

## Q. WHAT IS SIGNIFICANCE OF SCO FOR PAKISTAN?

### Introduction

The world is now fed up with its unipolar outlook and also with the unilateral approach of the sole superpower along with its blatant demonstration of double standards and unilateralism in its global dealings. The hegemonic tendencies of US have forced the potential stake holders of this geopolitically complex arena to contain her anti-regional ambitions while promoting the economic well being of the local people in addition to the mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence for greater regional economic prosperity. Formation of SCO is one of such moves by the economic and nuclear giants of Asia, which has become centre of gravity in current times owing to its peculiar and distinctive characteristics.

### Members

SCO is a grouping of six permanent members and four those members who are enjoying observer status in this highly important regional forum. The forum includes rapidly growing China, nuclear giant and ex-superpower Russia, and energy resource rich Central Asian States as permanent members and Pakistan, India, Iran and Mongolia as those having observer status. The dynamic attributes of the forum make it very important for the global observers and its future economic and political potential over the globe as a regional grouping is being assessed.

### Objectives of the forum

At the time of its inception in June 2001 it had confined itself to few globally accepted and appreciated objectives of eradication of terrorism, ending of extremism and curbing the

proliferation of drugs. But in its latest summit it has extended its objectives and planned to act in

The main objectives of the SCO are to

(i) strengthen relations among member states;

(ii) promote cooperation in political affairs, economics and trade, scientific-technical, cultural, and educational spheres as well as in energy, transportation, tourism, and environmental protection;

(iii) safeguard regional peace, security, and stability; and

(iv) create a democratic, equitable international political and economic order

Significance of SCO for Pakistan is mentioned as follows:

1. Security benefits for Pakistan:

The members of SCO have established Regional Anti-terrorist Structure (RATs) with headquarters in Tashkent. The RATs involve the sharing of intelligence information by the member countries to defeat extremism and terrorism from the region. It also gathers information regarding different terrorist groups operating in the neighborhood.

The advent of technology, on the one hand, has connected people beyond borderlines for economic cooperation. On the other hand, it has also resulted in the globalization of terrorism. Now, a terror group is not only comprised of native recruits, but also people from all over the world. For instances, Al-Qaeda, when it was very active in Afghanistan, consisted of fighters from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China and son on.

Besides, SCO countries are known for conducting the largest

military exercises in the world. The membership, therefore, will ensure the participation in these joint exercises. Pakistan will also get a chance to modernize its military equipment using these drifts.

## 2. Energy benefits for Pakistan:

Pakistan has been facing energy shortages since 2007 and its estimated requirement of power in 2030 will be 50,000 Mw. The membership will open a window for her to get energy requirement fulfilled without installing expensive infrastructure because CARs are rich in energy resources. Moreover, SCO has formed "Energy Club" as a platform to make energy deals with the member countries in a transparent and effective way.

After the fall of Soviet, the US officials estimated that in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan lay between 50 billion and 100 billion barrels of oil, plus nearly 250 trillion cubic feet of gas. It was the reason that in 1995, some oil giant like Argentinian based Bidas Corporation and the U.S. based Unocal showed interest in signing Turkmenistan-Pakistan-Afghanistan-India

Pakistan signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Bidas Corporation instead of American based oil giant in 1995 under the government of Benazir Bhutto. However, the project could not be succeeded owing to instability in Afghanistan. Once this project is completed, Pakistan will not only receive adequate energy supply direct from Turkmenistan, but also get transit fees for allowing the pipeline to pass through its territory to India. The membership in SCO will help Pakistan to bring peace in Afghanistan and give a practical shape to TAPI. The Pipeline popularly known as TAPI.

### 3. Economic development of Pakistan:

The blessed geo-strategic location of Pakistan will help it to gain maximum economic benefits from the membership of SCO. Pakistan provides the shortest transit route to CARs, China and Russia to reach Arabian Sea (warm water) for trade activities. As a result, CARs will move their energy resources to the Sea by exploiting Pakistan's territory.

Consequently, Islamabad will get millions of dollars as transit fees. Same is the case with China, which is the largest trading nation of the world with an estimated trade of around \$4 trillion. At present, around 80 per cent of Chinese trade pass from its traditional route through South China Sea that is not only time consuming by also risky as surrounded by American allies. Pakistan provides China with the shortest transit route to reach Arabian Sea. The diversion of this huge trade will take the economic position of Pakistan to the certain new height of glory.

### 4. A platform to solve Pak-India issues:

India and Pakistan are facing numerous daunting challenges including Kashmir. All the bilateral attempts to solve their crisis have hit to the brick wall. Without the mediation of some great powers, the issues, between two countries, could not be addressed. The US has not shown any interest to mediate in India and Pak is Since, India is also a member of SCO, the organization will act as a platform to solve the differences of the two countries with the mediation of China and Russia. China wants peace in the region and economic cooperation among the regional countries. It will surely, in future, mediate and engage them in trade activities. It is also in the best interest of Beijing. Thus, the membership provides Pakistan

and India a much needed platform to solve their daunting challenges, before they turn into a wider conflagration.

#### 5. Image building for Pakistan:

The membership of SCO will act as an image builder for Pakistan. In International Relations, being a part of the largest and important organization is considered as a source of prestige for the countries. The SCO was formed in 2001, but Pakistan has gained membership in 2017. It means, the old members thought Pakistan as a responsible country to be included as member. It is, in short, a license of responsibility for any country to become a part of prestigious organization.

#### 6. Controlling drug trafficking:

The issue of drug trafficking was serious among the founding members of the SCO. However, by acting collectively, they framed policies and eradicated the evil of drugs from their territory. Pakistan has been facing the same issue of drugs that are entering from Afghanistan. By exploiting the experience of SCO, it can also eliminate the evil from its pure land

#### 7. Regional peace:

The members of SCO, particularly China and Russia, are interested in bringing regional peace. Pakistan has been facing the cross border terrorist attacks from Afghanistan. By acting together, SCO has potential to solve regional issues like Afghanistan and bring overall stability. Peace in Afghanistan is not possible without the support of regional countries like Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia. Once the US leaves the territory, Pakistan will force Taliban to agree on the political solution with other regional groups with the help of China. As far as Iran is concerned, China has already improved its

economic ties with Tehran by announcing the investment of around \$400 billion in its oil and transport sector. Thus, the membership of Pakistan will create an opportunity for the regional countries to work together to achieve peace in neighborhood.

### SCO and Pakistan

Pakistan is enjoying an observer status in this forum and is desirous of becoming the permanent member of it. There are lots of economic and other benefits for Pakistan if it becomes the permanent member of this regional grouping. However it requires different policy related measures which Pakistan should pursue in order to become a member which is potentially acceptable to the other stakeholders of the forum.

Areas of convergence of interests between Pakistan and SCO  
There are following areas of convergence of interests. These common concerns can act as a bridge between the two.

- No double standards
- No regime change
- No unilateralism
- No pre-emption by force
- Non intervention
- Peaceful coexistence
- Nuclear containment
- Sovereign equality
- Economic prosperity
- Regional stability
- Elimination of terrorism, extremism and drugs

## Benefits for Pakistan

1-Balance in Foreign Policy

2-Enhancing of economic activity

3-Trade and economic cooperation

4-Best utilization of its strategic location

5-Materialization of energy projects

## Needed steps to be pursued by Pakistan

1-Vigorous diplomacy:

In order to become a permanent member of this highly potential grouping Pakistan needs a high level of good and result oriented diplomacy. In the forum China and other Central Asian States are already having affinity with Pakistan. With central Asian states Pakistan is already interacted through ECO and with China it is having historic, deeply rooted, and all weather friendship. All such factors are really very helpful for Pakistan in forming a diplomatic support needed to become a permanent member. Anyhow there is a need to manipulate the old relations in needed dimensions so that a local support of the grouping could be attained in accepting Pakistan as a permanent member.

2-Good relations with Russia

Since the inception of Pakistan the relations with Russia have not been very good. The factors like diplomatic immaturity and hostile India with close affinity with Russia were the main in

making these countries hostile to each other. Inequitable use of veto power by Russia on Kashmir issue further aggravated the hostility. But now the change in geopolitical equations has brought the two countries closer to each other. It's up to diplomatic potential of Pakistan to use it in right direction. For full access to this forum a friendly Russia is inevitable and that can be the product of prudent foreign policy.

### 3-Good neighbouring relations

Pakistan should also form good relations with its neighbours like India, Afghanistan and Iran. Prevalence of good relations would make it in compliance with the credo of SCO which enjoins the peaceful coexistence of member states.

Demonstration of good relations would also cast a good image of Pakistan in the comity of nations and its chances of greater support in the forum would greatly be enhanced. So, good neighbouring relations are the need of the hour and are key factors in making Pakistan successful in its regional ambitions.

### 4-Pragmatism and expediency with regard to IPI

The energy project being negotiated between Iran, Pakistan and India should be brought into operation. Western community especially US is staunch critic of this project and is advancing different tricks to halt its headway. Continuation with regard to this project would cast a general impact that Pakistan's pro-US tilt is declining which would make happy not only China & Russia but also the Muslim world in addition to needed supply of gas to the region. Therefore the perpetuation and materialization of the project is the need of the hour and



Pakistan would be the main beneficiary if this project is successfully completed.

#### 5-No diplomatic blunders

Pakistan is passing through a very sensitive phase. Under the shadows of ludicrous allegations of Afghanistan that Pakistan is having potential hand in Taliban's infiltration and the Indian's allegations of Pakistan's hand in Mumbai bomb blasts, diplomatic moves have become quite difficult. Such allegations are also not serving for the image of Pakistan in international community. Keeping in view the current scenario it is advisable that Pakistan should not engage itself in any sort of internationally detestable diplomacy as it did when it recognized Taliban in Afghanistan. Therefore Pakistan should avoid any such diplomatic blunders.

#### Conclusion

As such, the membership of SCO will provide Pakistan security and economic benefits. Besides, it will create an effective platform for Islamabad to solve its differences with India. Moreover, it will improve Pakistan's image in the globe, help it to address drug trafficking and bring regional peace. Since the membership is very beneficial, Islamabad should take expeditious measures to gain advantages without wasting time.