

Q no: 8

What are the opportunities and challenges for Pakistan as one of the new members of the SCO?

Answer

Introduction

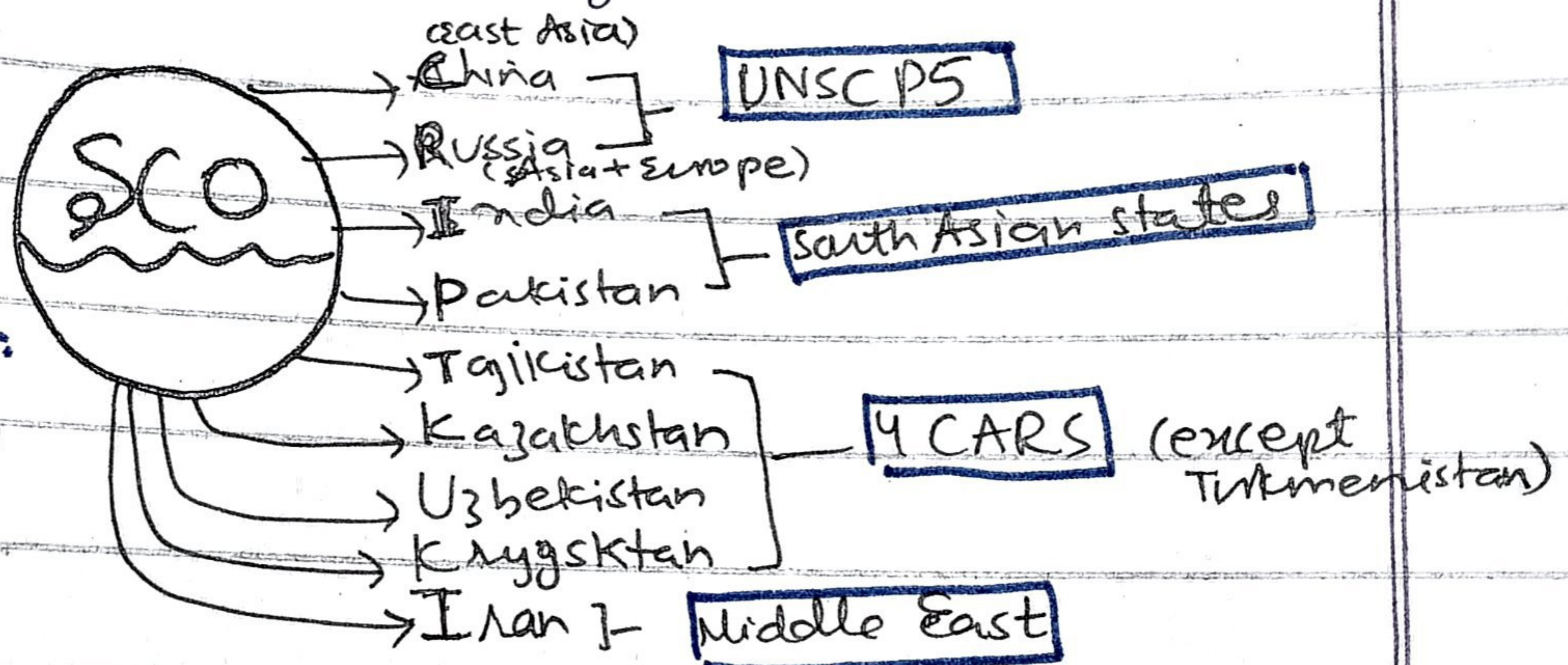
SCO is a multi-lateral regional organization of 9 South Asian states. It is primarily led by China and its headquarters is located in shanghai. After the era of cold war, the NATO's eastward expansion concerned the Eurasian states to counter US' hegemony on security front, particularly. It is also projected as an 'Eastern NATO' by some critics.

Observer states:

→ Afghanistan
→ Belarus

Dialogue partners:

→ Turkey, Sri Lanka



"SCO is a Eurasian multilateral body to counter the influence of US on security fronts." — IPRI Journal.

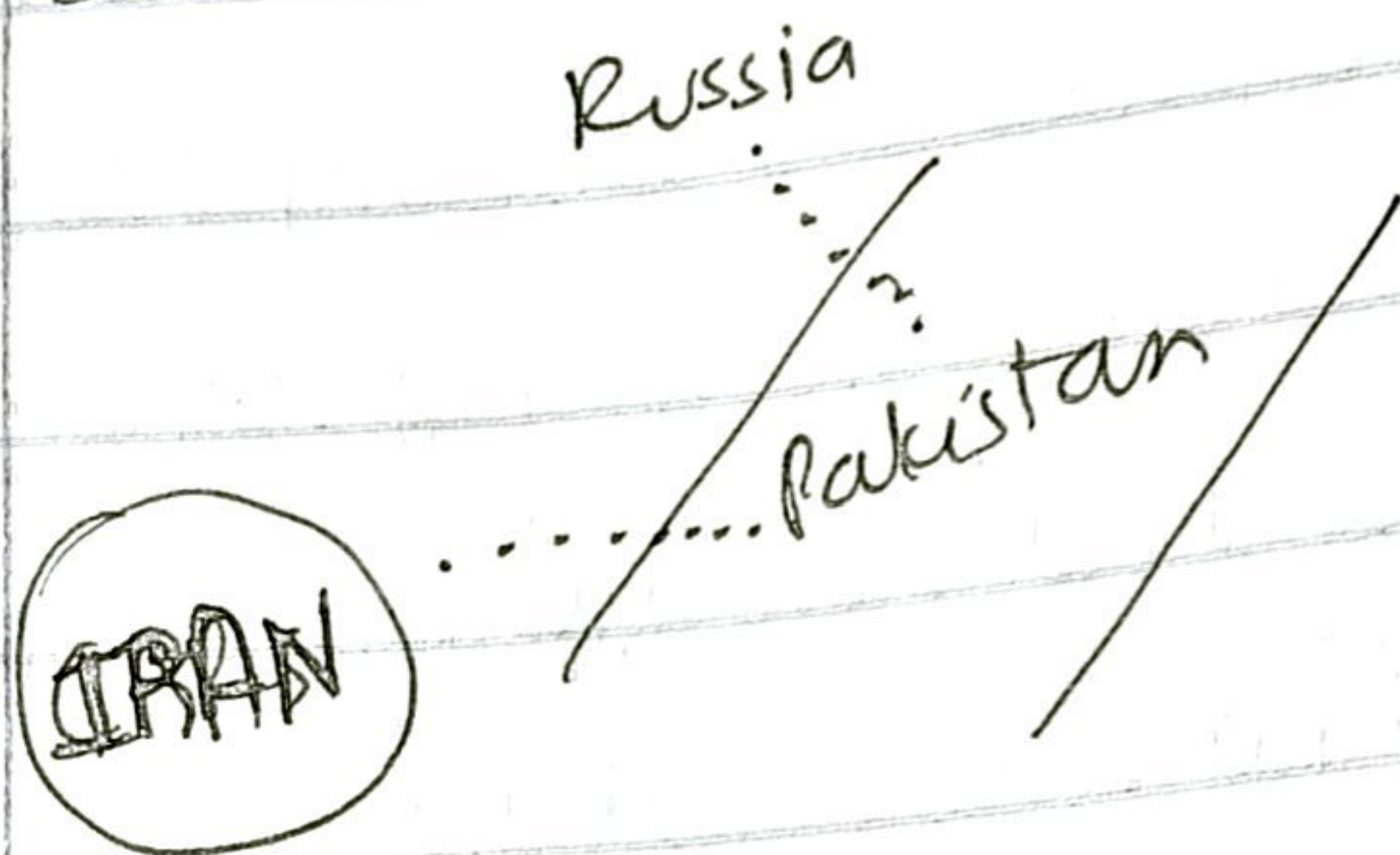
Pakistan's Entry into SCO:

Since Pakistan, along with India, joined SCO later in 2017 to enhance their regional connectivity, there are both prospects and challenges to Pakistan's entry into SCO.

Opportunities:

(1) Enhanced Regional Connectivity

With the entry of Pakistan into SCO, it can greatly enhance its regional connectivity with both Middle East and Europe through ^{Iran}~~CA~~ and Russia particularly.



(2) Expand Diplomatic Clout

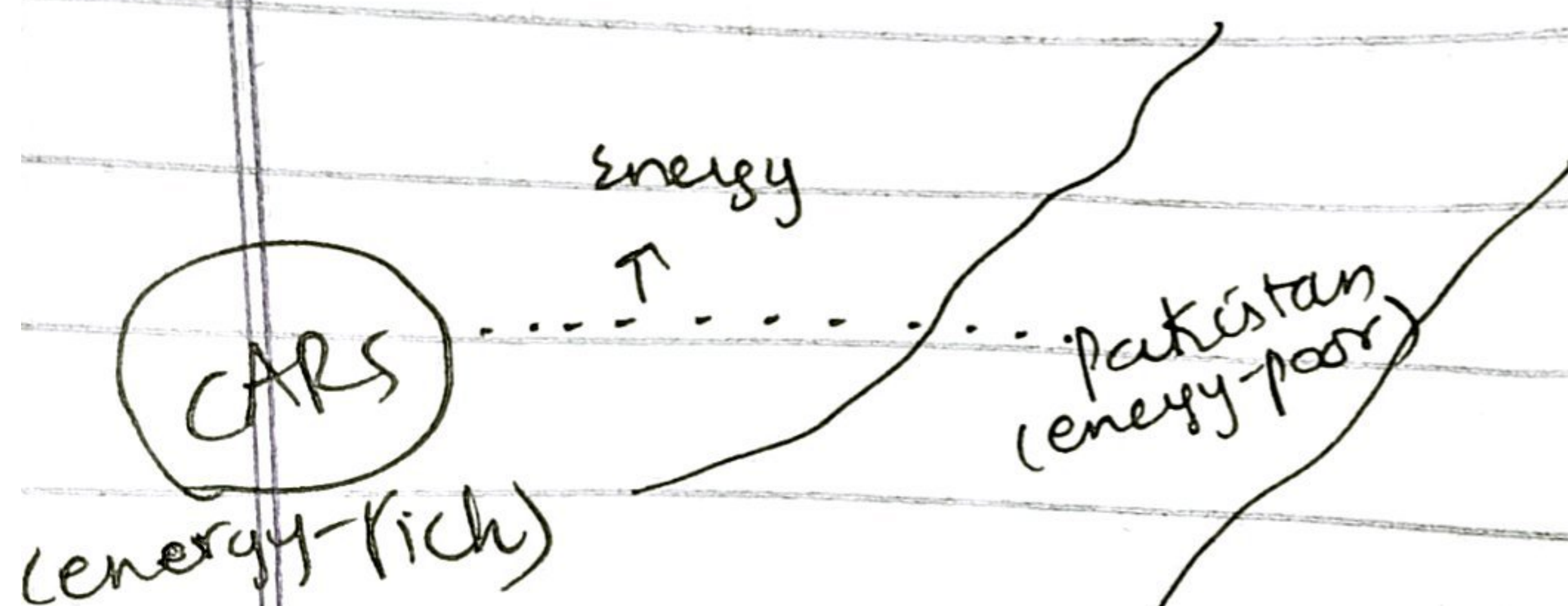
Pakistan can greatly leverage this multilateral body to expand and consolidate its diplomatic clout. It can pressurize the UNSC P5 (China + Russia including) to support its resolutions in UN.

(3) Rallying for Kashmir and Palestine

Pakistan can put forward its just causes in Kashmir and Palestine. SCO can emerge as an influential platform to expose the atrocities of India and Israel to exterminate Muslims from their own homelands. China, particularly can help Pakistan on many fronts as a core permanent member of UNSC.

(4) Energy From CAPs :

Since Pakistan is an energy-poor country and is suffering from energy deficit. CAPs, being energy-rich, can export their oil and gas to Pakistan to meet its growing energy demands.



"The Projects of TAPI and CASA-1000 can be expedited through dialogue and cooperation under the umbrella of SCO."

Federal Minister
Energy.
(Masood Malik)

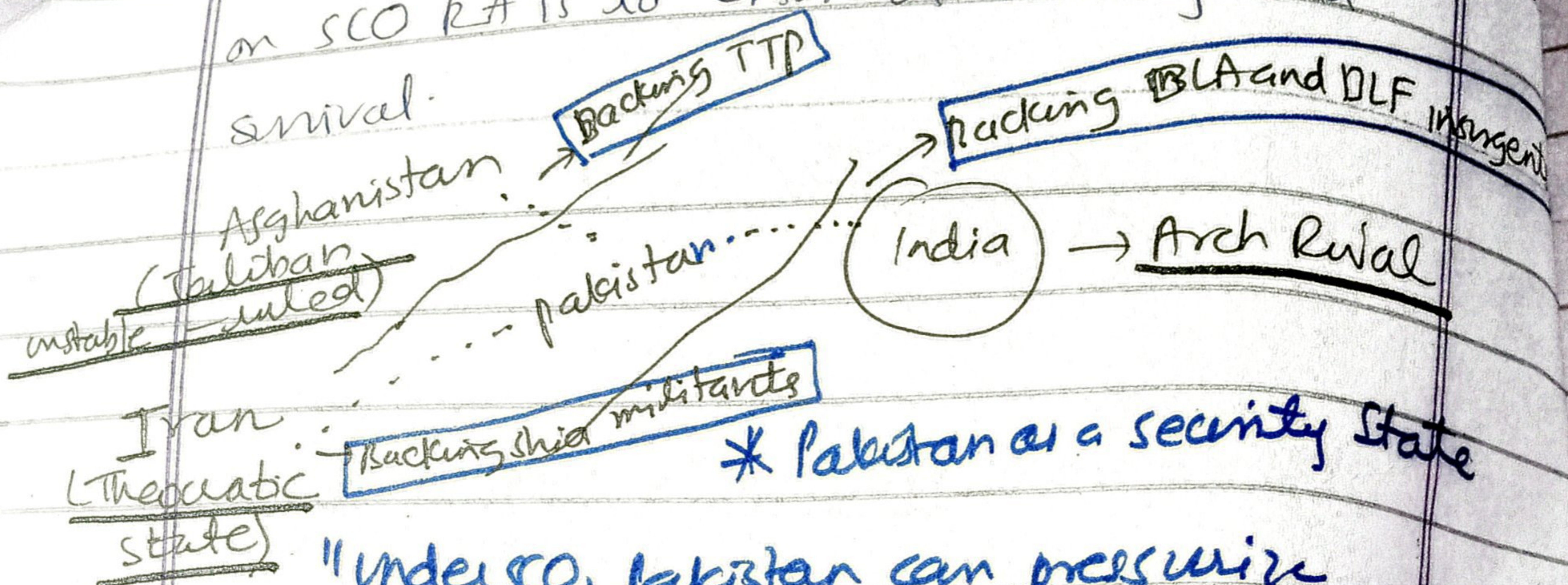
(5) Improved International Standing

By meeting the conditions to emerge as a permanent member, Pakistan has shown its potential as a rising power in the region. Its entry into SCO as a permanent member in 2017 has enhanced its domestic and international standings as well.

"Pakistan has shown its commitment to multilateralism by being part of regional organizations"
— Maleeha Lodhi

(6) To counter Militant Threats

Pakistan has been a hotbed of terrorism and extremism due to its geographical proximity with Afghanistan. Thus, under the common banner of SCO, Pakistan can greatly capitalise on SCO RATS to ensure its security and survival.



"Under SCO, Pakistan can pressurize Afghanistan to not provide safe havens to TTP militants!" —

Challenges:

(1) India's Hegemony in SCO:

India has emerged as a rising economy in SCO and is trying to dominate over this multilateral body to achieve its narrow national interests. Its hegemony in SCO has consolidated due to its growing GDP and stable economic growth. "India's economy is growing by 6% annually" — WB

(2) Geopolitical Pressure from Russia and China

Russia and China both are global powers and

thus may force Pakistan to take sides at times.

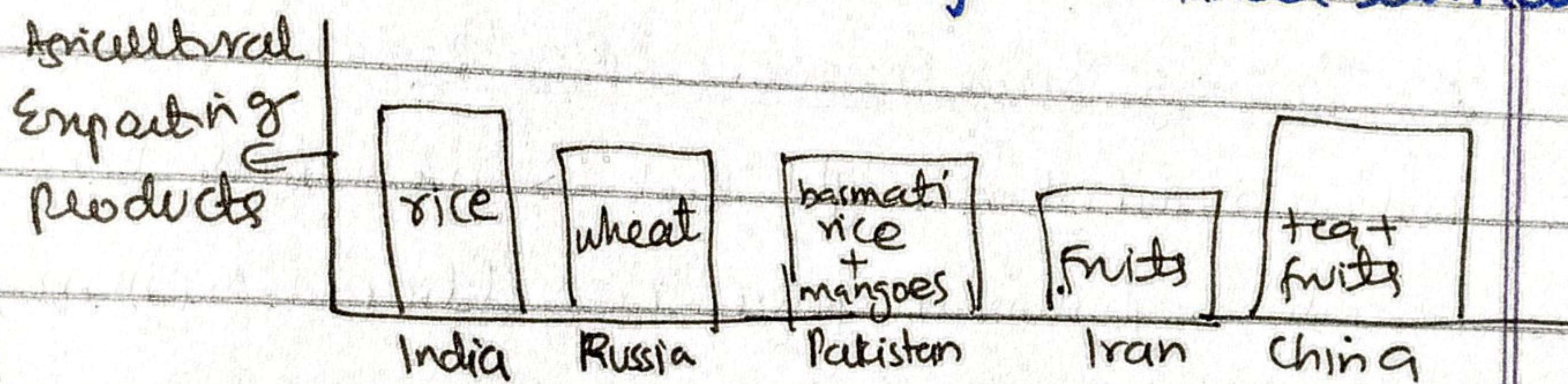
This will pull Pakistan into block politics which might hurt its national interests.

"Under SCO, Pakistan must perform a delicate balancing act to protect its national interest" - PM Pakistan.

(3) Cutthroat Competition in Agricultural Products:

Pakistan is primarily an agricultural economy. Under SCO, its exports to other members which also export the same product might hurt Pakistan's already fragile economy.

"Agricultural cooperation among SCO might turn into a brutal competition, hurting the global food security." — Dr. Ansel Salman.



(4) No Implementation on SAFTA

Pakistan, with its entry into SCO, wants to increase its trade ties with Asian and European states. However, SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) is not

being implemented in true letter and spirit to expand its economic clout. Pakistan might not be able to improve its regional connectivity sooner.

11 SAFTA must be implemented in true letter and spirit in order to create a win-win situation for all." — Xi Jinping

(5) Heightened India-Pak Rivalry

Indian might block Pakistan's resolutions on Kashmir and Palestine issues, as it has done in the past. Under SCO, it might wield significant geopolitical power to sideline Pakistan and assert its regional hegemony.

"India opposes CPEC because it passes through disputed territories." — Narendra Modi

(6) Taking Tough Domestic Policies

Under SCO, Pakistan might feel more pressurized to enact tough domestic policies in politics, economy and broader society. Since the country has been in domestic turmoil, it might face regional rage to improve its domestic standings.

"Every foreign policy starts at home. Put your house in order first." — Maleeha Lodhi

(7) Sidelineing Bilateral Ties under Multilateralism

Under SCO, Pakistan will be expected to maintain peaceful ties with all member nations. However, this might conflict with its national interest and Pakistan can feel overwhelmed to balance bilateral ties in a multi-lateral framework. Pakistan might be compelled to consolidate ties beyond China.

"Pakistan sees regional connectivity as more of a vulnerability than a leverage" —
"Nayalla papers"

Conclusion

Thus, Pakistan as a ^{permanent} new member state of SCO, is presented with both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, this multilateralism will enhance its diplomatic standing. On the other hand, it has to improve its domestic policies to consolidate its position as a key regional player within SCO and beyond. However, the prospects surely outweigh the challenges and Pakistan must fully capitalize on this Eurasian framework to assert its best geoeconomic and geostrategic power.