

Q NO 1:

INTRODUCTION:

Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an intergovernmental organization established in 2001. It represents a diverse region of vast swaths of South Asia, Central Asia and Europe. It has nine member states including China, India, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Iran. SCO is an important platform for taking the vision of Eurasian connectivity to next level.

"SCO is the largest regional organization globally encompassing 42% of global population and 32% of Global GDP."

Pakistan became the member of SCO in June 2017. Pakistan shares the cultural, historical and geographical ties with SCO member states. Pakistan is located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East that makes it an ideal trade conduit.

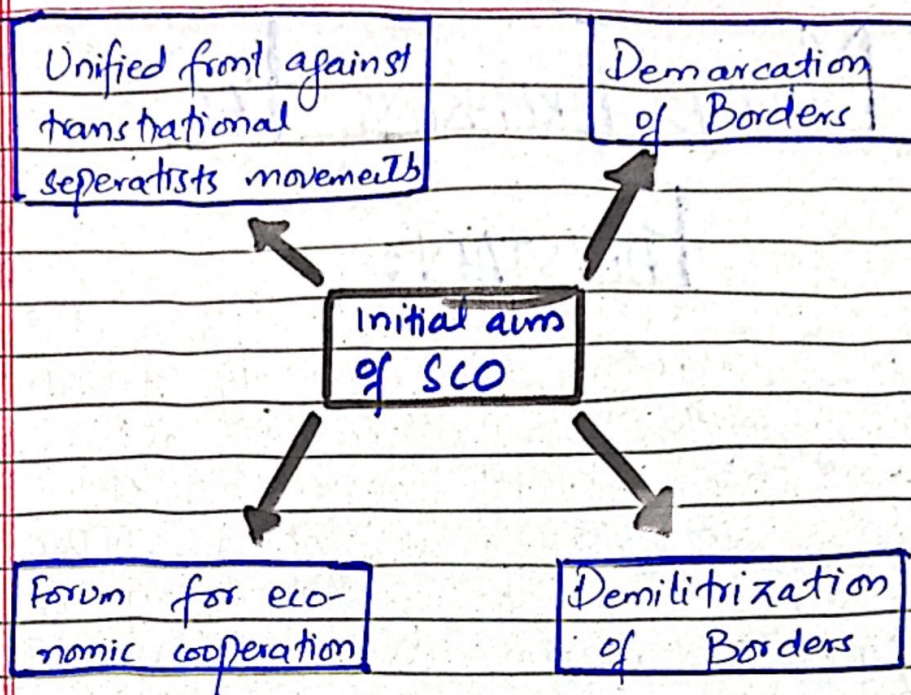
THE 2024 SCO

SUMMIT IN ISLAMABAD:

The 23rd meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government held in Islamabad on 15-16 October, 2024. The successful hosting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Conference in Islamabad is a significant diplomatic achievement for Pakistan. It reflects the growing engagement of Pakistan with regional powers and intent to play a constructive role in regional cooperation.

"SCO serves as a counter-weight to Western NATO influence in the region."

The initial aim of SCO was to address the border security concerns and promote regional stability in wake of Soviet Union's collapse.



But now SCO's main objectives are the elimination of 3 evils:

- 1- Terrorism
- 2- Separatism
- 3- Religious extremism.

SCO has an executive committee for of "Regional Anti-terrorism structure" that fights with these three evils. As we know that Pakistan is a geostrategic state, it need to counter these three evils for which SCO is cooperation is a fundamental need of the time. For the maintenance of Peace and security it has to eliminate the terrorism, separatism and religious extremism.

MAJOR TAKEAWAYS FOR

PAKISTAN:

As Pakistan is already fighting with the terrorism, insurgencies, and regional extremism, it has a golden opportunity to take cooperation in counter terrorism, extremist and trans-national crimes.

a- Enhanced Regional Standings:

Hosting SCO boosted Pakistan's image as a responsible international actor. It demonstrated the country's commitment to regional cooperation and its ability to lead multilateral platforms.

b- Economic and Trade Opportunities:

SCO focuses on regional economic cooperation. For Pakistan, this event provided a platform to highlight projects such as CPEC and explore investment

opportunities with other member states.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif delivered an opening speech that leaned heavily towards China's interest, reflecting China-Pakistan "all weather" friendship.

Shehbaz Sharif spoke on the expansion of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

BRI being the important project of China, it also focuses on INSTC which involves SCO members Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, India and Tajikistan. China recognizes the potential of the corridor to enhance its influence across Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The SCO can also help promoting the infrastructure development projects through CPEC connecting Pakistan to Central Asian countries.

c. Counter-Terrorism Cooperation:

Given the SCO's focus on security and

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counter-terrorism, Pakistan emphasized its efforts to combat terrorism and extremism, allowed it to present itself as a partner in regional stability. The counter-terrorism aspect was a critical aspect of Shehbaz Sharif's speech. ~~It~~ Shehbaz Sharif's ~~said~~ remarks on Afghanistan highlights that.

"A stable Afghanistan is not just desirable but essential to fully realize these opportunities."

As the stability in Afghanistan is aligned with the geostrategic stability in Pakistan. Mr. Sharif urging the international community to provide humanitarian aid while encouraging Taliban to embrace more inclusive political approach.

d. Strengthening Bilateral Relations:

The Conference enabled Pakistan to engage with the key players of the region like China, Russia, India and

Central Asian states on bilateral terms: As Pakistan has already signed various agreements with ^{AS member states} CARs on trade and energy cooperation.

For instance:

The TAPI Project:

Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India pipeline that transfers natural gas from Afghanistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India.

CASA - 1000:

The Central-Asia South Asia Electricity and Trade project is \$1.2 billion regional power project designed to bring the benefit of interconnectivity between four countries, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

Both the projects are yet to be completed, due to political instability in Afghanistan and regional tensions in Pakistan. Both the projects are under construction. With the help of SCO's successful summit in Islamabad, it is expected to be completed in the year 2026.

e. Geopolitical Balancing:

Pakistan as a member of SCO can play a strategic role in geopolitical balancing. Pakistan can act as a bridge between China, Russia and CARs.

By prioritizing regional stability, economic cooperation and security, Pakistan can play a key role.

With the ongoing tensions between India - Pakistan, through SCO platform, Pakistan can engage directly with India. China and Russia being the key players and Pakistan shares good relationships with both provides a platform to counter-balance Indian's influence in the region.

For instance:

Pakistan's cooperation with China on CPEC ~~and~~ strengthens its economic and strategic position, while its ties with Russia opens opportunities for defense and energy collaboration. These dynamics help Pakistan maintain relevance in polarized global order.

RECOMMENDED MEASURES

FOR PAKISTAN:

Pakistan can use SCO's platform as an opportunity for its economic, political and security benefits.

a- Addressing Indo-Pak Dynamics:

Pakistan can maintain open communication with India, despite broader tension, using SCO platform. Through regional mechanism Pakistan can advocate for conflict resolution.

b- Focus on Regional Connectivity:

Pakistan can enhance transportation and infrastructure to connect itself with CARs. By expediting projects like TAPI and CASA-1000, regional connectivity between South-Asia and Central-Asia could be enhanced.

c. Counter Terrorism Engagement:

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By actively participating in the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), Pakistan can address its mutual security concerns. Furthermore improving regional conflicts like religious extremism, political and ethnic extremism, Pakistan can improve its image as a peace facilitator.

d. Boosting Economic Diplomacy:

Pakistan can become a trade and energy transit hub by ensuring seamless connectivity between CPEC and Central Asia:

SCO provides a forum for addressing regional concerns and promoting multilateralism

CONCLUSION:

Pakistan has hosted a successful SCO summit in Islamabad. To convert this symbolic

achievement into tangible benefits, Pakistan must prioritize its economic diplomacy, counter-terrorism collaboration and infrastructure development. By addressing its internal challenges and enhancing role in SCO, Pakistan can solidify its position in regional and global geopolitics.