

(Current Affairs)

in 1½ hour

Q: What are the Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan as one of the new members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)?

ANS:

A Platform for regional Cooperation.

SCO was founded in 1996. China, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan are the founding member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

SCO is the Organization of mutual cooperation was founded for the purpose of sharing mutual trust and disarm borders between its member states. It was consisting of six member states including Russia initially.

The major Observer states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization includes Iran, Turkiye.

Pakistan has joined Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an Observer state in 2005. However, Pakistan got its full membership in Organization in 2017. India also received its full membership status in 2017. Iran

has signed MOUs with China for changing its status from an observer State to full-member at "21 Summit" of SCO in Dushambe.

The main purpose of SCO is basically combating three evils; extremism, terrorism and separatism. Along with that its major objective is to strengthen each others cooperation and protect their objectives through mutual trust.

→ Opportunities for Pakistan

① To increase regional cooperation with global powers; China and Russia.

SCO is one of major regional organization in the world. As China and Russia are two strong powers and economies in the world. Being a member of SCO Pakistan has an opportunity to enhance its relation with Russia especially after a long time.

Russia is the major exporter of hydrocarbons in

the world. Pakistan can get hydrocarbons to fulfill its energy needs given its large population by trading with Russia. Russia can export oil to Pakistan with low duties on hydrocarbons. Pakistan needs to look upon its foreign policy again towards Russia for the economic and trade benefits.

Pakistan and China has friendly relationship. Although, Pakistan needs to enhance them through more channels as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China has projected billion dollars at CPEC in Pakistan. Which is not a part of SCO but bilateral economic cooperation among the neighbouring states. By virtue of that Pakistan sought increase in growth in the country. However, Pakistan can cooperate with China in other major areas too. Like tourism, security, military, etc for the sake of development of the country.

② To enhance relations with Central Asian Republics
SCO Platform also provides opportunity to Pakistan to cooperate with Central Asian Republics (CARs). Central Asian Republics (CARs) are also rich in Oil resources. Pakistan can get access to Oil on cheaper rates through cooperation with them.

③ To Combat with ^{human} trafficking / drugs, illegal smuggling; can seek expertise
Illegal activities including human trafficking and drugs smuggling are the major concern of Pakistan. SCO countries have already achieved the goal of combating such evils like that. Pakistan can get SCO states expertise regarding combatment of such a kind of a problems.

④ To enhance military powers by joint practices.
Russia and China have PROCB joint military practices for many times. It definitely

enhance the expertise of military. Pakistan has an opportunity for the joint military practices with Russian and China.

⑤ To enhance relations with India by negotiation on trade and Kashmir issue according to the UN resolutions:

Pakistan has an opportunity to bring India under the talk on Kashmir issue and its solution in accordance with the UN resolutions on Kashmir with the help of SCO member states. SCO member states can pressurize India to come at the solution.

→ Challenges for Pakistan

① To maintain balance among China and USA

It is one of the major challenge for Pakistan to maintain balance among two major world powers. China is an emerging world power balancing USA. Pakistan has bilateral relations with China from which the major is

trade and economic relations. However, it is also a fact that Pakistan has long term diplomatic relations with USA for years. Pakistan has been major alliance of USA and strategic partner. Given the current situation it is a major challenge of Pakistan foreign policy to balance between the two major world powers.

② To improve image internationally - As survival nation from terrorism. Terrorism has affected Pakistan's image internationally where the country has suffered from losing thousands of people and also economic down fall. While combating with this kind of evil successfully Pakistan now has a big challenge to bring back investments in the country. And it is also hard to win the confidence of states for giving them a more safer environment for cooperation.

③ To Organize the Political institutions

Pakistan is having a major challenge of maintaining law and order situation in the country. There is severe economic, political and social chaos in the country. Pakistan is going through great turmoil situation. Badly trapped in debt crisis, Pakistan is looking for the IMF bailouts and assistance from friendly countries. In such a situation the proper involvement in the cooperation is quite difficult.

Although Pakistan's "Foreign Minister" has attended the recent meeting of SCO's Foreign Minister of Council in India with optimistic approach of future cooperation am. with SCO's states at Pakistan's full potential.

So, therefore, in SCO has Pakistan has multiple areas of choice for cooperation. Given status-co situation of Pakistan its foreign policy needs to

be very loud and clear, considering
economic benefits of Pakistan.
