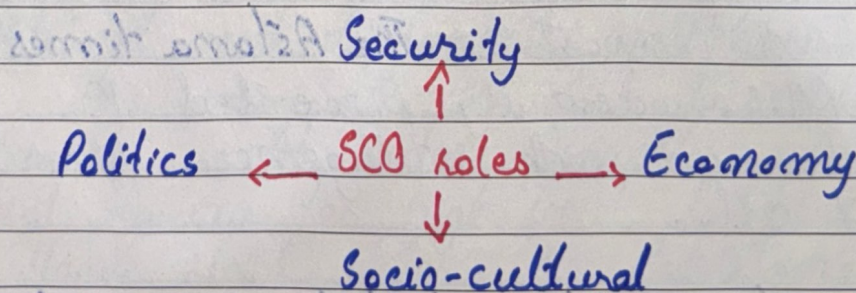


Why is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) becoming an important platform for its member states? How has Pakistan's membership in the SCO impacted its relation with China?

1) Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a regional intergovernmental body founded to strengthen trust and collaboration between member states. The SCO's charter defines its roles of cooperation, that play a significantly important role for member states. It includes security, trade and investment, energy collaboration and diplomatic cooperation. Apart from that, Pakistan's membership in the SCO impacted Pak-China relations through strategic alignment, economic collaboration, counter-terrorism working framework and leveraging Pakistan's diplomatic footprint.

2) Defining the role of the SCO:



The SCO as of today, has 9 full members: China, Pakistan, Russia, India and Central Asian republics, along with Iran. The main objectives

of SCO includes, "Security" cooperation like, sharing intelligence, peace missions and anti-drug trafficking cooperation. On economic side it promotes regional connectivity, ~~in~~ multi-lateral investments and energy cooperation. Moreover, the role of the SCO also includes promotion of multipolar world order and provides diplomatic platform for regional issues. Furthermore, it also focus on socio-cultural exchange through education and tourism.

3) Importance of SCO for member states are in following ways:

3.1) Security cooperation:

The charter of the SCO defines "three evils", terrorism, seperatism and extremism as a common threat for members. The counter this issue "Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure" (RATS) was formed. This body is entitled to share intelligence, coordinate joint operations and track extreme networks inland and overseas. According to the report of The Aslana Times, since 2015 RATS successfully prevented 73 terror attacks and with intelligence suppressed 69 terrorist cells.

3.2) Trade and investment between members:

As per the objectives of SCO, it supports trade and investment through roads connectivity, simplified custom procedures

and industrial infrastructure. One of the prime example of economic cooperation is **China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan highway**, is a major corridor connecting all these member states. Without joint cooperation such project would not be initiated. Through that these countries has easy access to Chinese ~~and~~ markets.

3.3) Energy collaboration:

In the rapid growing world energy's smooth supply ensures sustainable growth. In the SCO, China, India and Pakistan are most consuming nations. The energy rich states like Russia, Iran and central asian republics provides solution for that. For example, **The "Power of Siberia" gas pipeline** ensures smooth energy supply for China from Russia. Conversely, it is also a financial support for Russian economy to sustain in war conflict with west. The platform SCO provides bilateral solution for both member states.

3.4) Political and diplomatic collaboration:

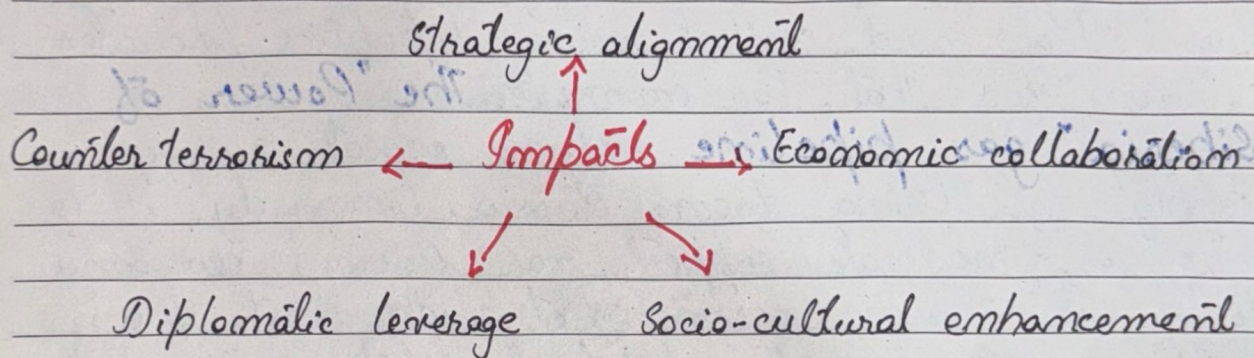
The policy of the SCO to support multipolar world order, promotes multilateral neutral forum for high level political discussions. It allows rival states like **Pakistan-India** to engage on diplomatic grounds once a year specifically. One of the prime moment in that case is arrival of **Indian Foreign minister, Jay Shanker** in 2024 in Pakistan.

during the SCO conference in Islamabad. The SCO provides common political grounds that are important for every member state.

4) SCO's impact on Pakistan-China relations:

After the formation of People Republic of China in 1952, Pakistan was one of the first country to recognize China's status.

In 2017 Pakistan secured permanent membership in SCO. The SCO membership impacted Pakistan-China relations in the following ways:



4.1) Strategic alignment:

In International relations strategic alignment refers to the relation between two states that involves coordinated policies and actions to achieve common goals. Since 2016, Pakistan became one of the prime member of Chinese flagship project "One Belt Initiative" through CPEC. Pakistan's membership in SCO has strengthened this relation because China considers Pakistan as prime link to connect China with Eurasian markets, vice-versa.

Pakistan gain collaboration in security and economic grounds, making SCO's platform a bloc of Eurasian countries.

4.2) Security and counter terrorism:

After the fall of Dhaka in 1971, Pakistan understood relying on the USA for arms and security would only result in chaos. From that Pakistan started development of arms with China. According to *The Economic Times*, after Pakistan's membership in the SCO, Chinese trust on Pakistan grown and one of the prime example of strengthening Pakistan's security seen during **May 2025 Indian conflict**. Pakistan used sophisticated Chinese **PL-16** missiles to dominate Indian air power. In exchange, **ETH Zurich war files**, claims that Pakistan share valuable intelligence with China against **East Turkistan movement**, in Xingyang region, operating from Afghanistan, through RATS platform.

4.3) Economic Collaboration:

China is one of the major business partner of Pakistan. China has heavily invested in infrastructure and energy development projects in Pakistan. Additionally, both countries have **bilateral free trade agreement**. Using the SCO platform, Pakistan and China agreed upon using local currencies for trade in 2024. This has made trade between both countries more efficient.

4.4) Socio-cultural exchange :

Historically both regions share social and cultural aspects, after Pakistan's membership in the SCO the exchange grown through programs like **SCO Youth Cooperation, Educational Exchange programs and Discover SCO**. According to Pakistan Embassy Beijing, more than **27,000** Pakistani students study in China. Meanwhile, **7000** Chinese students study in Pakistan, according to **HEC**, through mentioned programs. It helps both countries to connect people, develop mutual public understanding and bilateral trust.

4.5) Global diplomatic leverage for both countries :

Being a full member of SCO, Pakistan diplomatically engage with major powers like Russia to leverage its narrative ~~regal~~ regarding international politics. On the other hand, China uses the SCO to promote the vision of multipolar world: ~~order to balance~~ **USA** the US led influence. This creates diplomatic interdependence between both countries. Pakistan not only get engagement support but China also helps Pakistan through **VEIO power in UNSC**. According to **United States institution of Peace**, China consider Pakistan as regional ally and its trust grown after Pakistan's membership in SCO.

6) Conclusion

Last but not least, the SCO play important role for its member states by working fully committed on security issues, trade collaboration, energy cooperation and diplomatic engagements. On the other hand, it has significantly impacted on Pakistan-China relations. It has provided support for strategic alignment, economic collaboration enhancement, security interdependence, socio-cultural exchange and leveraging Pakistan's diplomatic footprint.