Iran’s Permanent Membership in the SCO in Achieving the Goals of China and Russia in the Fight Against Terrorism (Emphasizing ISIS) After Nuclear Deal

Shabnam DADPARVAR¹,a,* and Lai-jin SHEN²,b

¹,²Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan, Hubei, China

ªshabnamd53@gmail.com, bshenlaijin@263.net

*Corresponding author

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Abstract. SCO is one of the most important organizations in the field of trade and investment relations with participating of two great powers of China and Russia. The members have had different cooperation in different levels with important objectives in different fields as economy and security including counter-terrorism and they have taken steps to solve the problem. The members of this organization have had different approaches regarding giving membership to the countries and have always been impressed by the organization’s Terms and Conditions. Iran, a member of the supervisory agency, due to the opposition from China and Russia has not been a full member so far. However, the approach of the two countries after Iran nuclear deal has changed and it looks that unlike the past now the two countries’ tendency is to expand cooperation with Iran in the SCO. One of the main reasons for this welcome, according to the author, is fighting against terrorism. The question is that how Iran’s membership in Shanghai Cooperation Organization helps to achieve the goals of China and Russia in the war against terrorism (ISIS) after nuclear deal. Finally, through data collection and analyzing them it became clear that the Iran nuclear deal and lifting sanctions in addition to removing legal obstacles to Iranian membership in Shanghai could expand Iran’s role in the region and the fight against terrorism (ISIS). China, Russia and Iran have a lot of common points in the fight against terrorism that Iran’s membership in the organization as a strategic country can contribute to the deepening of relations between the countries to combat terrorism.

Introduction

The Middle East complicated and accelerating upheavals in the recent years as, Iran’s nuclear agreement, Syria issue and its aftermath terrorism upraise which was peaked by ISIS emergence are among the issues which have changed the relationships among many of the countries in Iran as Iran, Russia and china and led them inter into a new phase [1].

Nuclear agreement formation and stopping sanctions against Iran have resulted in increasing the role of Iran in the areas issue as terrorism phenomena in addition to providing more space and movement in Diplomatic phases. ISIS terrorist and anti-human actions in different parts of the world as some European countries as France and Belgium showed that the danger of terrorism spreading is a worldly phenomenon which is not limited to a specific country or area.

Most of the countries nowadays believe that if the issues as terrorism are not solved in the Middle East, other areas will gradually face with the problem. Meanwhile, having a common border with terrorist bases and having political and security interests in relations with terrorism, these countries are more endangered and seeking expanding their affairs with important countries as Iran. Iran’s role as a strategic country is significantly vital.

Syria crisis and the emergence of ISIS as a phenomena indeed has changed the entity of the relationship between Iran and other countries as Russia and Iran from a potential relationship framework regarding each other’s role in the area into an active relationship based on aria’s relationship toward providing geopolitics interests. In this way, China and Russia, concerning their security issues, support their relationship with Iran and its permanent membership in Shanghai for
expanding their relationship with Iran in case of fighting with terrorism. However it is heard that the Chinese have imposed these concerns in their meetings with the Iranian authorities and they have magnified their discussions in expanding cooperation with Iran during ISIS seeking power.

According to these explanations the main question imposed is that “how the permanent membership of Iran in this organization can contribute to the goal of China and Russia regarding fighting with terrorism?” In responding this question, this hypothesis is imposed that both China and Russia for preserving their own interests and preventing terrorism expansion in their countries need developing their relationships with Iran and Iran’s membership in this organization can help reach this goal quickly. So, Iran’s importance, in addition to other interests, against extremism and terrorism includes security concern.

The Causes of Russia’s Emphasize for Expanding Its Relations With Iran

Russia is well aware that the spread of terrorism in Syria and its fall into the hands of ISIS can endanger these countries interests. In this way, the Syrian-Iranian cooperation will be an important factor in maintaining the interest of the country and is preventing the spread of terrorism. In this regard, it must be said, one of the joint strategies between Iran and Russia stems from the two countries’ concern about the influence of the West and America. In fact, Syria and the formation of ISIS causes the formation of political groupings among the countries of the region and the world, including, Iran, China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, America and Turkey respectively. The so-called international coalition led by America includes conservative Arabic governments in the Persian Gulf zone and Turkey at the same time wants to fight and overthrow the Assad regime in Syria.

In contrast, the opposition bloc led by Iran and Iraq and Syria with the participation of Russia and China believe that the only way to fight ISIS is to Strengthen the state system in Syria and even keeping Assad in power (at least until the political transition). Opponents of Assad in Syria and abroad include a wide range of leftists to Islamists and Islamist Extremist which from Moscow’s view none of them are a suitable alternative to the formation of a government of the people oriented in Syria; precisely because of overt and all dimensional support of America, Britain, France, Turkey, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar form Assad’s opponents, Russians are certain that Arab Spring is made by West specially America to make their supposed alternations in what they called New Middle East in 2005.

The common point of all these countries is to overthrow the ISIS and the main cause of differences is to fill the power vacuum and to form a government in Syria. Moscow does not tend to form a pro-West government in Damascus; because it knows the emergence of such government as a threat to its long-term interests in Syria.

In addition, Syria is important for Russia from another dimension. One of the aspects is related to the country’s economic position and importance. Syria is “the seventh importer of Russian weapons”. Trade with these countries reaches to 1.32 billion dollar. The Russian military weapons exports to Iran and Syria between 2002 and 2010, has about 10 percent of total exports in the international arena.”

The imports of military equipment to Syria extent to which that can be safely said many military technologies in Syria are Russian. Russia at the time that was at good relations with Syria, scored a lot of points to obtain military bases.

Russia’s economic interest in Syria goes beyond the military sphere. Russians have invested about $20 billion in Syria. Russian oil and gas companies are present in exploration and production of energy in this country. Tatnfs contract was closed in 2003, but its first drilling conducted in 2010 in South Kyshmay.

Due to economic considerations one can understand that the loss of Syria to Russia is as the loss of a significant part of the economic market and submit it to America and Western countries. At the same time Russia do not want the story of Iraq to Syria to be repeated; because military and political structure of Iraq before the invasion and fall of Saddam Hussein, America was based on the objectives and interests of Russia. America’s intervention in Iraq, destroying the system of the Baath Party and Iraqi military bureaucracy which was formed based on the American model. This
was a serious failure for the Russians. Because in addition to reducing the role for Russia in the region, economically it imposed losses to the country and entered the regional balance as well as the fight against the Islamic State more seriously into political literature.

In fact, the fear of the spread of terrorism to Russia’s borders is a factor that closes this country to combat with ISIS and expanding relations with Iran. Russia to prevent the spread of extremist ideas on the separatist in some of its Muslim republics is in an effort to expand relations with the Islamic world and prevent the spread of separatist movements and support of some of the countries from these movements in areas under its control. Today, more than 30 million Muslims are living in Russia that could lead to the spread of terrorism and making the areas unsafe.

That’s why trying to limit any support, including political - verbal or physical support of some countries as Saudi Arabia from Chechen fighters is one of the important factors Russia to combat terrorism. It is said that, Saudi Arabia funded by the zakat funds plays an important role in activating the Chechen jihadist groups. Hunter writes: “Private groups and the Saudi government permanently give consultation to Chechen groups; Even the Saudi government through humanitarian aid plays a significant role in these areas”. So Russia is also concerned about the spread of terrorism in places like Chechnya.

Russia has tasted the bitter taste of approaches Salafi and Wahhabi bitter taste in the North Caucasus, especially Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan tasted and hence it is strongly opposed the power of the pro-Islamist Salafists in Syria [2].

Russia interprets the rise of the radical Salafist tendencies as the formation of an alliance of Sunni extremist that in the long term it can also be problematic for Muslims inside Russia. As the influence of the Wahhabi Salafi groups were also among Chechen separatists. These groups can avoid the convergence in Central Asia and Afghanistan, with a focus on Russia and China.

However, Russia’s look at this issue is not limited to Central Asia but also beyond as well, in the Middle East. In the eyes of the Russian government experience in Libya, Egypt and Yemen, it has been shown that if the prevalent governments in the world are hit, democracy doe not replace them but it would be a chaos that everyone will damage by it. The idea that Russia has about international relations makes it to act in the military support of the Assad regime and counter-terrorism fight.

So Russia realizes that if it does not take appropriate measures in these areas, it will face with many problems. The most important of these dangers is the threat of the country’s boarders and the countries that are in Russia’s vital interest field which are weak in preserving their political leadership.

The countries that are raised mainly as Russia’s backyard, located mainly in Central Asia. In this atmosphere, the Russian government look, countries that fail to keep their national governance in adjacent areas would be the biggest threat to national, regional and individual nation’s security, including Russia. This look has become more serious in the Middle East; we see the rise of radicalism ring of instability from West Africa to Central Asia which is a potential threat and the Russians see themselves exposed to this threat.

Concerns from the expansion of terrorism is not only limited to Russia but Iran is also concerned about reaching to power of Islamic extremists such as the Salafists. Saudi Arabia is the base of support for the extremist groups which have differences in their relations with Iran. In this way, Iran needs the role of Russia in air equations and political - security balance against regional and hyper regional rivals, Turkey and Saudi Arabia and America.

Of course, in addition to Syria and fight against ISIS terrorism that meet the interests of Iran and Russia, the two countries have a common point in Afghanistan and the fight against terrorism. ISIS has repeatedly stated its intention to establish Islamic caliphate in Khorasan. ISIS flag in “Badakhshan” Afghanistan is a serious warning to Russia, China and Tajikistan is the start of a new round of geopolitical competition in the region.

In addition to ISIS, Taliban is still active as an extremist group in the Northern provinces of Afghanistan and in some cases is allied with ISIS. These Union activities can face the interest and security of Russia in Afghanistan’s northern border with Central Asia and Russian with existential threats.
According to the interests of Iran it has special interest in Afghanistan in addition to economic interests, it includes political and security issues. Because both countries have common borders, and they have military bases in Afghanistan, and until recently America has had a powerful military group in this country. In this way, it can be said that here Russia and Iran interest meet each other because there is the question of the military presence of America and its allies in NATO. America and NATO presence are a threat to Iran they are damage to Russia’s interests in Central Asia.

On this basis Russia prefers to go straight into the Syrian conflict. Iran also knows this Russia’s actions in line with their interests and supports it. Russia’s presence in Syria needs the logistics and operational support of Iran at the scene of ground equation that can be achieved with the realization of the cooperation between two countries [3].

But the most important result of the above equations is change in the nature of relations between Iran and Russia from a passive look compared to its regional role in recognizing the benefits and privileges of close regional cooperation which increases their political-military weight against the rival blocks. The relations between Iran and Russia, beyond the historical distrust as a result of political developments in the past centuries as wars and the Cold War geopolitical or ideological competition during the Islamic Revolution, have been increased in the cooperation field in the recent years. It seems that Geostrategic common threats posed by the crisis in Syria and Iraq and the ISIS presence in the land of the two regional allies Iran and Russia is a turning point in relations between the two countries.

So in the final analysis, the causes of the deepening and expansion of relations between Iran and Russia, it must be said that the risks of land degradation in Syria and Iraq or displacement of the unfriendly governments in the two countries are the base of a mutual need for Iran and Russia to each other. Russia needs Iran because it is the only country having effective role in the political and field equations in Iraq and Syria at the same time. Russia knows the penetrations of Iranians to Damascus rulers and counts Iran as a partner in any solution to Syria and at the same time Iran also puts pressure in Moscow to remain in its status in supporting Syrian regime (and Bashar Assad).

In this way, following the nuclear deal between Iran and the great powers and removing sanctions is a good opportunity for Iran to be a member of Shanghai Organization. Common positions and strategies of both Iran and Russia against terrorism on the one hand and concern from Iran and the West specially the U.S. approach on the other hand have caused Russia to increase the speed and depth of its relations with Iran. Russians know the best way for providing the security of the zone not in NATO but in turning from disintegration to unity - the coalition among the countries in the area and whole security. In this way, Iran nuclear deal and the possibility of US penetration in this area can be effective in the interests of this country. Because US try to penetrate Russia’s interests will face this country with new problems. Iran based on the mentioned reasons and its ideological reason as supporting Palestine, knows Syria as a pressing axis against Israel [3].

China Emphasis Reason to Increase Its Co-operations With Iran

China similar to Russia has common points with Iran in fighting with terrorism. The presence of ISIS in the Middle East, specially Afghanistan and consequently Central Asia is not satisfactory for China and the key for preventing this event is in the hand of Iran. In this way, China tries to fight terrorism through more military interactions with Iran.

In this case, Beijing is extremely concerned regarding the alliance of northern inhabitants as Uyghur to ISIS terrorist groups. Uyghurs, the Turkish speaking minority in the north western province of Xinjiang, are mostly Sunni Muslims and one of the fifty five officially recognized in China. The group due to ethnic and religious reasons has always had separation claims.

China’s concern from these claims intensified when the supporters of ISIS terrorist groups present themselves in the East part of Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been a safe haven for Uyghur combatant.

Siegfried Woolf the research manager in Southern Asia Democratic Association in Brussels has told to the “Deutsche Welle” that the claims of some of the Chinese authorities that Uyghur extremists use Turkey Visa in order to enter Afghanistan and Pakistan to attend terrorist groups.
Increasingly, Beijing is concerned about a long term war in Afghanistan. In this point, Al Baghdadi, the ISIS leader, has declared earlier that ISIS members have come to area to make a so called Islamic state from many countries as China.

Woolf stated that: “Uyghur are receiving ideological and military teachings in bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan which are financially supported by Saudi Arabia.”

So, the penetration of ISIS in Badakhshan and Kunduz in Afghanistan and in important places as Xinjiang self-governed area has made an increasing security concern in China. China worries about the penetration of this group in the west part of China.

Xinjiang is a big self-governed area in the west part of China. This area has common and strategic boarders with different countries in the Central Asia and Southern China as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Russia. Although this self-governed area is mostly deserts, this area is rich in case of underground mines and the most natural resources especially oil and gas is located in this area. This factor has caused this self-governed area to be strategically important for Russia and led to an extreme rejection for ethnic separation and religious fundamentalism.

These treatments have been continued repeatedly during past decades. The significance of this area in to this extent that China sets its relationships with the Central Asia countries based on the stability and development of Xinjiang. China increases the framework and dynamisms of co-operations out of the Xinjiang boarders and expands the relations based on the equality principles.

One of the main threats in this area in the recent years has been the Eastern Turkistan movement that has been co operations with Taliban and ISIS in different times. The expansion of the domain of Eastern Turkistan Islamic movement activities and their attachment to ISIS can be a grave threat for China in a near future.

After the declaration of the presence of ISIS, this movement similar to other extremists groups sent many forces under the name of Jihad and Islamic State Making. This movement tries to change Xinjiang to the Islamic Emirate which is claimed by ISIS in the Eastern Asia.

Aboo Hamzeh Turkistani, one of the most significant active ISIS Turkistani elements in Syria explain his and other Turkistani presence in Syria as this point that the fall of “Tyrant” in Syria would mean the fall of “leaders of unbelief” in China.

However the concern of China does not only refer to the Xinjiang area but similar to Russia most of this concern goes back Afghanistan. Because at it was said the alliance of Taliban with ISIS and the membership of most of the Afghans in this group results in threat and danger of ISIS expansion in Xinjiang which has common boarders with Afghanistan.

It can be said that there would be peace and security in Xinjiang if there were stability and security in Afghanistan. Since ISIS empowerment in this country has a direct effect on its power in Xinjiang which in short term can be a serious danger for national security of China and its stability and continuity [4].

In addition, the other threatening factors of ISIS terrorism for China can refer to the setting of ISIS flag in Badakhshan and Kunduz collapse. Badakhshan in Afghanistan has common border with Tajikistan, Pakistan and China and this point can be a serious caution to Russia, China and Tajikistan.

The fall of Kunduz in the end of June 2015 increased China’s concern. Kunduz is connected to Tajikistan in north. In this way, the fall of this city can provide this possibility for terrorists to threaten the security of China and Central Asia through sending forces, money and ammunition. In fact, it can be said that lack of security in Kunduz has provided most of the threats for Middle Asia and the East of China because this province has common border with both areas and it can be a high way for the Central Asia militants for reaching their goals. One of the authorities in the Central Asia believes that militants and their allies are the biggest threat for the stability of the area.

The fall of Kunduz and gives the possibility of the occupation of the North Eastern provinces in Afghanistan as Badakhshan, Kunar, Nuristan to Taliban that this issue means access to Tajikistan and the Middle Asia. Although the Central Asia is regarded as the Russia’s strategic interests, China
makes it important a lot. China emphasizes on its relations with Central Asia in the development and economical changes. In this way, the stability of this area is important for China.

In this condition the coalition of China, Iran and Russia can help fight against terrorists. Because the US and NATO emphasize the continuity of their presence in Afghanistan to teach and train Afghan forces by NATO. In this way, lack of a powerful army, makes the cooperation of the three countries of great significance. Developing relations with Iran as a country which is a ring connecting the Middle East and the Central Asia is important [4].

Iran, Russia and China beside Afghanistan through military and diplomatic co-operations can contribute the security of Afghanistan and the Middle Asia, in case the area evidences more occupations by ISIS and terrorism expansion in Afghanistan and area. In this way, SCO has declared that it will increase its co operations with Iran in the fight against terrorism however it has not been reached yet.

Although Iran and China have common position in different issues as economic issues and world weapon disarmament, it seems that political and military aspects as terrorism issue and its expansion has put these two countries next to each other and necessitates more co-operations than the past. So, while the legal obstacles of the permanent presence of Iran in SCO has been lost, Iran permanent membership can contribute reaching one of its main goals as fighting against terrorism.

Conclusion

In the final analysis from the existing notes in case of the issue of the Iran’s membership in the SCO to cooperate with China and Russia in fighting with terrorism, it cleared that cooperation with Iran, Russia and China within the framework of Shanghai Cooperation Organization can accelerate the realization of the goal of combating terrorism. Iran nuclear deal with P5+1 on (14 July 2015) took place and had fixed many resolutions and international sanctions provided a good opportunity to promote this cooperation and Iran’s membership in Shanghai.

The emergence and development of ISIS terrorism entity and the sense of a common threat are of fundamental factors that connects the three countries together at one point. Login America and Russia to the Syrian conflict, the issue of ISIS has connected the Middle East geopolitical zone to the security of the West and the world. ISIS has now put at risk a multi-directional security in Europe, the US, Iran, Russia, China, India and other countries. The militia has faced security of the region and the world at major risk. Now the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is active in the Levant region which means Iraq and Syria and in Afghanistan, Central Asia and African countries such as Libya and Egypt.

In the meantime, Iran, due to its geopolitical position is of particular importance in the fight against Islamic terrorism. Iran which was introduced as a source of threat before nuclear deal was introduced as an important force in international negotiations dealing with major powers 1+5.

On the one hand, because this country knows Syria strategically important point on the axis of resistance against Israel and the West in the region, wants to maintain the Assad regime and the fight against the ISIS. Russia has now strategic agreements in all political, economic and military levels with Syria that in case of the collapse of the Assad government, all the contracts will face with serious threat.

In fact, Russia’s interest is in improving and strengthening the regional stability. Because the spread of Islamic terrorist activities in Central Asia or Russia’s Muslim regions can trigger separatist movements in these areas. The promotion and development of multilateral cooperation with Iran can increase the political-military weight of both countries against the rival bloc which is America and its allies calling for Assad’s removal. Meanwhile, China and Iran in the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan have in common. Both countries see stable and peaceful of Afghanistan as essential to protect their interests, too. The need was intensified when the supporters of the ISIS were announced Afghanistan in the East. China is gravely concerned about the spread of extremist ideas among its predominantly Muslim provinces. Furthermore Afghanistan shares borders with many countries in Central Asia that this issue could also affect the stability of the region. Iran, due to its adjacency to the country attaches great importance to the country. Hence we can say that
common ground China, Russia and Iran in the fight against terrorism through the SCO can establish regional stability and provide the regional and individual interests of all three countries.

So, it can be said that, China and Iran, in addition to political and security issues in general alignment with Iran, and although the West accuses Iran of supporting some extremist groups, but fundamentalism in Central Asia and adjacent regions of Russia and also some possible potential for the rise of fundamentalism or to spill it over the boarder of China causes that the two countries have tended and hoped to Iran.

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