

Part - II

Question : 3

Answer:

1.

Introduction

Regional cooperation has become a central to contemporary geopolitics as countries seek to advance collective development, economic integration and strategic security. In South Asia and Central Asia, three regional organizations play a key role: the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Although these bodies aim to promote regional cooperation, they differ significantly in their objectives, structure and actual achievements. Pakistan's role within each reflects its geographical centrality, political ambitions and regional limitations. This answer explores the distinctions among these organizations and critically evaluates Pakistan's involvement in each.

2. Overview of Member Countries

~~SAARC~~
SAARC, established in 1985, comprises eight South Asian nations: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

~~ECO~~, restructured in 1985 from the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), includes ten member states: Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan.

~~SCO~~, formed in 2001, originally began with China, Russia and four Central Asian republics but now includes nine full members.

3. Objectives and Achievements

a)

SAARC:

SAARC's foundational aim is to promote the welfare and quality of life of the people in South Asia. Its objectives focus on socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, education, health, agriculture, environmental protection and cultural exchange. The organization explicitly avoids political and security

matters due to longstanding rivalries among member states, especially between India and Pakistan.

Despite its broad development goals, SAARC has struggled to produce meaningful outcomes. The last successful SAARC summit took place in 2014 in Kathmandu. The ~~2016~~ summit, scheduled in Islamabad, was cancelled after India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan withdrew due to political tensions.

Initiatives like the South Asian Free Trade Area (**SAFTA**) have seen minimal progress due to ~~non-tariff~~ barriers and mutual distrust. As a result SAARC's contribution to regional integration remains symbolic rather than substantive.

b) ECO:

The objectives of ECO, on the other hand, are more economically driven. It seeks to enhance intra-regional trade, promote economic collaboration, strengthen transport and communication infrastructure and coordinate efforts in energy developments. ~~ECO~~ also aspires to facilitate integration with global markets through regional connectivity projects.

ECO has also underperformed relative to its ambitions. Although ECO Vision 2025 was adopted to strengthen cooperation in trade, connectivity and energy, its practical execution has been limited. Intra-regional trade remains low, while projects like the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway corridor have been initiated, they lack sustained momentum. Member states often prefer bilateral arrangements over ECO-led initiatives, which undermines the organization's collective strength.

c) SCO:

SCO primarily focuses on regional peace and security. Its key objectives include combating terrorism, separatism and extremism, improving regional stability and deepening military and intelligence cooperation among members. In recent years, SCO has broadened its scope to include economic cooperation, energy dialogue and multilateral diplomacy, while maintaining security as its core focus. SCO has achieved tangible results. It has established the Regional Anti-Terrorist

Structure (RATS), conducted joint military exercises and fostered multilateral security collaboration. The organization also provide a neutral diplomatic platform for dialogue among rivals, such as India and Pakistan. Its expansion to include Iran in 2023, following the inclusion of Indian and Pakistan in 2017, underscores its growing strategic relevance. Although its economic cooperation agenda is still evolving, ~~so~~ SCO's security-oriented mandate has been comparatively effective.

4. Pakistan's Role in these Organizations

- a. Pakistan is a founding member of SAARC and has been historically advocated for greater economic co-operation in the region. It proposed initiatives such as the SAARC Energy Grid and actively supported the SAARC Development Fund. However, the consistent deterioration of Pakistan-India relations has ~~marginally~~ marginalized Pakistan's influence in the organization. The cancellation of the 2016 Summit in Islamabad marked a significant setback. Although countries like Bangladesh

traditionally aligned with India, they are now pursuing more independent foreign policies, which may reshape SAARC's internal dynamics in the future.

b. In ECO, Pakistan occupies a geographically strategic position as a gateway between Central Asian and Arabian Sea. It promotes regional trade corridors, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Gwadar Port. Pakistan has actively participated in ECO summits and trade initiatives. However, its internal economic instability, border insecurity and underdeveloped infrastructure have prevented it from becoming the regional trade hub it envisions. Nevertheless, Pakistan continues to support ECO as a bridge between South, Central and West Asia.

2. Pakistan's role in SCO has been more robust and promising. As a full member since 2017, it has regularly participated in counterterrorism exercises and multilateral dialogues. The SCO provides Pakistan with a platform to balance India's influence while deepening

ties with China and Russian. Additionally, Pakistan sees the SCO as an opportunity to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan which aligns with its regional security objectives. As the SCO expands its economic agenda, Pakistan aims to benefit from a greater connectivity and foreign investment.

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Conclusion :

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SAARC, ECO and SCO each represent different models of regionalism; socio-development, economic and strategic, respectively. The scope and success of each are shaped by their institutional structure and the political realities of their member states. For Pakistan, these organizations offer critical avenue to pursue regional leadership, economic development and strategic stability. While SAARC remains largely dormant due to political tensions, ECO has yet to fulfill its economic promise. SCO stands out as the most effective platform through which Pakistan can project influence and pursue security and diplomatic

engagement. To fully leverage these forums, Pakistan must prioritize internal reforms, adopt a pragmatic foreign policy and present itself as a stable and cooperative regional actor.

Question : 5

Answer :

1

Introduction

Democracy, in its essence, refers to a system of governance where authority to rule emanates from the will of the people, expressed through periodic elections and institutional checks and balances. In the context of Pakistan, democracy has been a turbulent and incomplete journey, shaped by alternating phases of constitutional development and extra-parliamentary interventions. Since its inception in 1947, the country has experienced repeated breakdowns of democratic continuity, institutional imbalances and

weak political traditions. Despite these setbacks, Pakistan has gradually moved toward a more inclusive and participatory political system. The evolution of democracy in Pakistan can be understood by examining its distinct political phases, key institutional shifts and the recurring challenges that have shaped its democratic structure over time.

2. The Early Years of Political Instability (1947-1958)

Pakistan's initial years were marked by uncertainty and political fragility. In the absence of constitution, the country was governed under the Government of India Act 1935.

Political instability, frequent changes in leadership and power struggles between civil and political elites undermined the foundation of parliamentary democracy. The first constitution, promulgated in 1956, established Pakistan as an Islamic Republic and introduced a parliamentary system. However, institutional weaknesses and adminis-

trative dominance over elected representatives led to the abrogation of the constitution in 1958, initiating the first major disruption to democratic governance.

3. Controlled Political Order (1958-1971)

The regime that followed introduced a new model of governance characterized by centralized authority and controlled participation - The system of Basic Democracy introduced during this period was designed to create limited, top-down electoral process. The 1962 Constitution replaced the parliamentary model with a Presidential form of government, further concentrating power in the executive. While the era witnessed some administrative efficiency and economic growth, democratic participation remained weak. The lack of inclusive representation and political autonomy contributed to growing discontent in East Pakistan, ultimately leading to its secession in 1971.

4. Restoration of Parliamentary Democracy and the 1973 Constitution (1971-77)

The political leadership that emerged after the separation of East Pakistan sought to restore a functional democratic order. Under the leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the 1973 Constitution was unanimously adopted, establishing a federal parliamentary system and guaranteeing fundamental rights. It remains the cornerstone of Pakistan's constitutional democracy. However, the period also witnessed political polarization, authoritarian tendencies and allegation of suppressing the opposition voices. The inability to manage dissent and promote political consensus created a volatile environment, which once again invited an interruption in the democratic process in 1977.

5. Political Reversal and Institutional Restructuring (1977-88)

The subsequent decade witnessed a return to centralized authority under an unelected administration. Constitutional provisions were held in abeyance and a non-party based political structure was introduced through indirect mechanisms such as the Majlis-e-Shura. While some electoral exercises were conducted, they lacked the characteristics of genuine democratic choice. The use of religious and ideological narratives for political legitimacy became more prominent during this period. Legal and Judicial instruments were invoked to validate the status quo, contributing to long-term challenges in restoring constitutional supremacy. Although limited civilian representation was restored in the mid-1980s, the overall system remained heavily influenced by non-representative authority until 1988.

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6. Democratic Re-engagement and Political Instability (1988-99)

The return of electoral politics in 1988 marked a new chapter in Pakistan's democratic evolution. However, the decade that followed was characterized by short-lived governments, political rivalry and institutional confrontation. Elected governments alternated between the PPP and the PMLN, but neither could complete a full term. Constitutional provisions such as Article 58(2)(b) were frequently used to dissolve assemblies, disrupting the democratic process. Ultimately, the fragile democratic order was once again taken over by an extra-constitutional transition in 1999.

7. Political Management under Civil-Military Duality (1999-2008)

This period saw an emergence of a hybrid political order, combining administrative centrality with controlled democratic processes. While electoral exercises

were conducted and local government systems introduced, real political authority remained outside parliamentary institutions. Legal Framework Order (LFO) restructured the constitution to concentrate powers in the executive. Notably, this period witnessed the liberalization of electronic media and the beginning of judicial activism, which eventually catalyzed a broader movement for constitutional restoration. Public mobilization and political negotiations led to a return to civilian rule in 2008.

8. Civilian and Institutional Strengthening (2008 - Present)

The post-2008 period represents a relatively more stable democratic phase in Pakistan's history. The successful completion of ~~two~~ consecutive elected governments and peaceful transitions of power in 2013 and 2018 marked a significant institutional

milestone. The 18th Constitutional Amendment passed in 2010 stands out as a major reform, restoring the parliamentary character of the constitution, abolishing Article 58(2)(b) and devolving powers to the provinces.

Conclusion :

The evolution of democracy in Pakistan is a narrative of both interruption and persistence. While military takeovers, constitutional breakdowns and political instability have frequently disrupted the democratic trajectory, the resilience of civil society, political actors and institutions has also shaped a mature democratic environment in recent years.

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