

Q No. 1

Critical Evaluation of Pakistan's SCO Conference in Islamabad

1. Introduction

The successful hosting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference in Islamabad is a testament to Pakistan's growing commitment to regional diplomacy and multilateral cooperation.

Founded in 2001, the SCO is one of the world's largest regional organizations, representing nearly 40% of the global population and over 30% of global GDP.

Pakistan, as a full member since 2017, utilized this platform to highlight its

geostrategic importance, economic potential, and contributions to regional stability.

This conference came at a time when Pakistan faces significant domestic challenges, including political instability and an economic crisis. Despite these hurdles, the successful organization of such a ^{high-}profile event demonstrates Islamabad's ability to project itself as a reliable partner in addressing regional issues like counterterrorism, trade, and connectivity. Moreover, the event coincided with heightened global interest in regional partnerships, as nations seek collaborative solutions to challenges like climate change, economic recovery, and energy security.

2. Major takeaways for Pakistan

1. Strengthening regional engagement

The conference underscored Pakistan's growing integration with regional powers like China, and Russia, reaffirming

its commitment to the SCO's goals. By hosting this event, Pakistan demonstrated its dedication to regional connectivity, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aligns with SCO's vision of fostering economic and infrastructure links. This platform allowed Pakistan to present itself as a key player in facilitating cooperation among member states.

II. Economic Diplomacy

Economic stability and trade were central themes of the conference. Pakistan emphasized the potential of the CPEC as a gateway to regional economic integration. For instance, the conference facilitated discussions on enhancing trade routes connecting South Asia to Central Asia, thus positioning Pakistan as a hub for regional commerce. However, Pakistan's economic challenges, including its debt burden, necessitate greater commitment to sustainable economic

policies to fully benefit from such opportunities.

III. Counter-terrorism and Security cooperation

One of the SCO's primary objectives is counter-terrorism. Pakistan's active participation in the organization demonstrates its commitment to combating extremism and promoting peace. Through forums like the SCO regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), Pakistan can contribute its extensive experience in tackling terrorism. For example, joint exercise and intelligence sharing through SCO mechanisms have enhanced regional security collaboration.

IV. Enhanced Soft Power

Hosting the conference significantly boosted Pakistan's global image, portraying it as a capable and responsible state amid ongoing

economic and security challenges. This event also helped counter negative narratives that have often associated Pakistan with instability. By showcasing its organizational and diplomatic capabilities, Islamabad improved its standing among regional and international stakeholders.

V. Engagement with central Asia

The conference highlighted Pakistan's strategic location as a bridge between South Asia and central Asia.

Strengthened ties with central Asian states, such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan could lead to energy agreements like Turkmenistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan - India (TAPI) pipeline. These partnerships are critical for meeting Pakistan's growing energy demands while enhancing regional connectivity.

3. Challenges and areas of concern

I. Geopolitical rivalries

Pakistan faces challenges due to the tensions among SCO member states, particularly between China and India. While the conference provided a platform for dialogue, limited engagement with India due to strained bilateral relations restricted progress on critical regional issues. Navigating these geopolitical rivalries requires deft diplomacy to maintain balance and avoid entanglement in broader conflicts.

II. Economic constraints

Despite its strategic location, Pakistan's economic instability, marked by inflation, currency depreciation, and reliance on external loans, poses significant hurdles. Without addressing these issues, Pakistan may struggle to implement projects discussed at the conference, such as trade and energy initiatives.

with central Asia.

III. Internal Political Instability

Political polarization and governance challenges within Pakistan also threaten its ability to follow through on commitments made during the conference. Stability and continuity in domestic policies are essential to leverage the opportunities provided by the SCO.

4 - Recommendations for Islamabad

I. Economic reforms and Stability

To maximize the benefits of the SCO, Pakistan must prioritize economic reforms to attract regional investments. Developing macroeconomic stability, reducing reliance on external debt, and encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) are essential for sustainable growth. For

example, improving industrial zones under CPEC could catalyze trade with Central Asia.

II. Leverage CPEC as a model

CPEC, a flagship BRI project, should be showcased as a model for regional connectivity. Strengthening its infrastructure and expanding its scope to include Central Asia states would solidify Pakistan's role as a regional hub. This approach would enhance trade links and foster economic interdependence.

III. Proactive Diplomacy

Pakistan should leverage its position within the SCO to mediate tensions among members states, particularly China and India. By advocating for cooperative initiatives on shared concerns like climate change, energy security, and counter-terrorism, Islamabad can position itself as a constructive actor

in regional affairs.

IV. Enhance Security Cooperation

Strengthening counter-terrorism efforts through SCO mechanisms such as RATS will enhance regional security. For instance, Pakistan could propose joint counter-terrorism exercises or intelligence sharing frameworks to tackle emerging threats effectively.

V. Focus on central Asia

Deepening bilateral relations with Central Asian states is crucial. Expanding energy agreements, such as the TAPI pipeline, and facilitating trade through improved road and rail networks would create mutual benefits. Pakistan's Gwadar port could serve as a vital link for landlocked Central Asian economies to access global markets.

VI. Soft power Strategy

Pakistan should capitalize on the success of the conference to project a positive image through cultural exchanges, tourism and educational initiatives. For example, offering scholarships to Central Asian students and hosting cultural festivals could enhance people-to-people ties.

VII. Institutional Strengthening

Establishing a dedicated task force to monitor and implement SCO commitments would ensure effective follow through. This body could coordinate between domestic ministries and regional counterparts to maintain focus on long term goals.

5. Conclusion

The successful hosting of the SCO conference in Islamabad marked a significant diplomatic achievement

for Pakistan. It underscored the country's potential as a regional player while addressing key issues like economic integration and security cooperation.

However, challenges such as economic instability and geopolitical rivalries

require Islamabad to adopt a

proactive and strategic approach. By

implementing recommended measures, Pakistan

can enhance its role in the SCO and

leverage its strategic location for

sustainable development and regional

peace.

Q No. 2

COP-29

1. Introduction

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, against a backdrop of rising global temperatures and climate related disasters. As a pivotal forum for global climate negotiations, COP29 was tasked with advancing efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C , addressing disparities between developed and developing nations, and finalizing key agreements on climate finance and emission reductions. However, the summit delivered mixed results, with modest progress overshadowed by critical shortcomings.

2. Failures of COP29

I. Inadequate Climate Finance Commitment

One of the most criticized aspects of COP29 was the financial commitment from developed nations. While they pledged to mobilize \$300 billion annually by 2035, this figure fell far short of the \$1.3 trillion demanded by developing countries to tackle climate impacts effectively. For instance, countries in Africa and South Asia, which face disproportionate climate vulnerabilities, require significantly more funds for adaptation and mitigation projects. The \$300 billion pledge represents progress compared to the previous \$100 billion goal but is insufficient to address the escalating climate crisis, leaving many nations frustrated.

II. Lack of Consensus on Fossil Fuel Phase-out

COP29 failed to reach a consensus on phasing out fossil fuels, a critical step in limiting global warming. Despite mounting scientific evidence and the urgent need for renewable energy transitions, key fossil fuel-dependent nations resisted binding agreements. This failure undermines global climate goals, as fossil fuels remain the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions. The lack of a clear timeline for reducing dependence on coal, oil, and gas contradicts the UNFCCC's objectives and delays progress toward a sustainable energy future.

III. Unresolved negotiations on key issues

Negotiations on crucial topics like the Global Stocktake, just transition, adaptation measures and technology

transfers broke down without resolution.

These unresolved issues have been postponed to COP30, further delaying critical actions needed to combat climate change. Developing countries, already struggling with climate impacts, criticized the lack of urgency and political will among developed nations to finalize these agreements.

3- Commitments achieved at COP29

I. Climate finance agreement

Despite falling short of expectations the agreement to triple the previous \$100 billion climate finance goal to \$300 billion annually by 2035 was a notable outcome. This commitment, while insufficient signals a growing acknowledgement of the financial needs of developing nations. For example, countries like Bangladesh and the Philippines, which are highly

vulnerable to climate disasters, can benefit from increased support for building climate resilient infrastructure and disaster response systems.

II. Establishment of a new collective quantified goal

COP29 established a New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) to replace the outdated \$100 billion target reflecting the need for greater financial ambition. Although the \$300 billion pledge is below the demands of developing countries, it lays the groundwork for more structured and transparent financial contributions. The NCQG provides a framework for assessing progress and holding developed nations accountable for their financial commitments.

4. Lessons from COP29

The outcomes of COP29 reveal several critical lessons. First, stronger

political will is essential to bridge the gap between developed and developing nations. Disparities in financial commitments and responsibilities continue to hinder progress. Second, the lack of clear timelines and binding agreements highlights the need for more decisive actions and accountability. Finally, global cooperation must prioritize vulnerable nations' concerns to ensure equitable progress in climate action.

5. Recommendations for COP30 and beyond

I. Enhanced Climate Finance

To meet the demands of developing nations, financial pledges must increase to at least \$1.3 trillion annually. Developed countries should also establish transparent mechanisms for fund allocation and utilization, ensuring that the most vulnerable nations

receive adequate support. For example, direct funding for adaptation of projects in flood-prone regions of Africa and Asia could significantly reduce disaster risks.

II. Commitment to fossil fuel Phase-out

At COP30, countries must agree on clear timelines for phasing out fossil fuels and transitioning to renewable energy. Incentives for adopting clean technologies, such as solar and wind power, should be prioritized. Nations like Germany and Denmark, which have successfully reduced fossil fuel dependency, can serve as models for others.

III. Strengthened Global Cooperation

Consensus-building on unresolved issues like the Global Stocktake and technology transfer must be prioritized.

Developed nations should address the concerns of vulnerable countries by committing to just transitions and providing the necessary resources for adaptation. This will ensure that global climate action remains inclusive and equitable.

6. Conclusion

The COP29 summit in Baku delivered a mix of modest commitments and significant failures, highlighting the challenges of achieving consensus on critical climate issues.

While the agreement to mobilize \$300 billion annually by 2035 represents progress, it falls short of the financial needs of developing nations. The lack of decisive action on fossil fuel phase-out and unresolved negotiations further undermine global climate goals. As the world prepares for COP 30 in Brazil, there is an urgent

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need for ambitious measures, stronger political will and greater global cooperation to address the escalating climate crisis. Only through collective action can the international community hope to mitigate the impacts of climate change and secure a sustainable future.