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New Forms and Directions in Eurasia and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: An Indian Perspective

Abstract. The article explores the changing nature of Eurasia. Eurasian landmass has become the playground for rivalry and competition among the US, China and Russia. The issue at hand is whether the emerging new global order would be bipolar or multipolar. The three leading global powers would like to shape the future global order according to their interest. The tools employed to achieve their objectives have been discussed and analysed. In the on-going "Great Game" the role of Pakistan has assumed significance. The Central Asian States are also important for both sides. Besides the Shanghai Cooperation organisation (SCO) a regional organisation comprising of countries located in Eurasia and those on its periphery is an important organisation. The SCO was expected to play a role of security provider and economic matters. However, due to certain inherent weaknesses it failed to evolve as a strong organisation. The challenges and suggestions for a way forward have been discussed. India, as an important member, has made significant contribution towards rejuvenating the SCO. India's focus is on peace and dialogue for conflict resolution and settlement of differences among members.

Keywords: Eurasia, competition, bipolar, multipolar, natural and mineral resources, SCO.

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欧亚大陆与上海合作组织的新形式和新方向：来自印度的视角

*摘要：*本文探讨了欧亚大陆格局的变迁。欧亚大陆已成为美、中、俄三国博弈的舞台。当前的关键问题是，新兴的全球秩序究竟是两极格局还是多极格局。三大世界

强国都希望根据自身利益塑造未来的全球秩序。本文讨论并分析了它们为实现目标所采取的手段。在持续进行的“大博弈”中，巴基斯坦的角色日益凸显。中亚国家对双方也至关重要。上海合作组织作为一个重要的区域性组织，其成员包括欧亚大陆及其周边地区国家。上合组织曾被寄予厚望，希望它在安全和经济领域发挥重要作用。然而，由于固有的一些弱点，上合组织未能发展成为一个强大的组织。本文探讨了上合组织面临的挑战以及未来的发展方向。印度作为重要成员国，为重振上合组织做出了重大贡献。印度致力于通过和平与对话解决成员国之间的冲突和分歧。

*关键词：*欧亚大陆；竞争；两极格局；多极格局；自然资源和矿产资源；上海合作组织

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Нирмала Джоши

Новые формы и направления в Евразии и Шанхайской организации сотрудничества: Индийская перспектива

Аннотация. В статье исследуется меняющаяся природа Евразии. Евразийский континент стал ареной для соперничества и противостояния между США, Китаем и Россией. Вопрос в том, будет ли новый мировой порядок биполярным или многополярным. Три ведущие глобальные державы стремятся формировать будущее мироустройство в своих интересах. В работе рассматриваются и анализируются инструменты, которые они используют для достижения своих целей. В продолжающейся «Большой игре» роль Пакистана приобретает всё большее значение. Не менее важны для обеих сторон и государства Центральной Азии. Помимо этого, важным игроком выступает Шанхайская организация сотрудничества — региональное объединение, в которое входят как сами евразийские страны, так и государства на периферии континента. Предполагалось, что ШОС будет заниматься вопросами безопасности и экономики. Однако, из-за ряда внутренних слабостей, организация так и не смогла превратиться в по-настоящему сильную структуру. В статье обсуждаются стоящие перед ней вызовы и предлагаются пути дальнейшего развития. Индия как важный член ШОС вносит значительный вклад в её активизацию. Индийская сторона делает акцент на мире и диалоге как основе для урегулирования конфликтов и разрешения разногласий между участниками.

Ключевые слова: Евразия, соперничество, биполярность, многополярность, природные и минеральные ресурсы, ШОС.

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To-day Eurasia is caught in a complex web of rivalry and geopolitical competition between leading and regional powers. What is at stake is whether the emerging world order would be bipolar or multipolar. In the on-going competition, the issues are: geopolitics, security and economic matters. Presently, the competition has reached a level of countries using military power and intense economic pressure to intimidate the opponent. The recent conflict between US-Israel and Iran is a case in point. The conflict is vicious and has led to immense destruction to property, uprooted people causing hardship and suffering. The conflict has impacted negatively on Eurasia. In Eurasia, countries are trying to protect their respective interest, rather than forging shared values to put up a united front.

Regional organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) are unable to project a collaborative view. Undoubtedly, such a view has impacted on the cohesiveness and compactness of these organisations. In order to rejuvenate these regional organisations it is necessary to search for new forms and directions, otherwise they may lose their potentialities.

Primarily, it is the US President Donald Trump and his allies who have accelerated the competition in Eurasia on the nature of emerging global order. The main competitors are Russia and China, leading powers in Eurasia. Russia and China share a strong strategic partnership and their aim is to check the advance of the US in Eurasia and to promote their respective ambition at the global level.

Another aspect of the competition is to establish their presence in the Central Asian region. The Central Asian region geopolitically located in the centre of Eurasia but is landlocked yet have been coveted by the empires of the day and presently by the major powers. The Central Asian region comprises of five states namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The significance of the Central Asian State (CAS) lies in their location with access to land routes connecting East and West and north to south. Today trade and connectivity issues have moved to the centre stage of international politics. On the other hand, the CAS are also focusing on trade and connectivity issues and would like to reach out to external powers for their economic development. The CAS are also rich in natural resources and minerals. At present, it would not be wrong to say that Eurasia is witnessing replay of the “Great Game”.

Another factor that has assumed criticality in the on-going struggle for space in Eurasia is Pakistan. It is the ‘crucial pivot’ for both sides that is the US on one side and China and Russia on the other side. Pakistan’s geostrategic location is important for both sides. It has cordial and close ties with China its all-weather friend since decades. Recently, the US is making consistent efforts to befriend Pakistan. Pakistan shares land borders with India, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, a key CAS. Moreover, Pakistan has deep seaport overlooking the Arabian Sea. Pakistan’s coastline is dotted with deep seaports. It has offered the US to invest in one of its ports – Pasni. On the other hand, China has been a firm supporter of Pakistan in diplomatic and financial matters. It remains to be seen how adroitly Pakistan plays its role in the “Great Game”.

Changing Eurasia

In the late 1990s, the concept of the unipolar world as perceived by Western scholars was challenged by former Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. He put forward the vision of a multipolar world. In his perception "a multipolar world has three principles. One, multipolarity as a governing principle of international relations is in active opposition to attempts to establish a unipolar world order. Second, a constructive partnership with all countries instead of a permanent coalition and third, integration on a voluntary basis within a commonwealth of independent States" [Chufrin, 1999, p. 476]. The debate however got accelerated with the assumption of American Presidency by Donald Trump in January 2025. President Trump's foreign policy approach was geopolitical and to confront Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership, that of the leading powers in Eurasia. Geopolitical advantage in Eurasia would provide immense opportunities in economic issues in terms of acquiring natural resources of the region and in infrastructure activity. Besides regional powers are also attracted to Eurasia for similar reason as the major powers.

Thus, the competition in Eurasia is gathering momentum. At present, the trend is towards protecting one's own interest instead of projecting a common and a collaborative view. We shall now examine the role and interest of the US, China, Russia followed by the role of the SCO a prominent regional organisation of Eurasia.

The United States of America

President Trump's approach and foreign policy in Eurasia is largely guided by Nicholas Spykman theory of geopolitics. According to Spykman, "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world". The Rimland which cinsists of the European coast land, the Arabian-Middle Eastern desert land; and, the Asiatic monsoon land, is strategically important due to their location at the intersection of land and sea power [Spykman, 1944, p.43].

In pursuit of his Make America Great Again (MAGA) agenda, President Trump identified China as the main threat to his MAGA agenda. In his perception of Eurasia China was a major power. In its MAGA approach Pakistan was identified as the pivot to Eurasia[1].

Pakistan shares borders with Afghanistan on its western flank and India on the eastern Frank. Besides, Pakistan has a long coastline dotted with deep sea ports. Reportedly, Pakistan has offered the US the use of three Air Bases and invited American investment in Pasni, a deep sea port opening on Arabian Sea.

In view of the strategic significance of Pakistan, President Trump invited Field Marshal Asim Munir to the US and within a couple of months, invited him again. This has set in motion the trend of befriending Pakistan. In his attempt to win over, the US has offered Pakistan USD 686 million Military Aid Package [Trump lines up…, 2025]. But can Pakistan play the double game with the US as well as with China? It depends on Pakistan whether it can act as the linchpin for both the US and China.

[1] The geopolitical significance of Pakistan in the "Great Game" has been discussed in page 3 to 4.

The US has joined AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-US). The pact is an effort to forge connections among allied defences industries across the Atlantic and the Pacific in fundamentally new ways. The US is also a member of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) comprising of US, Japan, Australia and India. The focus of QUAD is on maritime security, economic resilience, critical technologies, cyber security, climate action and health security. India participates regularly in all its meetings of QUAD including military drills and exercises.

Now that the competition is getting fierce and uncertain, the US has been unable to strike a presence in Eurasia. As rightly observed by Emma Ashford, Senior Fellow at the Stimson Centre, Washington DC, USA "The 'unipolar moment' of American predominance is over. Long term economic, demographic and military trends have undeniably shifted global politics, and US now needs a strategy to manage the emerging world …" [Making Multipolar Work…, 2025]. We shall now examine the approach and foreign policy of China a major power in Eurasia.

The People's Republic of China

Chinese dreams are to establish the future global order based on 'Socialism with Chinese Characteristics'. An equally crucial goal is to re-unite Taiwan with the Mainland. In the economic sphere it would like to emerge as a trading country. Trade and connectivity focus could bring economic benefit, but also geopolitical advantages. Hence Chinese investments are primarily in the infrastructure sector. Its flagship project Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have reportedly been accepted by nearly 100 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. China also exports technologies and agriculture and its products.

In view of its interests China perceives the US as its main challenger. China has strategic partnership with Russia as they share the same objective of checking US advance in Eurasia. On China-US relation relations Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated at a Symposium on China US Strategic Choices he stated "China-US relationship was one of the most consequential bilateral relationship in to-day's world… The Strategic Choices of the two countries will shape the course of world history [China's top diplomat stresses…]." Whether China will be able to fulfil its Chinese Dreams and meet the Western global challenge is difficult to predict.

At the regional level, Chinese foreign policy is comparatively successful. Its strategic partnership with Russia is an asset. China has strategic ties with North Korea, Iran and Azerbaijan. It has friendly and cordial ties with all the CAS. China is a member of regional organisations, such as the SCO and BRICS. At the bilateral level, China has enduring ties with Pakistan. For China, Pakistan is also a crucial link. It adjoins India, with which it has troubled relations since inception. India-Pakistan adversarial relations coincide with the China's acrimonious tiles with India. China is keen to build a road connection with Xinjiang for which Eastern Ladakh is the crucial link. The China-Pakistan relations are best described by Hu Shisheng Deputy Secretary General of Academic Committee at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations. In his words "China-Pakistan relations have reached new heights… higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, stronger than steel

and sweeter than honey… [Political trust between…, 2025]. China's BRI project has helped it to establish contacts with countries of the Global South.

Apart from its diplomatic forays, China has also taken some significant initiatives. They are (a) Global Security Initiative (GSI). It is a framework for "Communal Comprehensive, Cooperative and Sustainable Peace" pushing back against US-lead security pact. An equally important initiative is "Community with shared future shared destiny and rejecting hegemonism" [Political trust between…, 2025].

In the economics sphere China's focus is on swift development of technology, particularly high technology that is useful for defence purposes. It was Deng Xiaping's strategy that China should follow a peaceful path. His dictum was "Hide your strength: Bide your time." Some of the key features of the policy are (a) Build strength, focus on domestic economic construction and development (b) observe the international situation calmly and wait for the right moment to act without attracting major challenges. This strategy is central to China's foreign policy and has successfully lead to its 'Peaceful Rise'. Current President Xi Jinping has moved away from this approach, signalling an assertive stance.

Today China has emerged as a powerful country; militarily and economically. It has used its military power in the form of drills and exercises. This is evident from exercise and drills around Taiwan's coastline to subdue it. At times, even such exercises and drills are held around Japan in the Sea of Japan. Similarly, China has stationed its troops along the Indian Line of Actual Control in the Himalayan region. Perhaps as a threat perception. To what extent China would succeed in achieving its aspiration remains to be seen. However, in the evolving geopolitical stratagem the role of Russia occupies an important place in Chinese strategic thinking.

The Russian Federation

Russia is one of the important countries in Eurasia. It also nurtures the ambition of regaining its earlier superpower status. Another goal of Russia, according to some experts and specialists on the region, is to emerge as a Black Sea power. Incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation in 2014, creation of Abkhazia as an independent nation with its excellent seaport at Poti. In Russian ambition, its miliary operation in Ukraine perhaps has similar strategic aim. Russia has the wherewithal of achieving its aspiration. It has vast territory, a wealth of natural resources, including rare minerals. Russian people are skilled, well-qualified and capable of achieving their countries' ambition. Some began to consider it a second level power. However, its strategic partnership with China has stood Russia in good stead. Russia is trying to give a fitting response to Western approach of a bipolar world and focusing on building a multilateral global order. This goal was clearly spelt out by President Valdimir Putin in an answer to a question on Russian foreign policy at the Valdai Discussion Club in 2025. President Putin said: "We stand for diversity, for polyphony – for a true symphony of human values. The world, as I am certain you will agree, is a dull and colourless place when it is monotonous… In today's multipolar world, that very harmony and balance can only be achieved through a joint, common effort." The expanded BRICS is gaining traction as more countries tired of Western hegemony and unilateralism want to join it [Vladimir Putin meets with the members…].

In spite of facing challenges to its policy, Russia cannot be written off as a second rank power. Its defence and technological development is of a high order, it could possibly bounce back on the global scene as a superpower.

Eurasia has also attracted other powers apart from the three major powers. The Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi aptly said that "security in Europe and security in the Pacific "are not separable" [Foreign Policy Speech…]. As Julianne Smith and Lindsey Ford pointed out, over the past seven years, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the EU all drafted new Indo-Pacific strategies that stress the importance of working with Asian democracies to build resilient supply chains and protect freedom of navigation [The New Eurasian Order…]".

Besides, regional organisations are also active in Eurasia. To mention some SCO, BRICS, CICA (Conference of Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia). An equally significant grouping is the trilateral one between Russia-India-China (RIC). The grouping met a few times earlier, but presently it is dormant.

Among the regional organisations, the SEO is important as it comprises of the countries located in Eurasia as well as those on its periphery.

The Shanghai Cooperation organisation

The SCO, an inter-governmental Organisation, was formed in Beijing in June 2001. In fact, the SCO is the successor of the Shanghai Five. The Shanghai Five was established in 1996 at the behest of China, after the long-contested land boundary between Russia and China was resolved. Besides Russia and China three CAS: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan who share land borders with China were also included. The objective of Shanghai Five was to ensure that their common border remained peaceful and stable, and that the members exuded good neighbourly attitude towards each other. The Shanghai Five was primarily a bilateral agreement.

By the end of the last century, wider issues began to impinge on global order. The crux was whether the emerging global order would be unipolar, bipolar or multipolar. Western scholars, experts and others opined that the global order would be unipolar. It was at the end of the last century that the competition among major powers was gathering momentum. In the midst of it, new forms of security threats were arising, such as non-traditional threats in the form of extremism, terrorism and illicit drug trafficking and smuggling of weapons. In the midst of this emerging turmoil the need for a regional organisation was keenly felt so as to project a collaborative view on issues of common concern. Hence, The Shanghai Five paved the way for the SCO in Beijing in June 2001. Uzbekistan was opted as the sixth member. The SCO was conceived as a multilateral organisation.

The Declaration of the Establishment of the SCO stated that it "aims at: strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighborliness between the member states; encouraging effective cooperation between them in the political, trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural, educational, energy, transport, environmental and other fields; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region and establishing new, democratic, just and rational international political and economic order" [Declaration on the establishment…, p. 1–2].

The SCO has two structures: the Secretariat in Beijing and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. Secretariat fixes dates for summit meetings, agenda and prepares the Declaration and statements to be issued at the end of the Summit meetings, while the RATS collects information about terrorist groups, their movement and activities, and supplies the information to all members. The SCO has held meetings regularly. However, it remained an ineffective organisation. Despite having potentialities to emerge as an effective organisation, the SCO in its twenty five years of existence was unable to impact in a positive way on the Eurasian region. What were the challenges faced by SCO?

Issues confronting the SCO

(a) A major drawback was that the SCO was not formed in an evolutionary manner. For any regional organisation to be effective it should be cohesive and compact. The SCO's effectiveness was stymied due to differing perspectives of the members on issues of security and economic matters. In the course of the last twenty-five years, the SCO has passed several laudable resolutions and declarations, but some were being observed in violations rather than in observance.

(b) Another shortcoming of SCO is that it does not have a multilateral mechanism for decision-making. Decisions are arrived at by consensus. Consequently, decisions are watered down and do not reflect the collective view of the organisation. For instance, at the end of the second summit in St Petersburg (2002) it extended support for the One China Policy and the principle that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. According to Dr Jyotsna Bakshi, an expert on Eurasian affairs, there exists certain resentment in the Central Asian States circles that under Russian and Chinese influence they are called upon to express views on issues that do not directly concern them and which lead to antagonizing Wes [Bakshi, 2004, p. 288–296]. Many Central Asian countries are linked to North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Program of 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP). Recently at the Defence Ministers Meeting in Qindao in July 2025, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh refused to sign the final statement. The statement did not mention the terrorist attack in Kashmir in April 2025 while mentioning a similar attack in Pakistan's Balochistan. At the Moscow Format meeting on Afghanistan in October 2025, the SCO could not put forward a collective view. While drafting the Statement, the Secretariat was reminded of its Declaration (2001) which stated, "Mutual Benefit, Equality, Cooperation and Sustainable Development." This anomaly on the part of the SCO was corrected at the Tianjin Summit (2025). In the absence of its ability to project a collective view, the SCO has remained an ineffective organisation.

(c) Moreover, the structure of the SCO also requires an overhaul in order to make it an efficient organisation. Given the global ferment, can the SCO play its due rule of a security provider of its members? In order to focus on the potentialities of the SCO, the following suggestions could prove helpful and significant.

The Way Forward

a) The SCO mechanism should become more effective. As early as in 2009 head of the Russian National SCO Research Center Alexander Lukin stressed that it was it Russia's interests to prevent SCO's "becoming yet another discussion forum," and to this end, first, its institutions, especially the Secretariat, "must be developed more actively and given more powers, so that institutional logic would let them show greater initiative" and, second, the organization should develop a "real multilateral economic cooperation among its members, which now is actually non-existent" [Lukin, 2009, p. 95]. However, these tasks are still to be implemented.

b) The SCO should broaden its space by including experts, specialist diplomats etc. Inclusion of experts will provide a wider perspective to an issue at hand. In fact, it is suggested, every member should set up a research study centre in their respective country on issues of common concern. The issues could focus on climate change, energy security, health and sustainable development. Discussions on common issues with different perspectives could provide a better understanding of the concerns.

c) Scholarly exchanges at conferences or seminars organised by the SCO could be helpful in projecting a collective view. In fact, the SCO should think of setting a Core Discussion Group (CDG), where members interact with each other in an informal manner.

d) The following suggestions are worth considering: (1) Short-term fellowships for skill development and enhancing one's own expertise by incorporating high technologies in one's own skill. (2) Areas of common interest should be encouraged, such as tourism, health facilities and people-to-people exchanges. This will also cement the past cultural ties.

Indian perspective on Eurasia

Today India is an important member of the SCO. Its perspectives are worth noting. India's contact with the region dates back to millennium. In the past, the Indian subcontinent was a prominent player in the Eurasian trading activities and search for land routes. In the process, people-to-people exchanges and cultural partnership flourished between the two regions. As observed by a Tajik Academician Babajon Gafurov, "It was not a mechanical transmission of cultural values from one people to another, it was a creative process in which cultural achievements were further refined before they were further past on" [Gafurov, 1974, p. 11].

At the turn of the century, India's foreign policy expanded to include the Eurasian region. In India's strategic thinking, Central Asia is considered as its extended neighbourhood, or strategic neighbourhood. In pursuit of its policy, India enunciated the Connect Central Asia Policy (CCAP) in Bishkek in June 2011. The policy was to enhance the engagement with the CAS. It was also welcomed by all the CAS. In July 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited all the CAS. In Uzbekistan, the first one on his itinerary, he highlighted the significance of Central Asia for India. In his world "Our relationship with the region has ancient roots and has left a strong imprint on both. It now occupies significant place in India's future" [Visit of Prime Minister…, 2015]. At the Nazarbayev University in Astana,

Prime Minister Modi pointedly spoke about the significance of the region. “Central Asia is at the crossroads of Eurasia. It has been caught in the current of history and it has also shaped it” [Address by Prime Minister…, 2015].

The strength of India's connection with the CAS also manifested itself when all the Five Foreign Ministers visited India to express their solidarity on the gruesome terrorist killings of tourist in Pahalgam and extended support to India on “Operation Sindoor”. In the Joint Statement issued at the end of the meeting it was stated “…the countries condemned the Pahalgam attack and re-affirmed their firm commitment to fight against terrorism in all its form and manifestation” [Joint Statement issued…, 2025]. At the political and economic security level, India’s relation with the CAS are cordial and stable. Its engagement with the regional organisations is equally important and credible.

India and the SCO

When the SCO was formed in Beijing in June 2001, India welcomed its formation. In 2005, India was accorded the Observer Status of the SCO. Former Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna hoped that by becoming involved with the SCO, Afghanistan could become the geostrategic bridge between Central Asia and South Asia as well as the transit hub [READ: SM Krishna's speech…].

At the Ufa summit in 2015, India was invited as a full member of SCO, which became operational in 2017. In his acceptance speech, Prime Minister Modi said “Our membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is the natural extension of the relationship that India had with the member countries and mirrors the region’s place in India's future.” Further he said it will promote peace and prosperity in this vast region that has often been called “Pivot of History” [Visit of Prime Minister…, 2015]. Subsequently, India has attended all the meetings of the SCO structure. India's focus has been on security and economic matters. In the last meeting at Tianjin, China in August 2025, Prime Minister Modi presented an innovative interpretation of the SCO, by classifying it as “three pillars” of India's vision and policy. In Prime Minister Modi's vision, the first pillar “S” stands for Security. Terrorism is not only a threat to the security of individual nation but a shared challenge to all humanity – India has consistently stressed the importance of unity in the fight against terrorism. The Second Pillar “C” denotes connectivity. India has always believed that strong connectivity does not nearly facilitate trade, but also opens the doors to trust and development. The third pillar “O” stands for opportunity and cooperation. Finally Prime Minister Modi suggested the creation of a Civilisational Dialogue Forum (CDF) under the SCO. Such a platform will allow to share the richness of our ancient civilisation [Prime Minister's statement…, 2025].

India regularly participated in all SCO meetings. However, the SCO’s efficiency as a regional organisation is still lacking. In a study commissioned by the United Services Institute of India (USI) on India - Proposed Defence Cooperation Activities in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, in an attempt to rejuvenate the SCO, the author and Maj Gen Jaishankar (Ret) suggested the following: (1) joint measures to combat international terrorism; (2) climate change and environment related issues; (3) annual interaction of defence

think tanks; (4) development of military medicine; (5) adventure activities involving youth (NCC cadets); (6) joint studies on climate change issues after joint Projects are identified and agreed upon; (7) training and capacity building of exchanges in climate change issues.

Concluding Observation

Present-day Eurasia is in a state of flux due to the shifting dynamic at the global level. Major and regional powers are vying with each other for space in Eurasia. It is geopolitics, security and economic development that has attracted countries to Eurasia. The crux of the competition is, whether the evolving new global order would be bipolar or multipolar? The tools deployed for this competition are economic pressure, sanctions, creating threat perceptions or tensions or perhaps even reaching conflictual level. The present trend indicates it would be a multipolar global order.

President Trump accelerated the competition by enunciating MAGA agenda. China was viewed as the main challenge to his agenda while, the latter viewed the US as its main adversary. In the competition, Pakistan emerged as the "crucial pivot" for both the US and China. Pakistan's geopolitical location assumed tremendous geopolitical significance in achieving their respective ambition at the global level. Pakistan at present is enjoying its position of being coveted by both the major powers and playing an important role as a mediator in the US-Israel war against Iran. A tricky question arises: Can Pakistan play the dual role of pleasing both sides? It is like "running with the hares and hunting with the hounds".

An equally important issue is: will the Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership, former adversaries, presently ideologically different and aspiring for similar global status, remain stable? In the present global turmoil, the Partnership is an asset to both Russia and China. Once either side achieves its ambition, how would the partnership be impacted? Given the tactical nature of the Partnership, it is possible to conjecture that in the near- to midterm, the Partnership would remain stable.

The SCO has the potentialities to emerge as a strong organisation. It can act as a unifier among members. A united SCO can act as a security provider to its members and facilitate economic interaction. For instance, a collective approach would facilitate its effectiveness and, thereby, give new form and directions to the organisation in Eurasia. Apart from noteworthy suggestions made earlier, President Xi Jinping in his Opening Address to the Tianjin Submit in 2025, stressed that members regardless of size, strength and wealth are equal participants and decision-makers and beneficiaries in global governance. If these principles are followed, the SCO would emerge as powerful regional organisation and play its due role.

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