

Strategic Position and Role of the SCO in the Silk Road Economic Belt

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The SCO consists of 6 member state, namely China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and it is likely to expand this year, to accept India and Pakistan as a full member. In addition, the SCO observer states include Mongolia, Iran and Afghanistan. In the aspect of members and regions, there are overlaps between the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt to a large degree, for they both cover Eurasia, Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia. Functionally, the SCO and the Silk Road economic belt also have some overlap. Economic cooperation is one of the three areas of cooperation of the SCO, the contents of which are also similar to the Silk Road Economic Belt. In this case, how to deal with their strategic positioning and relationships become an important issue, for it not only has a bearing on the prospects of the SCO, but also influences the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

1. Diplomatically, the SCO cannot be positioned as affiliated to or severing the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Both the Silk Road Economic Belt and the SCO are put forward and supported by China and serve the strategic interests of China. However, there are still evident differences between them. Silk Road Economic belt is predominated by China with fully independent decision-making right, whereas the SCO is an international organization belonging to all member states, the decision-making depends on the collective will.

Despite of China's important position in the SCO, it cannot be positioned as affiliated to or severing the Silk Road Economic Belt, which is not appropriate diplomatically and will not be generally acknowledged. An international organization cannot be positioned as a tool subordinate to one of its member state; otherwise this will inevitably lead to Russia's discontent, which may also say that the SCO should be affiliated to or serve the Eurasian Economic Union according to the past practice. Thus, a passive position will appear. Contradiction will arise between China and Russia, which is harmful to the SCO and not conducive to the construction of Silk Road Economic Belt.

Introduction>>

The Shanghai Cooperation Organizations (SCO) resembles the Silk Road Economic Belt closely in members, regions and function. Therefore, the relationship between them has become an important issue, for it not only has a bearing on the prospects of the SCO, but also influences the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

2. The SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt should be positioned as parallel strategic partnership with independent status, mutual support and mutual promotion.

The SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt only overlap with each other geographically and functionally, with no political contradictions and conflicts. The SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt have same members, which are also partners in the two frameworks, they naturally should be partnership. In a sense, it can be said that a group of people are doing two things, and find themselves in a paradoxical situation.

The SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt should be properly positioned as strategic partnership with mutual support and promotion for positive interaction

3. The SCO remains China's important international and regional platforms, and China should endeavor to promote the development of the SCO.

The SCO has been the foremost multilateral platform in the region before the conception of the Silk Road Economic Belt was put forward. China attaches great importance to the SCO and spares no effort to promote its development. After the conception of the Silk Road Economic Belt was put forward, China has a new cooperation framework with wider space and more freedom of action, which unavoidably changes the original position of the SCO. It is manifested in the shift of the SCO from the most important platform for China into one of the most important platform, and China's higher enthusiasm for the Silk Road Economic Belt than the SCO.

Once China, the main promoter of the SCO, attaches less importance to it, its political status and importance will naturally decline. The SCO may also be used to serve the Silk Road Economic Belt when it becomes the focus of China. On the mutual relationship, the SCO will be in a lower position and the driving force for development of the SCO will decrease.

The SCO still has an important value to China. It supplements the Silk Road Economic Belt in terms of politics, security, regional relations and international impact, and some of its functionality can hardly be replaced by the Silk Road Economic Belt. The institutional framework of the SCO is China's important diplomatic asset in this region. In promoting the Silk

Road Economic Belt construction, China should continue to pay attention to and promote the development of the SCO, avoiding catching one and losing another.

4. If China attaches less importance to the SCO, it will be controlled and at the disposal of Russia.

The SCO has been in a relatively stable state, with stable regional and international impact and occupies a place in the international structure. After the entering of India and Pakistan, its geopolitical influence will be significantly increased and it will become a huge regional organization covering the Eurasian Continent. If China attaches less importance to the SCO and reduces investment, Russia and India and other member states will actively make use of this platform to reflect the wishes of Russia and India, which will be a loss to China's diplomacy.

5. SCO's development is conducive to the development of the Silk Road economic belt, in a sense, that is the development of the Silk Road economic belt.

Politically, the SCO linked China, Russia, Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia. As for security the SCO guarantees the stability around China. Economically, it pushes forward regional economic cooperation, all of which either creates a good environment for the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt, or directly implements the content of the Silk Road Economic Belt construction. So the development of the SCO is harmless to the construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt. In some aspects, the development of the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt is inseparable.

The SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt will not cause the problem of resource decentralization. Their overlap in functionality primarily falls in the field of economic cooperation. From previous practice, multilateral cooperation is the main form of SCO economic cooperation, focusing on the formation of common principles and rules. The SCO is powerless to complete specific major investment and construction projects. Major investment and construction projects will be implemented within the framework of Silk Road Economic Belt.

6. The SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt can differ in functionalities.

Functional restructuring can be made to the SCO, which is reasonable and

necessary in view of the situation of the organization itself or the need to adapt to the Silk Road economic Belt. The restructuring should highlight its function in the cooperation of politics, security, regional relations and international issues. In the economic sphere, on the one hand, key areas should be highlighted, focusing on multilateral cooperation with maximum consensus, such as the build-up of rules and systems, projects concerning national welfare and people's livelihood, poverty eradication and disaster reduction, environmental protection and so on; on the other hand, the SCO can reduce the scope of cooperation, giving up some functions and projects, and shifts to the Silk Road Economic Belt. There are two kinds of functions and projects that can be abandoned: what has proved difficult to promote within the SCO, and what is likely to constrain future development, including the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Benefits can be expected from the shift of part of the economic cooperation and projects of the SCO to the Silk Road Economic Belt. Active functional restructuring makes differentiation between the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt, and the SCO will suffer less shock from the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt. At the same time, the restructuring can activate economic cooperation. In the framework of the Silk Road Economic Belt, the economic cooperation can have more forms and space for free development.

7. China can make a clear explanation of the relationship between the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt on the SCO summit held in September this year.

Currently, there is a certain ambiguity in the relationship between the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt, causing problems to China's policymaking and confusion to the SCO member states. They don't know whether China's policy and attitude to the SCO will change or whether China will wholeheartedly support the development of the SCO. This situation is not conducive to the cooperation between China and other SCO member states, thus causing uncertainties in the development of the SCO.

We suggest that China should make a clear explanation of the relationship between the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt on the SCO summit held in September this year.

First, the SCO works in partnership with the Silk Road Economic Belt

Second, the direction of development of the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt are consistent with each other without contradiction.

Third, the SCO and the Silk Road Economic Belt are distinct in functionality, forms and frameworks and can reinforce each other. The development of the SCO is conducive to the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt, which in turn will further promote the development of the SCO.

Fourth, the SCO, as a regional cooperation organization, has an irreplaceable important position and function.

Fifth, China spares no efforts to promote the continued development of the SCO.

Translated by Yang Chaonan