems? This chapter examines the potential role of the SCO, its limitations, and challenges in resolving the Afghan issues.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Afghanistan contains multi-ethnic, multi-faith and multi-linguistic groups. These groups are in a contest to achieve political might. Afghanistan is the hub of terrorist organizations and groups. Afghanistan is notorious for opium cultivation. Drug trafficking is the major source of income for warlords. Afghanistan has been a battleground of proxy wars between major powers. In the past major powers (Great Britain,

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U.S.S.R and the U.S.A.) invaded Afghanistan. Internal polarization and external interference of regional and global powers made Afghanistan an unstable and fragile state. Internal and external factors have caused severe problems in Afghanistan. Unplanned Withdrawal of the U.S. forces has created a power vacuum and worsened the situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is facing a severe multidimensional crisis after the hasty withdrawal of the U.S. forces. According to the reports Afghanistan is the least peaceful country in the world. Millions of Afghans have fled to neighbouring countries. Millions of Afghans are internally displaced and need food and health services to survive. If political, social, economic and security issues in Afghanistan are not solved it could lead to a disaster. International organizations and major powers have failed to obtain political stability in Afghanistan. An unstable Afghanistan is a serious threat to the world especially for the neighbouring countries. Shanghai Cooperation (SCO) is the largest regional organization in terms of population and area. Russia and China are co-founders of the Organization. Afghanistan shares borders with SCO members. Afghanistan is also an observer state of the SCO. SCO members share some common objectives relating to Afghanistan including, cross-border terrorist activities, drug trade and regional economic development. Afghanistan holds significance in the security calculus of the SCO. A stable and peaceful Afghanistan is essential for regional stability and economic development. The SCO provides hope for the settlement of Afghan issues. This chapter deals with the potential role of the SCO in resolving Afghan problems. This chapter addresses the following questions. How SCO could play a role in resolving the Afghan Crisis? What are the Challenges for the SCO in resolving the Afghan issues? What are the limitations of the SCO for dealing with regional conflicts? Why SCO is a better option for resolving Afghan problems? This chapter examines the role of the SCO in resolving the Afghan Crisis.

### **Research Methodology**

The study is Descriptive and Qualitative. Afghanistan has been the source of cross-border terrorism and drug trafficking. An unstable Afghanistan poses a direct threat to its neighbouring countries. Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the largest regional organization and Afghanistan is its observer. Neorealism provides theoretical foundations for this study. Secondary data is used for this study. Data is collected through reliable resources. Journal articles, books, newspapers, reports of international organizations, reports of non-governmental organizations, conference proceedings and research papers are the sources of data collection for this study.

### **Literature Review**

There is a plethora of literature available regarding the topic of this chapter. The chapter is descriptive. Historical events and facts are cited from different reliable sources.

Kenneth Waltz explained “Realism” with new features when he wrote “Theory of International Politics (1979)” and laid the foundation of “Neorealism” in International Relations. According to the theory of Neorealism international structure determines the state’s behaviour. Waltz (1979) says that security is the basic goal of a state. States make alliances for security.

Multiple reports and indices formulated by International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) (2021,2023), International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2023), Reporters Without Borders (RSF) (2023), Transparency International(TI) (2023), UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA)

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