

THE ROLE OF SCO IN AFGHANISTAN'S STABILITY

Shahid Iqbal*

Abstract

Due to the role of regional and extra-regional players, the situation of reconciliation and permanency in Afghanistan, since 9/11, has been continuously deteriorating. Though several peace efforts are being made at the political front by various regional actors, as far as the country is not economically self-sufficient, the chances of peace and stability in Afghanistan are bleak. Similarly, regional players, especially regional organisations, must play a more significant role. The SCO has the prospects for stabilising the country via peaceful negotiations with various factions/ groups along with the pivotal role of the institutions/ regional organisations in the smooth implementation of energy projects. However, the US and NATO involvement in the Afghanistan crisis impeded the SCO's role. The paper intends to address how SCO can overcome this challenge and promote economic stability in Afghanistan for peace in the region.

Keywords: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, (SCO), Afghanistan's Stability Regional Organizations, Economic Stability, Energy Projects, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Introduction

The regional organisations, especially SCO, can effectively contribute by their pivotal role of fostering peace and stability in Afghanistan by focusing on improving its economy and making its trade functional due to the topographical contiguity of Afghanistan with the member countries of SCO.¹ Moreover, Afghanistan being an Observer at SCO has remained the center of attention during various SCO meetings. However, continued US/ NATO presence in Afghanistan remains a significant challenge to SCO role in Afghanistan.²

According to neoliberal institutionalism, by enhancing collaboration among like-minded states, institutions will play a role in bringing security and harmony. The Central Asian region's geopolitical landscape has been shaped by the pivotal role of the SCO in new ways. By the addition of Pakistan vis a vis India as permanent members of the SCO system means that it is steadily spreading into the broader area of South Asia. The subsequent SCO conference will likely see Sri Lanka and Belarus becoming SCO dialogue partners.³ With renewed Chinese and Russian interest in Central Asia and Afghanistan, renewed impetus is given to formulating a framework

* Mr Shahid Iqbal is serving in Pak Army and occasionally writes on national and international issues related to International relations. . The authors' email address is skjadoon6@gmail.com

for the organisation's continued engagement in Afghanistan. In the last Summit, participants worked to streamline an effective practical manifestation, for a tenure of five years, for a long-lasting cooperation, brotherhood, and a strong geographic proximity bond. Similarly, the participants of the last SCO summit also worked on various documents and resolutions about economic, security, environmental and cultural cooperation.⁴

Afghanistan is geo-strategically located at the crossroads of many energy corridors and initiatives recently taken by significant powers. These initiatives include the Belt and Road Initiative BRI, CASA-1000, and TAPI, are some of the energy corridors/ initiatives that depend on Afghanistan's stability for successful completion and optimum benefits. The internal destabilising situation in Afghanistan, the effects of the conflict, and the evolution from within the country are compelling the neighboring/ regional states to address the root causes of significantly enhanced security parameters and the diversion of the means required to solve the socio-economic problems. Above in view, this research paper delves into the pivotal role of SCO and regional states in bringing economic stability, ultimately leading to peace and stability in the country. The paper will also delve into the perspective of neoliberal institutionalism in the context of the role of SCO in Afghanistan and the significance of energy and trade projects by SCO member states that can bring economic stability in Afghanistan.

Most of the available literature doesn't cater to providing permanent stability in Afghanistan but instead focuses on the number of future energy projects to be undertaken in the country. Some authors have highlighted the role of ERFs, especially NATO and US forces, in peace and restoration of law and order in Afghanistan. The presence of the extra regional forces which are causing hindrance in the practical manifestation of genuine efforts by the regional organisations like SCO have not been deliberated upon, especially with regards to the future course of action, post withdrawal of the extra regional forces (ERFs) viz a viz mutual collaboration by the regional countries/organisations for opening of the energy corridors in the country.

Similarly, the literature regarding the effective role of the neighboring countries in immediate resolution of the conflict via peace talks by various organisations/ institutions and the inception of viable economic activities has been found lacking. Regional cooperation regarding empowerment of the institutions in Afghanistan has not been researched and deliberated upon in any of the literatures.

Research Questions

- What factors have impeded the effectiveness of SCO in resolving the conflict and creating a conducive environment in Afghanistan?
- How can neoliberal institutionalism and various regional and international organisations, in the age of multilateralism, play a critical role in solving transnational conflicts, especially in Afghanistan?
- What is the significance of SCO member states' energy and trade projects that can bring economic stability to Afghanistan?

Neo Liberal Institutionalism Perspective

The role of international institutions worldwide is found in every functional domain and each region of the world. In the age of multilateralism, various regional and international organisations play a critical role in solving transnational conflicts. Scholars' emphasis has been shifting from states to institutions in international relations due to the changing dynamics. After the First World War, and with the formation of the League of Nations and the advent of international law, international organisations⁵ became the region's subject. Efforts were made to integrate Europe by the creation of the European Economic Community. Scholars of international relations closely analysed the emergence of these and transnational organisations, and local organisations developed a recognised international relations subfield.⁶ In the early 1980s, the study of multinational institutions and regional integration took a radical turn, later known as regime theory, and neoliberal institutionalism was renamed.⁷ After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, SCO was created in 2001 to enhance cooperation among founding members including Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.

Plano and Olton defined the international organisations as, "a formal arrangement transcending national boundaries that provides for establishing institutional machinery to facilitate cooperation among members in the security, economic, social, or related fields".⁸ Later on, Stephan Krasner broadened the narrow conceptualisation as "Principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area".⁹ The organisation substituted the tenure structure since it endorsed IR scholars to interact with the re-emergence of research in economics, political science, and sociology of institutions. An "old institutionalism" that continuously concentrated ceremonial structures was replaced by a "new institutionalism" that reflected a more significant abstract idea in both these domains and in separate subfields.

Along all domains and sub-disciplines, researchers could endorse the concept of “institutions,” as “the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction”.¹⁰

Liberals emerged as the group that conducted an in-depth study of international organisations post-Second World War, to some extent, though not entirely. The liberals emphasised mutual understanding, which focused on the new global arrangements, post-Second World War, with a specific appearance of alterations and advancements. International relations scholars explained the international institutions based on economists' explanation of replacement of firms with market transactions, as the former brought more efficiencies.¹¹ The modern literature of the institutions, even though it focuses on self-interest and microeconomics, as is done by the realist, and another commonality of usage of game theory, is called neoliberal institutionalism and neoliberalism due to its inherent focus on the role of cooperation and institutions.¹²

Preceding the Great Depression of the 1930s, classical liberal economic thought was dominant in the US and UK, leading to a modern form known as neoliberalism. Similarly, a modern interventionist approach took the place of classical liberalism from approximately the mid-1930s to the mid-1970s, so it was evident that certain state regulations were essential for making capitalism more potent and acceptable.

Some of the key assumptions of neoliberal institutionalism include: First of all, some of the probable propositions of realist are considered to be appropriate by the neoliberal institutionalist like interstate relations are defined by the pivotal players which are the states which basically are the sole undiminished coherent agents and primarily interact continuously at the foundation of acumen basing on their peculiar egotisms. Secondly, the concept of Anarchy, which is termed to the state behavior as explanation, would also be acceptable as in the case of realism's perspective.

Lastly the interstate relations will be become more complex in terms of their cooperation by keeping in mind the probability of states interest in relative gains the actual potential of all institutions in supporting the state for accomplishment of the global cooperation has been offered by liberal institutionalism by predicting more viable International cooperation effectively likewise the realist Pessimistic approach about the global Institutions was glaringly rejected by the liberal institutionalists. It was argued by the functionalists that for promoting International or Regional Cooperation, the specialised agencies are perfectly suitable to undergo specific projects as these are not directly affecting the state sovereignty.¹³

In the context of the SCO role in Afghanistan, according to the neoliberal institutionalist perspective, member states are sole agents with an agenda for fetching reconciliation and strength in Afghanistan, which is on the same foundation of acumen of their self-interests. The relative gains acquired through energy/ trade initiatives through Afghanistan will make the cooperation more strenuous among SCO members and Afghanistan.

According to Stephan Krasner, great powers use their bargaining power to attain acceptable outcomes.¹⁴ The same concept is described as “coordination for the powerful” by Arthur Stein. But this does not reduce the importance of institutions, however, this shows that the coerciveness exists for exchanging the mutual benefits, as most of the actors have almost three peculiar probabilities, such as strength of bargaining, distinct or separate possibilities, as well as different characteristics, which ascertain results.¹⁵ Keeping in view the stance of neoliberalism or neoliberal institutionalism, that is, the inception of self-interests vis-a-vis states’ power or energy, paving the way for global or international institutions. Such like results being mutually cooperative have not been meant that there is an absolute absence of power and persistent or intimidating dangers.¹⁶

It emerged and spread with dominating International relations disciplines in the 1980s via a procedure of analysis on neorealism and neorealist theories in a cumulative way. The regulation of the neoliberal institutionalism subjugates the Regime theory because it also highlights the relevance of institutions in international relations.

The Regime theory, like neorealism, assumes some of the parameters as follows: -

- The International political framework has the pivotal actors: the states.
- The international system is characterised by the complexity of an anarchical fabric in which states exist and work.
- The states have a foremost duty of prioritising their rational interest.

The regime's philosophy, however, leads to assumptions that are somewhat distinct from those of the neorealist school and appears to promote theories related to international affairs with the liberal school.¹⁷ Mainly on the afore-referred assumptions, the neorealists who advocate theories of hegemonic stability stress that it is only possible to sustain international cooperation if the hegemonic authority can implement such collaboration with other nations.

However, this emphasises that foreign collaboration is feasible outside hegemonic power systems if cooperation is in the collective interest of all involved states, in light of cross-border dynamic interdependencies in regime theory.

Neo-realism concludes that foreign institutions are, at best, vehicles of hegemonic forces. Regime theory, on the other hand, stresses that foreign organisations are important outside hegemonic power systems since, as instruments, they can assist the group of states in solving collaboration problems arising from their complicated interdependencies.

Governmental organisations such as the (CSCE) Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Convention (NPT), and a variety of other arms control regimes (SALT, ABMT) have arisen in the background of the East-West war, establishing cooperative relations even though neither the US nor the USSR occupied a hegemonic position.¹⁸

Hence, in the SCO, there is no hegemonic state, but member states follow the charter of the SCO to ultimately achieve regional peace and stability in their respective regions. According to Keohane, international regimes are mechanisms that help states understand their shared interest in international cooperation. Therefore, to promote global interaction, the impact of international systems should not consist of shifting the interests of the states concerned and thus their preferred order.

Instead, global governance's impact is solely to enable nations to recognise their pre-existing mutual interests through international collaboration. Thus, foreign regimes act as negotiation catalysts that leave states' rights unaffected.¹⁹

According to Keohane, this cost-benefit ratio is affected by, among other factors, the degree of interdependence in each problem region. In particular, the degree of interdependence determines the advantage granted to the states participating in the regime.²⁰

The higher the level of interconnectedness, the more foreign involvement will help them. For states with comprehensive trade ties, stabilising them into an international trade system is much more critical than for states with negligible trade relations. In most other terms, the higher the degree of interdependence, the more the costs involved with the regime's creation and the continuation of the regime are compensated by the gains of the regime.²¹ So, in the case of high levels of interdependence, the creation of foreign systems is more likely to occur than in the case of low levels of interconnectedness.

However, as per Keohane, the expected values are often determined by the number of states in each area of concern.²² The number of states affects the cost of maintaining a regime. The higher the number of states engaged in a regime, the more difficult it is to introduce collaboration in a decentralised way.

SCO – Afghanistan as Observer

The situation in Afghanistan was the underlying reason for establishing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO Member Nations have arranged for the creation of a regional anti-terrorist mechanism in Central Asia, mainly in response to events in Afghanistan at that time. The need to fight the "three evil forces" has dictated the development of the common strategy (terrorism, separatism and extremism). The key objectives of the SCO are to foster mutual trust and good neighborly ties between Member States; to foster practical cooperation in the fields of politics, science and technology, trade and economy, tourism, culture and education, energy, transportation, environmental protection, and other fields; to preserve and ensure peace with shared effort, security, and stability in the region. The council of heads of state is the highest decision-making body in the SCO, which organises its annual meetings to make decisions and accord directives on all vital matters of the SCO activity. The SCO member states cover an area of approximately 30 million 189 thousand square kilometers, which makes up three-fifths of the continent of Eurasia, and have a population of one and a half billion, making up a quarter of the earth's population.²³

At the moment, the pivotal reason for the instability of the environment in Afghanistan and in the complete SCO region is due to manifold reasons such as social and political disorder, transnational crime, weapons sales and terrorism vis-a-vis the import of terrorism and drug trafficking. The ongoing illicit/terrorist activities and many others are causing peril and threat to the security of the complete region, which is geographically in Central Asia, an essential component of the strategic aspects of the SCO. The futuristic advancement of the military-political situation in Afghanistan will dictate the stability and conduciveness of the SCO area in the coming years, as acknowledged by experts. The prevailing situation in Afghanistan dictates the mutual collaboration for joint monitoring with the inclusion of Afghan representation. The same activity inculcates the involvement of partners and observers in the SCO member states. Merely relying on military actions is not a solution to the Afghanistan problem, all members of the member states of the SCO openly declared it.

The need of the time is to change the core approaches to assessing the Afghan crisis and ponder the findings of peaceful methods of resolving the issue via long-lasting policies to create a viable social and economic basis for the advancement of Afghanistan.

SCO - Afghanistan Contact Group (CG)

The SCO Summit meetings have always been trying to draw vibrant attention towards Afghanistan on the issues of mutual interest. The contact group between Afghanistan and SCO was initiated in November 2005 to build cooperation between SCO and Afghanistan. Avoiding spillover effects in terrorism and trafficking of drugs was the central issue of concern, therefore, the highest priorities are to resolve the problems by strengthening the state capabilities of Afghanistan and superimposing cooperation with the SCO.²⁴ In connection with the same plan of action of combating terrorism, trafficking of drugs and organised crimes, a pivotal conference with the Afghan government in 2009 was developed.²⁵ Likewise, support for the reconciliation process, which is Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, was declared during the Astana summit in 2011. Afghanistan was accepted as an observer SCO member 2012 in the Beijing SCO summit.²⁶

Approximately 40 representatives of almost eight member nations along with the executive committee of the SCO regional anti-terrorist organisation and Afghanistan participated in a meeting co-presided by Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. The ministers of foreign affairs of both countries, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, highlighted and discussed the crucial issues, including the current scenario in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan reconciliation process, and the affiliation of Afghanistan with the cooperation of SCO member states, with vis-à-vis its advancement, plus some other key issues were discussed. The draft roadmap for future planning and practical manifestations by the SCO Afghanistan contact group was one of the vital issues of the meeting to be addressed. The incorporation of anti-terrorism and other fields, other than trade and economy, was also pointed out by the secretary-general Bolat Nurgaliev. In a special conference on Afghanistan, the member nations also presented, under the patronage of the SCO, for discussing the issues of joint counter action against terrorism, organised criminal acts and illegal smuggling and circulation of narcotics.

The third meeting was the recent meeting of the SCO-Afghanistan contact group. The other two sessions in the past were held on 11th October 2017 in the capital city of Russia (Moscow) and the other one was held on 28 May 2018 in Beijing/China.

As per procedure in vogue, the conference/ meeting of the participating states of SCO and Afghanistan is typically held at the deputy foreign minister's rank.²⁷

Role of SCO Member States in Afghanistan's Economic Uplift

Afghanistan's long-term feasibility development will be promoted due to its geo-strategic location, which can potentially become the hub of the region's trade, energy, and transport. Afghanistan could also obtain the position of a key hub connecting the network passing through a corridor in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The solely viable policy for keeping neighbouring countries and Afghanistan is primarily regional cooperation, which plays a pivotal and vital role. For the indefinite stability and peace within Afghanistan, the neighbouring states are wholly concerned and involved in Afghanistan. Due to the obvious reasons of the repercussions on the neighboring states, any other regional state of the globe is directly affected by the Afghan conflicts, causing problems for them.²⁸

For Afghan national reconciliation to achieve favourable external conditions, their constructive and active intervention will be targeted. The active involvement of neighboring countries in stabilising Afghanistan needs the development of infrastructure and the creation of new conditions for the resolution of social services for citizens in the medical sector. Other countries, regional cooperation and economic integration with Afghanistan in South and Central Asia should be encouraged.²⁹

Energy Projects of SCO Countries having Economic Significance for Afghanistan.

Belt Road Initiative. In an attempt to promote foreign trade and revive ancient trade routes, the One Belt, One Road is a political and economic initiative developed by China. The Belt Road Initiative has been the centerpiece of Xi's foreign policy since it was revealed in 2013. Since May 2017, members from more than 100 countries attended the Belt and Road Forum, including Afghanistan, in which global organisations and 68 nations have entered into a cooperation agreement with China. One Belt, One Road would expand China's economic reach but also promise to boost China's political and financial standards. As the country continues to experience political and economic turmoil, the framework assists Afghanistan with revolutionary possibilities.

Since 2014, China has stepped up its diplomatic efforts to enhance its bilateral relations in terms of political cooperation with Afghanistan and to play a role in the process of reconciliation between the Taliban and the Afghan government.³⁰

A primary goal of China's OBOR is to link Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East with the construction of highways and railways. As Afghanistan is a geographical center, its turmoil and instability could adversely affect this grand project.

China also has some critical investments, in Afghanistan, such as the latest project, the Amu Darya oil fields and the Mes Aynak copper mine. ³Afghan Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi said in March 2017 that Afghanistan had previously synchronised most of its national plans with the BRI. "The government claims that the initiative will offer Afghanistan an opportunity to become once again an "Asian transit and trade roundabout" linking Central Asia to South Asia and West Asia to East Asia, which brings economic advantages to Afghanistan and the whole country. Afghan leaders claim that under China's grand connectivity initiative, the Five Nations Railway, the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, and other gas pipeline projects can be connected to other projects. Furthermore, until October 2016, Afghanistan has conveyed interest in joining the.

The ambassador of China Pakistan economic corridor (CPEC), for Pakistan: Omar Zakhilwal, has already approved the access of CPEC to Afghanistan. This possibility seems open to both Pakistan and China, but the logistical issue of expanding CPEC into Afghanistan remains unanswered. In particular, the supporters of the plan and the advocates of Afghanistan joining the CPEC and the BRI have generally argued that participating in this megaproject would offer the country the following benefits.

Afghan corporates will be provided access to the consumer market in South Asia through the existing construction within Pakistan, thereby reducing import costs and increasing exports to the region. This might enable Afghanistan to improve its trade with regional countries and thus to stabilise its economy. This might allow Afghanistan to improve its trade with regional countries and thus to stabilise its economy. Pakistan was Afghanistan's top export destination in 2015 (three hundred and ninety-two million dollars), followed by India's (two hundred and seventy-seven million dollars). Similarly, with trade amounting to \$1.95 billion, Pakistan emerged as the top import outlet, followed by China (five hundred and eighty-seven million dollars) and India (five hundred and sixty million dollars). Afghanistan has exported items such as carpets, rugs, dried fruit and medicinal plants to date, but not copper, iron ore and other natural resources.

Afghanistan will be able to export important commodities to markets in Central Asia, China, West Asia, and areas of Europe that it does not currently trade

extensively with. It will also expand the construction of a trans-Hindukush motorway and railway line to Central Asia, utilising the support of BRI.

Afghanistan is likely to turn into a land bridge between Central, South and West Asia and China, respectively with the aid of CPEC and CAREC (Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation) the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC). Thus, some Afghan experts contend that "Afghanistan's integration into the [BRI] will give the country the ability to pursue economic stability by improving trading opportunities, by linking regional rail and road networks, by becoming an important partner in the regional energy market and by fighting regional drug trafficking."³²

The advantages of the China-Afghanistan BRI can only be enjoyed if Afghanistan's security improves. Neighboring countries and other international actors must expand their support and cooperation to create a stable Afghanistan to resolve this and other challenges. In terms of economic and financial commitments within the region, by its position, China needs to play a more significant role. China must do much to meet Afghanistan's expectations as an important regional force.

Central Asia South Asia – 1000

From the sale of energy every year, for millions of dollars, as the economies of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the primary energy exporters. Both countries can benefit as their economy is already developing. In addition, energy exports will speed up economic development in both countries. The implementation of the CASA 1000 project is also entirely sponsored by both countries.

The feasibility of the CASA-1000 project is also politically and economically relevant for Afghanistan, and the following few specific reasons can demonstrate Afghanistan's involvement in the implementation of the project:

- a. The execution of the project has potential advantages for Afghanistan, which can obtain 300 MW of electricity from the project and is particularly influenced by the needs of the region's citizens.
- b. The program will enhance Afghanistan's revenue tools and provide opportunities for trade and jobs for the country's citizens.³³
 - (i) Afghanistan has been attempting to lessen the fractional balance of imports and exports in the coming decades, so that investment and consumer goods will increase in the country, where without electricity, it is impossible to increase home products; thus,

electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan can cause increased electricity

- (2) Home goods from Afghanistan, further provision of job opportunities, and facilitation of investing in the country for traders.
- c. Introducing broad local trade programs can also benefit defense, development, poverty reduction, inequality, and policy problems.
- d. The venture will set the stage for more developments in foreign economies and open the way for other significant projects in the region to be implemented, such as the sharing of energy and electricity between Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (TUTAP), Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan (TUTAP), Pakistan and India (TAPI), Railways, Silk and Azure Transport Route Renovation.

The project's implementation also enhances people's loyalty and belief in the government's competence. These advantages have usually motivated Afghanistan's government to make more efforts to broaden regional economic cooperation.³⁴

Turkmenistan Afghanistan, Pakistan India (TAPI) Pipeline

The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline is a 1,814km trans-country natural gas pipeline running through four countries. The TAPI pipeline, known as the Peace Pipeline, originates in Turkmenistan and passes through Afghanistan before reaching Pakistan and India. TAPI will likely operate for approximately 30 years and was scheduled to begin operations in 2020. Through the cooperation of neighboring countries, the TAPI pipeline project is expected to turn the war and conflict scenario cumulatively toward political stability and growth in Afghanistan.³⁵

- a. Afghanistan is estimated to buy 16% of the gas, approximately 5.1bcm. The country will also earn a transit fee of \$400m annually for the pipeline. The TAPI project would offer Afghanistan many economic benefits.
- b. Firstly, the TAPI Initiative would produce revenue for the government's treasury through transit fees and taxes. Afghanistan will earn approximately USD 450 million per annum only via transit fees.

- c. Furthermore, this would generate thousands of job opportunities for the pipeline's service, maintenance, and protection during and after construction.
- d. Consequently, using local goods and services would encourage domestic industry and products.
- e. Likewise, energy generation will require additional fixed asset investment of hundreds of millions of dollars during the project's expected life. It will replace tens of millions of dollars flowing from the country's budget energy.
- f. Awareness building for Afghan engineers and other specialists.
- g. This develops a global framework of cooperation among multi-nations. The same venture will build a forum for all neighboring states' cooperation, improving the regional economies of gas exporters and importers. This economic development will allow the development of new industries and businesses.³⁶

Busy with opium production and other illicit economic activities, regional economic collaboration in the region will result from constructive economic spillovers and the mass population currently recruited by insurgent forces. Instead, it was possible to find a legal source of income; they could be hired to protect the pipeline and employed by factories that could be set up after the operation of the TAPI pipeline. Through the introduction of the TAPI initiative, there have been enormous benefits for Afghanistan and the nation that could not be ensured without this connectivity.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

A forward-thinking project by Russia, Iran, and India (INSTC) has emerged as a regional connectivity and yet another vital scheme and aims to connect the Indian Ocean to Europe as of 2017. Similarly, through the Chabahar Port and the Lapis Lazuli Corridor with INSTC, Afghanistan has the full potential vis a vis the capacity to link/ connect itself. The first shipment from India entered Afghanistan, via the port of Chabahar in November 2017, adaptation by the port to a deliberate substitute to the port of Karachi in Pakistan, on which Afghanistan has been cripplingly reliant on so far. Furthermore, through the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, in mid-December 2018, the first merchandise shipment was done through Afghanistan to Europe. With the port of Chabahar and the Lapis Lazuli Corridor now in service, the INSTC could give Afghanistan additional opportunities to access the Indian Ocean and Europe.

Conclusion

Afghanistan is of significant strategic value to Eurasia. The SCO has witnessed a vibrant and pivotal practical manifestation in the regional domains for years; nevertheless, as the climate evolves, the priorities and targets of cross-border terrorism, drug trafficking, and other challenges also expand.

For a credible perception of Afghanistan's diplomatic restoration, it is essential to create stability by uplifting its economy through contemporary trade and energy projects undertaken by SCO representatives in the region.

Transitioning from a reliant support economy to a transit and trading economy in Afghanistan is a stretched and intimidating journey. The Afghan government sees initiatives such as the BRI, CASA 1000, TAPI and INSTC as vital and dynamic tools to turn the overwhelming shift in its economic fields by being self-reliant in the community of nations.

According to the neoliberal institutionalist viewpoint, international organisations are also relevant because, if collaboration is consistent with their goals, they will allow the group of states to solve problems of cooperation emerging from their diverse interdependencies as an instrument. Consequently, in the case of Afghanistan, because of the diverse interconnectedness of its Member States with each other and Afghanistan, SCO as an international organisation could play a significant role in economic stability.

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