

Q: Discuss the significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and critically evaluate the challenges it faces in achieving its objectives.

## 1- Introduction: Importance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization:

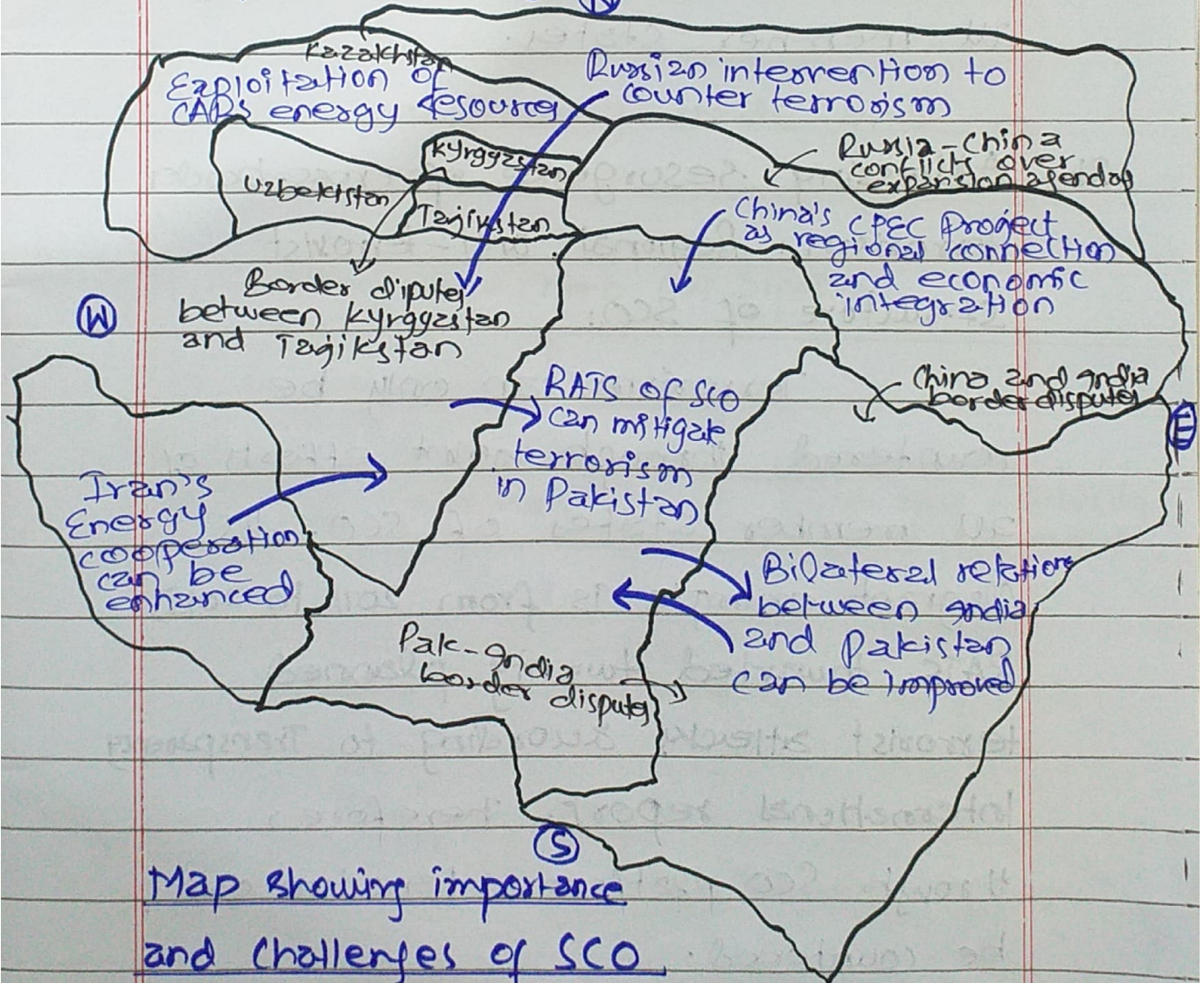
"The organization has firmly established itself as one of the key pillars of a fair, multipolar world order"

- Putin, Russian President

Shanghai Cooperation Organization has ten member states, including China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Belarus. It is an intergovernmental international organization that was established in 1996, aiming economic, political and security cooperation among member states. However, it faces multifarious

challenges, encompassing conflicts among countries, security concerns, western influence and regional hegemonic agenda of some countries. Therefore, members countries need to build consensus to harness the potential of organization.

## 2- Significance Of The Shanghai Cooperation Organization:



Map Showing importance and challenges of SCO

2a- Enhancing economic cooperation among member States: functionalist approach:

Economic integration is a shared interest of all countries that provides impetus to member States of SCO to cooperate with each other. For instance, CPEC and International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) provide opportunity for trade and cooperation among all member states.

2b- Addressing resurgence of cross-border terrorism: Regional anti-terrorist structure of SCO:

Terrorism can only be countered through joint efforts of all member states of SCO. Its flagrant example is from 2011 to 2015, RATS thwarted twenty planned terrorist attacks according to Transparency International report. Therefore, through SCO platform, terrorism can be countered.

2c- Cooperation on environmental problems:

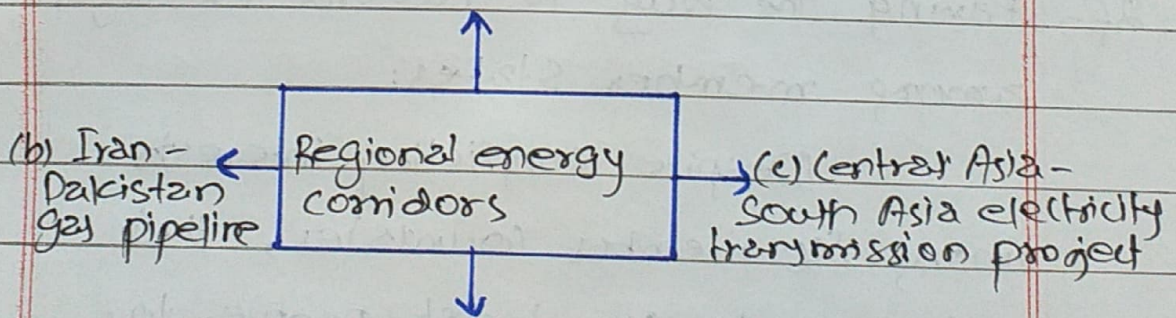
Aggravating impacts of Climate change:

SCO is the largest organization of Eurasia. It constitutes almost 42 per cent of world's population.

Hence, most of the countries such as Pakistan and India face adverse impacts of climate change. SCO is an opportunity to bring all member states together to address these issues

2d- Encouraging energy trade and cooperation:

(a) Central Asia - China gas pipeline



(d) Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India gas pipeline

These energy projects among different countries can be operationalized through this platform. It can work

energy crisis in regional countries.

2e- SCO can be served as an alternative to 'west-led international order:

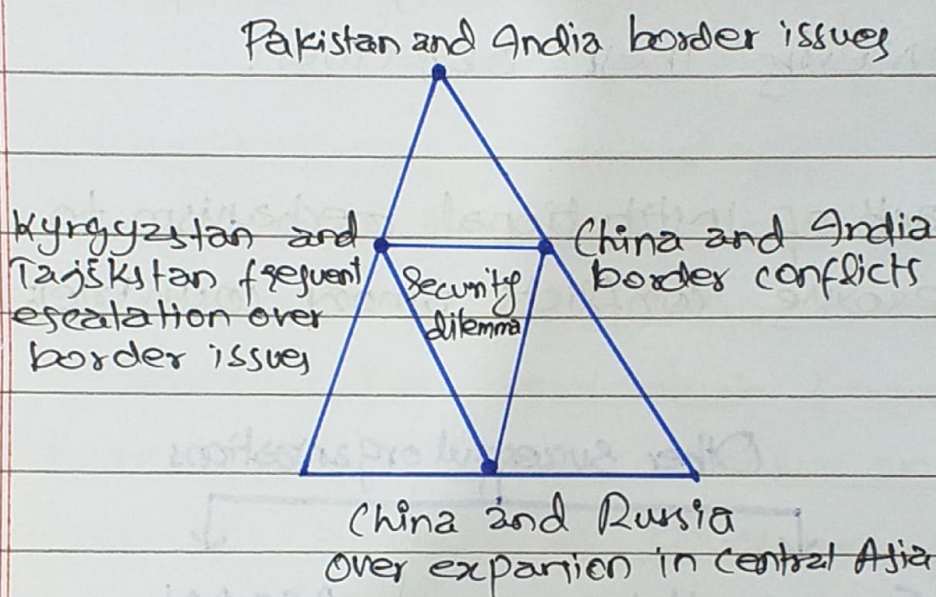
The predominant Western influence on South Asian countries can be curtailed through regional integration. China and Russia are two emerging global powers, which are also permanent members of United Nations Security Council. Thereby, SCO has great significance that can leverage itself against Western dominant influence.

2f- Paving the way to cultural exchanges among member states:

Despite conflicting interests among SCO member countries, their mutual goals can boost people-to-people exchanges among them. Fully funded scholarships in Chinese universities for Pakistani students open up ways for cordial ties between them. Similarly, other countries can also provide such opportunities.

### 3- Hurdles That SCO Encounter In The way of Achieving Its Goals:

3a- Conflicts among member States: security dilemma and border issues:



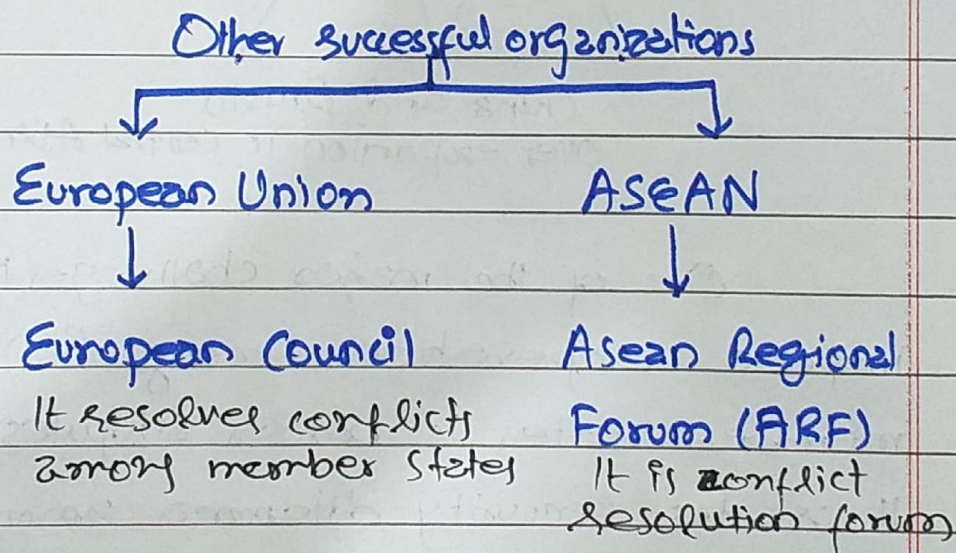
One of the major challenges that impede cooperation among SCO member states is border disputes. It creates security dilemma among them, which prevents economic cooperation and trade among them.

3b- Divergent interests and disagreements of member countries:

Member states have different

political, economic and strategic models such as Pakistan and China's economic model of CPEC and India's strategic ties with the USA reflect that these states have conflictual interests, which stop them from achieving their objectives.

3c- Lack of institutional mechanism to resolve conflicts among countries



These organizations present a good example of resolution of conflicts among countries and paving way to cooperation among states. However, SCO has no such forum

that resolves conflicts among them, which is a stumbling block in gaining objectives.

### 3d- China and India's hegemonic designs and expansion agendas:

As China is an emerging global power, it wants to integrate its economy throughout the region. However, Russia and India are also revisionist powers, which prevent them from building consensus on common issues. Its stark example is China's Belt and Road Initiative and India's nexus with US to contain China.

### 3e- Inclination of SCO members towards West:

- US-India strategic ties
- China's trade with European countries
- Cooperation on climate-related issues
- Pakistan's overly dependency on USA



The predominant economic supremacy of Western countries hinder South Asian countries to reduce alliance with West and boost cooperation among them.

### 3f- Hurdles in the way of free trade:

SAARC members face multifarious hurdles in economic cooperation and free trade. According to the World Bank report 2023, intraregional trade in South Asia, despite free trade agreement (FTA), stood at mere 5% in 2023.

### 4- Conclusion:

SAARC is the largest organization of Eurasia, which covers almost 42% of world's population. It has huge potential to cooperate on economic, political and security issues among member states. However, multifaceted issues among member countries prevent them to build strong ties.