

**Nelofar Ihsan**

Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KPK, Pakistan.

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Corresponding Author:

Nelofar Ihsan

Email: neloufarihsan@gmail.com

License:

Abstract: *The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a significant regional institution shaping the evolving security architecture of Eurasia. Since Pakistan's accession as a full member in 2017, the organization has gained increasing relevance in Pakistan's strategic calculus, particularly in the context of regional stability, counterterrorism cooperation, and geo-economic integration. This study examines the security implications of the SCO for Pakistan, focusing on both the opportunities it presents and the challenges it generates within the broader geopolitical environment of South and Central Asia. This paper presents the role of institutional mechanisms in the SCO, especially the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), multilateral security exercises, and intelligence sharing platforms in the struggle against transnational terrorism, militancy, narcotics trafficking, and other forms of non-traditional security threats in Pakistan. At the same time, the paper also points to a number of strategic threats facing Pakistan in the SCO. These issues are the geopolitical rivalry between the key powers, the availability of India as a competitor state in the region, the instability in Afghanistan, and the overall strategic competition between China, Russia, and the United States in Eurasia. Such dynamics complicate consensus-building within the organization and influence the effectiveness of multilateral security cooperation.*

Introduction

South Asia and Center Asia constitute one of the most strategically contested and security-fractured regions in the world. Over the last two decades, shifting geopolitical alignments, the rise of new multilateral institutions, and the emergence of transnational security threats have compelled regional states to reconsider their foreign and security policies. Within this broader strategic environment, Pakistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) represents a significant turning point in its regional engagement, multilateral diplomacy, and internal security architecture. As a platform originally formed to manage post-Cold War border security, the SCO has progressively evolved into a comprehensive regional organization dealing with counterterrorism, extremism, separatism, economic security, and political cooperation (Ambrosio, 2008; Germanovich, 2011).

The core essence of this chapter is to systematically examine the security implications of SCO membership for Pakistan by assessing both opportunities and challenges arising from multilateral institutional engagement. The central arguments advanced here is that Pakistan's accession to the SCO

reshapes its security environment in multiple dimensions: it enhances counterterrorism coordination, strengthens regional diplomatic engagement, supports economic-security integration, and diversifies strategic partnerships, while simultaneously presenting institutional, geopolitical, and interstate challenges — particularly in the context of India's simultaneous membership, uneven threat perceptions among SCO states, and the limited operational mechanisms of the organization.

Security Impacts SCO for Pakistan

A state's geographical features provide both opportunities and risks that must be mitigated. Pakistan has mitigated the risks associated with its geographical position while capitalizing on its inherent benefits. Geostrategic and geopolitics refer to the field of study that explores how a state may effectively use its geographical location to achieve its political and strategic goals. Pakistan has derived significant advantages from its geographical position, although its imprudent use has also played a role in the instability of the region. Pakistan's geographical features were adversely affected by the "New Great Game" and the "Global War on Terror" due to its strategic position as the gateway to Central Asia and a potential route for major world powers to access landlocked Afghanistan. Nevertheless, there is now a shift occurring (Marianna, 2011).

The western border with Afghanistan is actively advancing the TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India) Gas Pipeline, while the northern border with China is poised to attract substantial investments following the implementation of the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor). Similarly, the Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline will eventually enhance flexibility along the South Western border with Iran. Pakistan's geographical importance has broadened to include other aspects, such as its strategically vital position in close proximity to the Gulf States and its recently operational port of Gwadar.

Pakistan's Security Environment: A Contextual Overview

Pakistan's Inclusions in US War on Terror:

Since attaining independence, Pakistan has encountered several internal and external threats. Upon thorough analysis, it is evident that Pakistan's geostrategic situation has resulted in more security challenges than benefits. The main external threat, however, was from India, its eastern neighbor, whose influence and capabilities have significantly increased. Nevertheless, there were both benefits and drawbacks to participating in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) since 2001, establishing a secondary alliance with the US to counter a Soviet incursion in the 1980s, and executing the Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement with the US in the nascent years of independence. Due to its restricted alternatives and the substantial expense of joining this alliance, Pakistan opted to align with the US-led campaign against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Indian-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Pact: security Challenge for Pakistan;

India swiftly extended its support for a global coalition, aware of Pakistan's geostrategic significance. Pakistan has long seen India's growing influence in Afghanistan as a significant threat to its national security, since it endangers the country's security and economic interests in South and Central Asia. Moreover, Pakistan's apprehensions have escalated considerably since the signing of the "Strategic Partnership Pact" between Afghanistan and India in October 2011. Pakistan is once again faced with the danger of a domestic conflict hotspot after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Pakistan's security challenges have deteriorated over the last four decades for three main reasons: first, the need to fight against Soviet occupation from 1979 to 1989; second, its involvement in the US-led Global War on Terror after the events of September 11; and third, the repercussions of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Pakistan's genuine efforts to foster peace in Afghanistan have always been met with mistrust, despite the reality that a stable and prosperous Afghanistan is advantageous for Pakistan, which cannot sustain

a hostile western border.

Consequently, Pakistan's strategic need has always been a peaceful settlement of the Afghan issue. Pakistan's participation in the Global War on Terror has engendered a pervasive gun culture and religious intolerance, phenomena that were previously absent. The last four decades of fighting in Afghanistan have significantly influenced Pakistani culture. The path to prosperity in Pakistan has been obstructed by many internal problems, such as illiteracy, religious and ethnic diversity, and rapid population increase. Consequently, Pakistan is entrenched in challenges pertaining to both international and internal security. Pakistan has had significant challenges over the last two decades as a result of the US-led war on terror in Afghanistan, incurring substantial economic losses and the fatalities of over 70,000 individuals.

Afghan Refugees incursion into Pakistan:

Furthermore, Pakistan had to manage the prior flood of Afghan refugees resulting from a war in the 1980s. Following 9/11, US-led forces invaded Afghanistan, alleging the Taliban's involvement in the attacks, so re-establishing the region's prominence in public discourse. The crises in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have adversely impacted the security and stability of the whole region, however the Afghan conflict has more significant security ramifications for the area. Sectarian unrest adversely affects the Middle East and has attracted the forces of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to the region. Pakistan is increasingly finding it challenging to advance its interests and maintain neutrality in the Middle East. Pakistan confronts India, its larger and more hostile neighbor, on its eastern border. India has a history of important hostilities and a legacy of unresolved issues, with Kashmir being the most prominent.

The Modi-led BJP government has prioritized military coercion to vilify and marginalize Pakistan on regional and international fronts. Although Pakistan has effectively countered India's aggressive maneuvers, it needs a more assertive and robust foreign strategy to navigate the evolving regional dynamics. Notwithstanding these challenges, a goal-oriented foreign policy might use Pakistan's strategic advantage to its utmost capacity. This article seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the importance of Pakistan's geographic location in the region and its implications for security.

For the last forty years, this area has been a hotbed of great power politics. Whether it was handling the aftermath of 9/11 or the USSR's containment effort, Pakistan's position has remained critical. Pakistan suffered a number of internal and foreign challenges, including the increase in extremism, acts of terrorism, and economic devaluation, as a result of the US's changing geopolitical objectives toward it over a protracted period of time. Pakistan was still a member of the US alliance while the US vigorously pursued the goal of containing the former Soviet Union during the Cold War. But shortly after the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, the United States accomplished its ultimate objective and withdrew from Afghanistan amid a civil conflict. Along with dealing with the ongoing threat of civil conflict in its near neighborhood, Pakistan was also forced to cope with the surge of Afghan refugees. The US's strategic interests in Pakistan had diminished in the years that followed, while the US and India's strategic collaboration had grown significantly.

TTP a serious threat to Pakistan Security:

The state of Pakistan is facing a threat from newly organized organizations inside the country dubbed as the "Pakistani Taliban." Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, often known as the Taliban Movement of Pakistan or TTP, is a terrorist organization headed by Baitullah Mehsud that was formed in 2007 when various parts of the Pakistani rouge, criminal, and outlaw community joined some of the outlawed extreme religious organizations. TTP, a militant group with its stronghold in border regions of KPK, FATA, and portions of

Baluchistan, and its allied organizations are believed to have been behind most of the terrorist acts that have occurred in Pakistan over the previous 15 years, targeting thousands of civilians in addition to military targets. When the TTP refused to give up, Pakistani security forces began an offensive in North Waziristan. Terrorists persisted in their attacks on military and civilian targets, including as the airport in Karachi, murdering innocent people before bravely declaring credit. The civilian government's will and the ability of Pakistani troops were shown by the successful military operations against terrorists and their hideouts in North Waziristan. Following the Pakistani security forces' decisive operations against the TTP, confusion ensued among their ranks. Pakistan has to strengthen its internal defenses, regulate its borders strictly, and take immediate action to stop militancy via military operations in light of the external environment and the backlash from inside as a result of joining GWOT.

Major Internal Security Threats

Terrorism and Violent Extremism

In Pakistan since the beginning of the 2000s, there has been a consistent series of terrorism mainly perpetrated by networks of militants acting within the border provinces, with a specifically strong concentration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former FATA territories. Several factors have led to radicalization, including the indirect impacts of the Afghan war, sectarianism, the unlawful trade in firearms and the weakness of border control (Rizvi, 2020).

Despite the fact that Pakistan military operations, such as Zarb-e-Azb, Radd-ul-Fasaad, the operation in Khyber, and so on, have significantly undermined militant forces, terrorist groups remain active and flexible. This is particularly noticeable in the groups that still have regional connectivity, like the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Islamic State Khorasan Province, and divisions of Al-Qaeda (Mansoor, 2021).

Militancy and Hybrid Insurgency

Pakistan is facing a dual-nature paradigm of militancy where non-state armed groups are being supported through transnational financial resources, advanced media propaganda and dominant ideological narratives. These cyber terrorists are also taking advantage of digital networks, encrypted communication protocols as well as cross border sanctuaries to avoid the operational scope of Pakistani security forces. The strategic advantage of integrated intelligence coordination within the SCO-RATS framework increases with such a dynamic threat architecture because cyber-tracking and transnational databases can provide decisive comparative advantage to traditional bilateral counter-terrorism regimes (Tripathi, 2020; Eva, 2021).

Border Terrorism and Cross-Border Movements

Border spaces that are not regulated, especially the Afghanistan route and parts of Balochistan have traditionally supported the transference of weapons and narcotics in the shadow, movement of insurgent heads, informal funding streams and tribal armed mobilization. These complex dynamics obscure the distinction between intra and extra threats because violence and unrest spill over national borders and directly affect the domestic security environment of Pakistan. The ensuing lack of border security has since been one of the main drivers that have led Pakistan to participate in multilateral security cooperation under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation since no particular state can effectively counteract cross border terrorism and transnational criminal networks on their own. The multilateral platforms, the intelligence sharing, and coordinated activities, therefore, provide a systematic and collaborative opportunity to deal with such difficulties.

Border insecurity has since emerged to be one of the main causes of creating the strategic interest of Pakistan in trying to engage in multilateral cooperation in the form of SCO. Through these attributes of complex threat dispersion, inter-state asymmetries, solitary action is insufficient and therefore joint

structures combined with intelligence sharing and coordinated operation procedures are imperative measures to avert the multifaceted security threats that are saturating the region.

External Security Pressures

India–Pakistan Rivalry

India remains at the center of the strategies of Pakistan. The conflict that has been decades old rests on the basis of territory disputes, even-handedness in nuclear weapons, and a history of distrust. Since India is a complete member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the group is an exclusive platform where two nuclear-powered rivals meet to discuss their security issues. Pakistan has anxieties that India is attempting to redefine the meaning of terrorism in the SCO, namely, by trying to portray Pakistan-based or Pakistan-allied groups as terrorism organisations, without adequate contextual analysis (Amin, 2023). This makes the agenda of India both diplomatically straining and strategically cautious in terms of the considerations in SCO.

Afghanistan Instability

The Afghan war has turned out to be one of the biggest external insecurity sources to Pakistan in the last 4 decades and the 2021 Afghanistan Taliban takeover did not provide the stability as many scholars had predicted. Instead, re-emerging Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) cells have re-appeared in Afghanistan, border tussles have been escalated and non-state actors still have a haven in porous border regions. In that regard, Pakistan is becoming more and more interested in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as an alternative to the allegedly ineffective Western and exclusively bilateral strategies towards Afghanistan management. Of the utmost importance is the Afghanistan Contact Group with SCO; it provides an organized multilateral environment that is aimed at avoiding security spill-over effects and organizing responses to regional threats (Zhao, 2018; Germanovich, 2011).

Border and Cross-Territorial Challenges

In addition to Afghanistan, Pakistan is faced by a continuum of transnational security issues such as narcotics trafficking produced in Central Asia, rising pressures of illegal migration, smuggling of weapons and explosives and the proliferating level of financing terror as well as the hawala networks. All these threats are interconnected and this highlights the need to have regional mechanisms as opposed to individual domestic reactions.

Here, the interior and anti-drug cooperation system of the SCO, which, however, is not fully used yet, has a considerable potential to support the border-security system in Pakistan. In case of a policy alignment, information exchange and institutional coordination, these mechanisms have the potential to significantly uplift the ability of Pakistan to monitor, prevent, and react to transnational crime and security hazards in its western frontier.

Regional Power Politics and Strategic Vulnerabilities

Great-Power Competition

Pakistan stands at the center of a changing geopolitical triangle which involves the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the people republic of China. China is strategically a partner of Pakistan and the main sponsor of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); Russia, a state that is providing new opportunities in the field of defense; and the United States is also a relevant player with its world financial networks, the power of the International Monetary Fund, and the supply of counter-terrorist technology (Sial, 2021). The complex environment that Pakistan is facing is forcing it to adopt a multilateral strategic elasticity, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a strategic platform that reduces the danger of complete dependency on any particular giant power.

Central Asian Criticality

The Central Asian Republics (CARs) including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are a strategic point in the long term plans of energy security, defense diplomacy and regional connectivity of where Pakistan is based. However, in the past, the participation by Pakistan in these republics in the security arena has been marked with inefficiency and disintegration, which is as a result of absence of sustainable institutional platforms. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) fills this gap by providing formalized mechanisms such as security discussions, military cooperation framework, joint policing education, as well as intelligence sharing through the Rapid Action Force of Transnational Threats (RATS). By such arrangements, Pakistan successfully institutionalizes itself nationally in the Central Asian security structure, a structure that, until 2017, was mostly symbolic or confined to limited bilateral contacts (Amin, 2023).

Non-Traditional Security Risks

The current state of security threats in Pakistan has shifted out of the traditional battlefield and territorial issue and encompasses a growing list of non-traditional terror, such as cyber-terrorism and recruiting extremists online, narcotics networks funded by the production of Afghan opium, money laundering and terror financing, displacement as a result of climate change and promoting terrorist radicalization, and attacks on energy infrastructure and highways associated with CPEC. Since it is well known that regional security risks are changing dynamic, the SCO has slowly broadened its mandate such that it now reflects these non-traditional security areas, which has redefined its place in the international security landscape. This strategic response is a huge challenge to modernise the internal security principles, revise rules and regulations and enhance multilateral cooperation so as to curb complex trans bound threats that have been better tackled.

The Security–Economy Nexus

CPEC, Regional Transit Routes, and Energy Corridors

Pakistan is increasingly shaping its national security agenda through its economic vulnerabilities and its desire to develop strategically. In this respect, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is not only a massive infrastructure project but also a geo-economic defensive fortification, which is designed to ensure regional stability in the long term and draw in investment. However, militant groups in Baluchistan, tribal border regions, and urban places commonly attack CPEC-related infrastructure and Chinese nationals, which form a clear connection between internal security situations and the confidence of foreign investors (Khan, 2020).

In this environment, the Pakistani involvement in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) provides a cluster of practical advantages: the multi-lateral security guarantees, the harmonized protection regimes of energy and transit initiatives, the single surveillance system of external workers and critical infrastructure, and the judicial collaboration regarding the cross-border infrastructure protection.

Energy Security

Pakistan is also actively seeking the energy diversification via such significant regional projects as the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline, the CASA-1000 electricity transmission project and various Central Asian oil and gas transit deals. These strategic projects however cut across conflict prone regions that are characterized by instability, militancy and poor border controls. In this regard, SCO-based collaboration, especially the schemes that entail interior ministries, provides a useful model on how to protect energy corridors against sabotage, terrorism, and cross-border interferences (Eva, 2021). Multilateral integration of security measures and information dissemination can contribute greatly to the resilience of energy infrastructure in Pakistan and mitigate the risks to long-term

investment in the region, which can greatly benefit SCO engagement.

Geo-economic Realignment

The scholars argue that Pakistan is undergoing geopolitics to geo-economics paradigm shifts, whereby security concerns are becoming more and more embedded in the nexus of regional economic connectedness (Panda, 2018; Nicholson, 2022). This reinterpretation highlights the fact that security and economic interests are interdependent and that individual security actions would not be able to manage the complicated dynamics involved.

The Security-Cooperation Organization (SCO) is therefore an ideal institutional bridge that balances security demands with the regional trade and investment imperatives. Through the combination of a total security regime and the effective connectivity programs, the SCO proves to be a holistic model that is in line with the modern world of geopolitical and economic reality in the region.

Role of RTAs:

The permanent body of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure. The SCO emphasizes security concerns such as terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism, with the foremost concern being the containment of Islamist militant groups capable of executing terrorist strikes. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was established in 2004 to address the threat. The SCO considers organized crime, drug trafficking, energy security, and health pandemic security as progressively significant concerns. The Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure adheres to the SCO Charter, the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, the Agreement among SCO member states on the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, and other documents and decisions established within the SCO framework. The primary responsibilities encompass: maintaining collaborative relationships with member state institutions and international organizations addressing terrorism, separatism, and extremism; assisting member states in preparing and executing counterterrorism exercises upon their request; conducting search operations and related activities aimed at combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism; drafting international legal documents pertinent to the fight against these issues; collecting and analyzing information received from member states and developing the RATS database; collaborating to establish an effective response system to global challenges; and organizing scientific conferences and workshops to promote the exchange of experiences in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Terrorist activities are prevalent in the SCO area (Boland, 2011). This is an overview of various terrorist incidents that have occurred during the last decade. Terrorist or extremist attacks have transpired in every SCO member state.

April 2001: killing of the presidential aide in Tajikistan in September 2001, the culture minister of Tajikistan was killed. The Chinese consul in Kyrgyzstan was assassinated in June 2002. October 2002: Ninety individuals perished in a hijacking incident in Moscow, Russia. December 2002: bombing at a market in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan bus hijacked in March 2003, resulting in 20 fatalities; bombs detonated on the Moscow metro. Russia February 2004: 50 fatalities, 130 injuries March 2004: bombs in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, resulting in 10 fatalities; Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan: bombing in May 2004. A stadium explosion in May 2004 in Chechnya, Russia, resulted in seven fatalities, including the president of the nation, and fifty-three injuries. June 2004: Ninety individuals were murdered in a militia attack in Ingushetia, Russia. In September 2004, 300 individuals perished in Beslan, Russia, with half being children. May 2005: 187 people were killed during riots in Andijan, Uzbekistan. October 2005: militia attack in Nalchik, Russia; 84 injuries, 17 fatalities May 2006: militant terrorist attack in Kyrgyzstan Moscow, Russia August 2006: market explosion resulted in 10 deaths and 55 injuries. Russia: train derailment in August 2007; 60

people wounded August 2008, Kashgar, Xinjiang, China: car explosion resulting in 16 fatalities and 16 injuries. November 2007, Dushanbe, Tajikistan: explosion aimed against the president June 2009: motorcade attack in Ingushetia, Russia; president wounded In July 2009, 200 individuals were killed during riots in Urumqi, Xinjiang, China. Assault in Ingushetia

Terrorist organizations in SCO members regions:

Russia, August 2009: 12 fatalities, 50 injuries Russia: attack in November 2009 resulted in 25 fatalities and 63 injuries March 2010 Bombers assault Moscow, Russia, resulting in 41 fatalities. A terrorist attack in Kashgar, Xinjiang, China, in July 2011 resulted in three fatalities and forty injuries(Xiaodong,2016). It is well acknowledged that terrorist groups inside SCO states have strong connections to extremism, separatism, and terrorism. The Taliban, al-Qaeda, the East Turkistan Liberation Organization (ETLO), and the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) are all operational in Uzbekistan. The World Uygur Youth Congress, the East Turkistan Information Center, and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) are all active in Tajikistan. Several have expanded their activities and opened branches in other SCO member states. To achieve their goals, various terrorist groups have established alliances with each other. Terrorist organizations are not confined to a certain terrorist operation (Kan, 2010). Terrorists conduct operations that not only instill fear in the people and jeopardize human life and health via bombs, assaults, and displacement, but also aim to achieve political, religious, and other goals. Terrorists evidently expand their activities to areas where they may get assistance. The security and stability of the region are significantly jeopardized by the pervasive terrorist activities in the SCO area, where domestic terrorists are collaborating with foreign operatives. The SCO member states express significant concern over the increase of terrorism, as it threatens global peace and security, state sovereignty, the development of amicable inter-state relations, and the realization of basic human rights and freedoms. These factors illustrate that the "three evil forces"—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—persist as threats to the member states of the SCO. Extremism is a primary worry for the SCO, prompting member states to collaborate on counterterrorism efforts inside the SCO framework (ziojing, 2007). In the SCO, political coordination is essential for counterterrorism cooperation. The SCO member states have shown their steadfast commitment to executing anti-terror operations via the issuance of declarations and statements about terrorist incidents. Included are the following: Shanghai Cooperation Organization Foundation Declaration dated June 15, 2001; Shanghai Cooperation Organization Member State Heads' Declaration dated July 5, 2005, Astana. Announcement of the 10th Anniversary of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on June 15, 2011, in Astana Special Conference on Afghanistan convened under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on March 27, 2009, in Moscow. Following the terrorist assault in Nazran, SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev issued a statement on August 19, 2009. In reaction to the occurrences in the Chinese city of Urumqi, SCO Secretary-General Bolat Nurgaliev issued a statement on July 10, 2009. Following the terrorist attacks in Moscow, SCO Secretary-General M. Imanaliev issued a statement on March 29, 2010. On January 25, 2011, the SCO Secretary-General issued a statement on a terrorist assault at Domodedovo Airport in Moscow. On April 12, 2011, the SCO Secretary-General issued a statement on a terrorist incident at the Oktyabrskaya Station in the Minsk metro system of the Republic of Belarus. Anti-terror exercises effectively enhance member states' military and security capabilities, weapon handling proficiency, and collaborative capability with other countries in planning, command and control, logistics, and maneuvers. This facilitates cooperative actions during these exercises and fosters constructive communication among member states and security, including a wide range of practical themes. Recent instances include: Bilateral joint drills in the border area between China and Kyrgyzstan, October 10–11, 2002. Combine-

2003: joint exercise in the border region between Kazakhstan and China, August 6–12, 2003, Peace Mission-2005: counter-terrorism exercise in Vladivostok, Russia and Shandong, China, August 18–25, 2005, Tian-shan-1-2006: anti-terror exercise in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan and Yining in Xinjiang, China, August 24–26, 2006, Collaboration-2006: anti-terror exercise in the border region China and Tajikistan, September 22–23, 2006, Peace Mission-2007: counter-terrorism exercise in Chelyabinsk, Russia, August 9–17, 2007, Volgograd Anti-terror-2008: exercise in Volgograd, Russia, August 14–September 4, 2008 in Norak, Tajikistan, April 17–19, 2009 † Peace Mission-2009: anti-terror military drill in Khabarovsk, Russia and Taonan, China, July 22–26, 2009 † Peace Mission-2010: anti-terror military drill in Zhambyl, Kazakhstan, September 9–25, 2010 † Tianshan-2-2011: joint counter-terrorism exercise in Kashgar, Xinjiang, China, May 5–8, 2011 † Peace Mission-2012: anti-terror military drill in Tajikistan, June 8–14, 2012 The Vostok Anti-terror-2006 exercise focused on countering a simulated assault on the nuclear reactor of Uzbekistan's Institute of Nuclear Physics, while the Norak Anti-terror-2009 exercise seemingly centered on the simulated protection of a Tajikistani chemical facility facing a terrorist threat, indicating the group's emphasis on unconventional targets. Achievements of cooperation Since its inception, the SCO has evolved into a vital guarantor of regional peace, stability, and prosperity. It has also contributed to the preservation of the political, economic, and social stability of the parties, together with their geographical integrity and security (fennig, 2018).

Moreover, it contributes to international initiatives aimed at countering terrorism, separatism, extremism, illegal drug and arms trafficking, and transnational organized crime. To tackle pressing issues in a unified response to new threats and challenges, procedures for regular sessions and meetings among Security Council secretaries, public prosecutors, supreme judges, security officials, and chiefs of anti-drug agencies were instituted. The Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure, the organization's permanent entity, is tasked with implementing treaties and agreements established within its framework. Exhibiting a readiness to collaborate with other countries and regional and international organizations. Within the framework of the SCO, both the participating entities and the observers are progressively engaging in intricate interactions.

The role of United state:

In May 2023, Pakistan is confronted with various formidable challenges, encompassing energy and climate concerns, acute political instability, an economic balance of payments crisis, a resurgence of domestic security threats and terrorism, diminished diplomatic influence, and other pressing issues. This predicament has been referred to as a "poly crisis" by some observers. Systematic and persistent infringements of human rights are prevalent across the country; some infractions are explicitly prohibited by the government, while others are tacitly endorsed. Since 2001, the objective of U.S. policy has been to actively combat Islamic extremism while fostering the development of a prosperous, democratic, and stable Pakistan. Pakistan, a country possessing nuclear weapons and having a land area twice that of California harbors many Islamist terrorist groups. With a population over 200 million, Pakistan has significant strategic importance in both South Asia and along the Indian Ocean coastline. Pakistan was excluded from the national security and Indo-Pacific initiatives of the Biden Administration. The United States' capacity to attain its foreign and regional policy goals, such as ensuring regional stability and security in the future, will likely be impacted by several factors. These factors include Pakistan's strained relations with the Taliban government in Afghanistan, its longstanding rivalry and conflict with India, and its increasing connections with China, the primary competitor of the United States (Asif Shahzad, 2022). The relations between the United States and Pakistan may still be altered by legislation and congressional oversight. Congress has the authority to

ascertain the scope of U.S. foreign assistance, choose whether to endorse heightened bilateral investment and commerce, and decide whether to support endeavors targeted at safeguarding Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal, stabilizing its economy, and improving its human rights record. Between 2001 and 2021, the relationship between the United States and Pakistan was significantly changed by two key factors: increasing animosity between the US and China, Pakistan's primary ally, and the withdrawal of US military forces from Afghanistan. Pakistani leaders have voiced worry about the diminishing and undermining of their country's significance to Washington. This is partly due to the perception that Islamabad is aligning with Beijing's geopolitical interests, which is a result of the Biden Administration's active involvement in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with Australia, Japan, India, and the United States. The Biden Administration's primary focus on countering China, along with reduced attention to Afghanistan by the U.S. government, has contributed to these concerns. Pakistani officials, along with some independent analysts, have proposed a "reset" of bilateral ties with the Biden administration. This reset aims to shift the prior emphasis on security to a more comprehensive approach. Pakistan's vision involves actively fostering regional integration to collectively pursue sustainable development, with a particular focus on "geo-economics." Pakistan's business and political elites present their country as a promising economic partner for the US, with a strong emphasis on investment and development. They are actively engaged in key sectors such as energy, information technology, agriculture, health, and climate change. Pakistan's aspirations to emerge as a prominent technology hub in the area are driven by the nation's growing digitalization and a substantial, entrepreneurial middle class consisting of hundreds of thousands of IT experts, many of whom possess proficiency in the English language (Omarkhail, 2021).

President Joe Biden has not directly engaged in a meeting with the prime minister of Pakistan since assuming office, and the Biden Administration has not yet provided clear signs of a substantial restructuring being planned. A group of prominent professionals in Washington, D.C. propose a restrained and practical relationship between the United States and Pakistan, devoid of unrealistic expectations from both parties. Surveys conducted among the general population reveal that there is still a widespread presence of anti-American sentiment among Pakistanis. Nevertheless, in 2022, the 75th anniversary of U.S.-Pakistan ties was observed, and during the previous year, notable efforts were made to enhance bilateral engagement. These events comprise the commencement of a U.S.-Pakistan Health Dialogue in July 2022 to enhance cooperation in the health sector, the ninth meeting under the U.S.-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework in February 2023 (after an eight-year hiatus), and a gathering of the U.S.-Pakistan Energy Security Dialogue in March.

Drug production and prevention:

In Central Asia, little opium is cultivated or manufactured; almost 99 percent of the opiates in the region originate from Afghanistan. Central Asia seems to lack industrial capabilities for the conversion of opium into heroin. All opiates traversing Central Asia are either processed in Afghanistan or will remain as opium until processed elsewhere. The majority of opiate seizures in Central Asia take place in Tajikistan, where it is thought that most drugs infiltrate the nation from Afghanistan via the "northern route" to access primary markets in the Russian Federation and Europe. Central Asia's opiate seizure pattern has been relatively steady over the last decade, with average seizure volumes just below 10,000 kg. The opiate seizure dynamics in the area seem to exhibit a cyclical pattern: heroin constituted an ever-increasing percentage of opiate seizures from 1996 to 2003, whereas post-2003, the proportion of opium seizures has been steadily ascending. Drug trafficking is a significant issue for Central Asia due to its associations with opiate use, injectable drug use, HIV/AIDS, and drug-related criminal activities. The

region's improved road and rail infrastructure is used by many significant trafficking routes. To avoid detection, traffickers divert from main routes and use the network of trails that traverse the highlands and pass "green borders." UNODC estimates indicate that the extent of opiate trafficking in the region significantly exceeds the volume confiscated, with total seizures accounting for less than 4% of the estimated opiate flows in heroin equivalent, and is experiencing annual growth (12 percent increase in 2006) due to a plentiful supply from Afghanistan (Zhao, 2012).

Due to the scarcity of data, estimating the extent of the connection between organized crime and drug trafficking in Central Asia is challenging. The bulk of Central Asian law enforcement agencies have focused on apprehending low-level traffickers or those possessing quantities associated with personal use, rather than targeting high-value individuals. Central Asian trafficking is sometimes characterized as mostly disorganized, with small traffickers operating inside ethnically homogenous collectives. It is believed that little amounts of drugs are repeatedly bought and sold, with the predominant ethnic group in the country overseeing the transaction. Recent indicators suggest a potential shift, as organized criminal groups are increasingly engaging in trafficking, although to a limited extent. In Central Asia, drug-related crimes rose from 1993 to 2000, thereafter decreased until 2005, exhibiting an inverted U pattern. The increase in opiate production in Afghanistan post-2001 and the escalating volume of opiates purportedly moved across the region complicate the elucidation of this post-2000 phenomenon. The boundary between China and Afghanistan in Central Asia is particularly vulnerable to precursor trafficking. A considerable proportion of border inspectors lack the requisite skills and training for identification. The border agency just evaluates incoming traffic for threat assessment, excluding antecedents that may be departing the region (Anna & Giustozzi, 2008).

Most concerning is the seldom comprehensive inspection of both incoming and outgoing products. The incidence of drug usage has risen throughout Central Asia with the escalation of drug trafficking. The extensive accessibility of affordable heroin has resulted in a transition from conventional drug use, such as smoking marijuana and opium, to intravenous heroin administration and, to a lesser extent, opium use. Despite the prevalence of opiate use in drug trafficking routes, these pathways do not consistently exhibit elevated rates of opiate use. Metropolitan regions that function as centers for the storage, repackaging, and redistribution of opiates often exhibit elevated opiate usage rates. The patterns of newly registered drug users throughout the years of 1996–2001 and 2002–2006 exhibited significant divergence, with the later decade demonstrating a markedly reduced yearly number of new registrations. This may suggest that while drug consumption continues to increase annually, the rate of increase is not as rapid as it was from 1996 to 2001. Although the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Central Asia is still low, the illness has proliferated rapidly over the last decade, with an average yearly increase of 48%. The escalation of opiate use, the elevated prevalence of intravenous drug use among opiate users, and hazardous injection practices such as needle sharing are the primary contributors to the region's persistent increase in HIV cases.

Central Asia is recognized for its considerable wild cannabis cultivation and little cannabis production. The bulk of cannabis is cultivated locally, with a little quantity being transferred to markets in the Russian Federation and Europe. Interdiction actions are impeded by limited supply routes when the commodity is produced for local use. The quantity of cannabis seizures has varied significantly annually; however, a little rising trend has been seen since 1998. The primary reason for the seldom use of synthetic drugs in Central Asia is economic factors (Tripathi, 2020). Synthetic pharmaceuticals are often more expensive and employed by the middle class or affluent individuals. With the region's economic position improving, a rise in the use of synthetic pharmaceuticals seems likely. Ephedra, which

proliferates abundantly throughout Central Asia, may be used to synthesize methamphetamines. Likewise, synthetic medications may be manufactured using the extensive lawful chemical industry in adjacent China. Concerns over inhalant use are increasing, particularly since it is more prevalent among young than cannabis consumption. In Central Asia, a distinct causal relationship exists among HIV, opiate use, and drug trafficking. Due to its location along Afghan drug trafficking routes, Central Asia has a high availability of opiates at reduced prices, facilitating usage. The utilization of drugs and perilous injection methods has resulted in a concentrated HIV epidemic inside the injection drug user group, therefore elevating HIV prevalence rates. A widespread HIV pandemic is possible, akin to the situations in the Russian Federation and Ukraine, since several individuals who inject drugs engage in other high-risk activities, including unprotected sexual intercourse. In Central Asia, little opium is cultivated or manufactured; almost 99 percent of the opiates in the region originate from Afghanistan. The "northern route" linking Afghan opiates to lucrative markets in Europe, the Russian Federation, and increasingly China is established via Central Asia (Eva, 2021).

The availability of Afghani opium poppies has an inverse correlation with Central Asian opium production. Consequently, while cultivation is not now a significant concern, any success in reducing opium production in Afghanistan may lead to an increase in supply from Central Asia, particularly if the region experiences instability. The latest UNODC assessment on opium poppy cultivation in Central Asia (1999) indicates that opium is cultivated in minimal quantities, mostly in mountainous meadows, with a lesser quantity cultivated in small house gardens predominantly for personal consumption. The evaluation indicates a potential production of 40.6 kg of opium per acre. In light of the 2.22 hectares of documented cultivation in the region in 2006, this corresponds to a potential yield of 90 kilos of opium, representing a trivial fraction of the total produced in Afghanistan. Central Asia lacks any identified infrastructure for the conversion of opium into heroin. Consequently, all opiates traversing Central Asia are either refined in Afghanistan or will remain as opium until processed elsewhere. Central Asia may serve as a conduit for illicit precursor chemicals to infiltrate Afghanistan, facilitating heroin manufacture due to the country's scarcity of indigenous precursor sources and the concentration of manufacturing activities. **KAZAKHSTAN:** Opium cultivation is relatively insignificant in Kazakhstan, similar to other Central Asian countries. The vast majority of the 18,676.5 m² that were illicitly farmed, as per the last UNODC survey in 1999, were located in Southern Kazakhstan (18,324.0 m²).

Farming occurred in remote alpine areas eighty-four percent of the time. Kazakhstan officially reported a significantly reduced area of 0.07 hectares dedicated to opium poppy cultivation and the lack of equipment for converting opium into heroin in 2007.

KYRGYZSTAN: Among the three Central Asian states assessed by the UNODC in 1999, Kyrgyzstan exhibited the lowest opium poppy cultivation, encompassing 0.08 hectares. The 1999 study indicated that cultivation mostly occurred in Chui oblast, covering an area of 267.4 m². The largest individual growing area was just 203 m², and all poppy patches were located in residential gardens. Reports indicate that the majority of cultivation was conducted for personal use rather than for distribution. In 2006, Kyrgyzstan claimed an absence of illicit opium poppy cultivation or production facilities.

TAJIKISTAN: The 1999 UNODC survey indicated that most cropping occurred in Leninabad (8700 m²) and RSS (8108 m²). More than 86 percent of the 1.73 hectares of illicit cultivation occurred in alpine pastures. Tajikistan documented 1.01 hectares of illicit opium cultivation in 2006. No production facilities were known to exist.

TURKMENISTAN: There are no indications of illicit opium poppy cultivation or production facilities in Turkmenistan.

UZBEKISTAN: Government data indicate the absence of opium production facilities and the presence of 1.44 hectares of illicit opium cultivation in Uzbekistan in 2006. Eradication Efforts for eradication have been limited due to Central Asia's little opium production. Turkmenistan has no data on cultivation or eradication; nonetheless, information from neighboring Central Asian countries in 2006 reveals that 100% of illicit production areas were destroyed, mostly via comprehensive eradication initiatives such as "Black Poppy." 1.14 hectares in Uzbekistan, 1.01 hectares in Tajikistan, and 0.07 hectares in Kazakhstan were part of the total lands devastated. In 2006, Kyrgyzstan reported no cultivation or eradication activities. Convulsions Data about drug seizures in Central Asia must be interpreted with care, as it reflects both the quantity of drugs discovered in each country and the efforts exerted by national law enforcement agencies and their governments in combating these issues (Meena, 2010).

Historically, opiate seizures in Central Asia have mostly occurred in Tajikistan, where the majority of drugs are believed to come from Afghanistan via the "northern route" to Europe and the Russian Federation. Tajikistan accounted for 73% of heroin seizures and 48% of all opium seizures from 1996 to 2006. Tajikistan's significance as the gateway to the "northern route" is underscored by Khatlon province, which shares a border with Afghanistan and consistently reports the highest volume of heroin confiscations. UNODC estimates indicate that the "northern route" facilitated the shipment of 118 metric tons of heroin across Central Asia in 2006. Merely 3.1 percent, equivalent to 3,651.2 kg, of the total amount carried was located in Central Asia. Law enforcement agencies in Kazakhstan captured 554.7 kg, Kyrgyz authorities seized 260.8 kg, Turkmen officials confiscated 201.1 kg, and Uzbek authorities seized 537.1 kg. Tajik authorities confiscated 2,097.5 kilogram, about four times the amount seized by other Central Asian countries. In 2006, opium, rather than heroin, constituted the predominant portion of opiate seizures. The opiate seizure dynamics in the region exhibit a cyclical pattern: heroin constituted an increasing proportion of seizures from 1996 to 2003 (rising from over 1 percent to 70 percent); conversely, the proportion of opium seizures has consistently increased since 2003 (growing from 30 percent in 2003 to 61 percent in 2006). In 2006, Turkmen officials confiscated the most quantity of opium in the region, totaling 2,655.7 kg, followed by Tajik authorities with 1,386.8 kg, Uzbek authorities with 759.3 kg, Kazakh authorities with 636.8 kg, and Kyrgyz authorities with 302.3 kg. In 2006, the total quantity of opium confiscated in the area was 5,740.8 kg. The trend of opiate seizures over the last decade has been rather constant. Seizures have averaged 9,632 kg, reaching a maximum of 13,984.0 kg in 2000 and down to 6,100.2 kg in 1998. The 1996 total of 9,155.2 kg and the 2006 total of 9,393.9 kg exhibit notable similarity. Following the Taliban's prohibition of opium in Afghanistan in 2001, all countries documented a decline in opiate confiscations. Nevertheless, Central Asia has not seen a consistent rise in opiate seizures despite the subsequent increase in opium production and the anticipated escalation in opiate trafficking. UNODC estimates indicate that opiate trafficking in the region significantly exceeds the quantity seized, with total seizures accounting for less than 4% of estimated opiate flows in heroin equivalent, and is increasing annually (12 percent in 2006) due to the ample supply from Afghanistan. Moreover, anecdotal evidence indicates that Central Asia is seeing a rise in significant seizures. This indicates that traffickers are getting more coordinated and financially robust to acquire and transport cargoes over 100 kg (Weitz,, 2015).

Regional Integration and Complex Interdependence:

Regional integration has become an inevitable consequence of globalization. The primary goal is to establish structures for cooperation in the realms of politics, business, and security. The creation of regional groups has led to a transformation in the attitude and relations among nations. Political and economic integration is rapidly becoming popular among emerging nations. Increasingly, people are

seeing that adopting a regional strategy is the most efficient approach to promoting cooperation and achieving both political and economic stability. The significance of resolving security and terrorism concerns is readily apparent. This article examines the possibility of merging Central and South Asia, two significant regions located in the heart of Asia, which are linked by historical, cultural, and religious bonds, as well as mutual interests in security, energy commerce, economy, and politics (Khan & Sultana, 2019).

Each state in the region has comparable challenges and prospects for development in terms of security and economics. There are many opportunities for both regions to collaborate in combating terrorism. Energy security seems to be the most crucial complementary issue at now. Pakistan and India, who are the least energy-efficient nations in South Asia, now enjoy convenient access to the hydrocarbon-abundant Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Utilizing a single organizational platform is the most efficient method for addressing challenges and common interests. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has already developed a comprehensive framework for the Central Asian region. The organization has expanded its membership to include countries from South Asia. The SCO provides the most effective forum for resolving the challenges of cooperation and regional integration in this area (Korybko, 2021). Various areas worldwide are now engaged in the process of regional integration. Global regional integration and cooperation have steadily increased worldwide from the mid-20th century. During the last 25 years, many integration agreements have been signed and various regional organizations with political and economic objectives have been established (Rakhimov 2010). The "West African Economic and Monetary Union" (UEMOA) was established in 1994. In 1997, China, Korea, and Japan became part of the newly established ASEAN (ASEAN+3), while the Eurozone joined later in 1999. The Union of South American Nations was founded in 2004. The year 2000 saw the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community, along with numerous other institutions spanning across all continents (Wani, 2021).

The area of Central Asia is not an exception in this sense. Following their independence in 1991, the Central Asian governments made a concerted effort to promote regional integration and collaboration on a number of fronts. States in Central Asia became members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), Organization of Economic Cooperation Organization (UNECO), and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Two significant milestones in this region's integration process are the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Central Asia Cooperation Organization (CACO). The primary driving force behind these integration attempts was collaboration in the areas of politics, economy, and security. In a similar vein, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has faced challenges in building a robust regional cooperation framework among its member nations. The realization and focus on state-to-state and regional cooperation have increased since the end of the Cold War. It is impossible to separate the political, economic, and security components of integration between Central and South Asia from their geographical similarities. Actually, they are mutually beneficial. Economic integration requires political integration first. Asia-Pacific South Asia benefits from a common history spanning over a millennium and strong cultural affinities. Both areas have been working together to attempt to address the difficulties of the twenty-first century. The turn of the century has given them new opportunities for collaboration. There is a growing convergence of interests about significant problems and difficulties that both regions face (Gul, "Pakistan Sends Humanitarian Aid to Afghanistan, 2021).

The SCO has grown to be a highly important regional organization in terms of both militaries might and population, one that actively promotes peace and stability in the area while tackling comparable issues.

Because they face comparable difficulties, the nations of Central Asia and South Asia complement one another by being present in this forum. Terrorism poses serious security threats to both areas, necessitating coordinated action to stop it. One of the most complimentary factors for their collaboration is the energy security of both areas. The energy-deficient republics of South Asia find an appealing market in the huge hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (Gul, 2022). In a short amount of time, the SCO created an institutional structure to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism and to promote regional stability. The organization was founded as a forum to address border concerns, but its scope quickly grew to include security, the economy, and collaboration across social sectors. The member nations cleared the path for the organization to play a bigger role in promoting peace and security in the area by effectively resolving all border disputes and creating an atmosphere conducive to actions aimed at fostering trust. The organization's function is growing and changing as a result of its steady development, and it now has a bigger influence on the stability of the area. Due to many factors, including increased economic contacts and an increase in both classic and non-traditional security concerns, the function of regional and international organizations has grown in importance in the twenty-first century. Because regional challenges and conflicts need regional solutions, the overburdened and ineffective function of the United Nations in conflict resolution has further enhanced the importance of regional organizations in addressing regional conflicts (Wulf, 2009). In the twenty-first century, new geopolitical realities for the developing world and interregional connectivity. Many areas of the region are connected by the Central Asian region, which is situated at the meeting point between Asia and Europe. Its geostrategic position indicates how highly valued its function is in 21st-century regional connections. One outcome of globalization is regional integration. It offers advantages and disadvantages for both industrialized and developing nations (Collins, 2015). The developing world has gained a lot of knowledge from globalization. The most crucial of these are a strong sense of regional identity and integration. However, Central and South Asia have not created these links on a major scale. It was anticipated that a fresh wave of regional integration would take off during the Asian financial crisis at the end of the 20th century, particularly in South and East Asia (Webber, 2010).

Security Challenges for Pakistan within SCO

India Security challenges:

To successfully navigate the evolving global order in today's interconnected world, it is necessary to embrace multilateralism. According to John G. Reggie, multilateralism is an institutional structure that facilitates coordination between three or more states based on general principles of behavior. These principles dictate appropriate actions for a certain category of activities, without considering the specific interests of the parties involved or the strategic circumstances that may arise in specific situations. Undoubtedly, multilateralism is widely recognized as the most rational and efficient approach to tackle global challenges within the current international order. One of the significant advancements in promoting multilateralism in this context is the establishment of various regional and strategic organizations, such as the African Union (AU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Nations have started to recognize that regional organizations serve as a way of transforming complex regional security issues into a security community via the establishment of collective institutions that are built upon common values and goals. This, in turn, aids in mitigating security concerns (Dutta, 2011: 494). The primary catalyst for the emergence of regional groupings is

the growing awareness of this phenomenon. Moreover, regional organizations play a crucial role in promoting their strategic objectives inside the area, while simultaneously tackling global issues that affect the international community as a whole. SCO is same in this context (Oberdorfer, 1991).

Although initially limited to a certain region, this group has achieved worldwide notoriety and established a new geopolitical presence in Eurasia and other areas in the last decade due to many factors. The expansion of participation by involving additional Observer members and discussion partners indicates a broadening of involvement beyond Central Asia into the South and West Asian area.

(b) The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIS) has enhanced its collaboration with other regional and international organizations by entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ASEAN and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2005, attending SCO summits as a guest, joining the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) in 2006, and becoming a member of the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2007. In 2004, the SCO was granted observer status in the UN General Assembly and continues to have contact with the UNDP and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In 2010, a Joint Declaration on Cooperation between the Secretariats of the SCO and the UN was approved. In June 2011, it entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UN office on drugs and crime to address the growing problem of regional drug trafficking (c) Over time, the United States and European Union have escalated its involvement in order to provide stability to the Central Asian region, despite the initial notion that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was against the United States or the Western world. As a result, the SCO continues to form relationships with the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). According to Boland (2011), it often participates in meetings organized by the EU and OSCE, particularly with security issues in Central Asia. (d) Afghanistan has constantly attracted special attention at the SCO summit meetings since its establishment due to its important implications for CARs (Central Asian Republics). Before the September 11 attacks, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) focused solely on using the United Nations (UN) to maintain security in Afghanistan, rather than relying on external powers such as the United States (US) and the European Union (EU). The 6 + 2 concept, which consisted of China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, and two more nations, was supported as a solution to the Afghan war (Nye, 1992).

Following the events of 9/11, the governments in the Central Asian Region shifted their position and began supporting the US-led War on Terror. This support included granting permission for the establishment of military bases and providing logistical aid to the US-led forces in their fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. In addition, the SCO-Afghanistan contact group (SCO-ACG) was formed at the summit in June 2004. In 2007, Russian President Valdimir Putin said that the Afghanistan problem will be a topic of discussion at the Moscow conference in March 2009. He also mentioned that a special summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) would be convened to develop a strategy for the restoration of Afghanistan. Consequently, the issue in Afghanistan has gained global recognition, and key countries have recognized the importance of the SCO in achieving stability in Afghanistan. (e) Finally, the presence of influential countries like as China, India, and Russia have contributed to its worldwide recognition and permitted enhanced cooperation in the realms of culture, economics, and security. India cannot overlook the SCO's evolution from a solely regional to a global organization, and it has expressed its intention to become a full-fledged member of the SCO. Initially, India paid little attention to the Central Asian Republics (CARs). However, India's "Connect Central Asia Policy" has enhanced diplomatic relations with countries in the Central Asian region in the last several decades. India is engaging in diplomatic interactions with the CAR states, often sending delegations of senior

officials (Grey, 2009). India and Tajikistan have engaged in collaborative military drills since 2003. In November 2010, General V.K. Singh, the Chief of the Indian Army, traveled to Tajikistan to engage in discussions aimed at enhancing the security and military relations between the two countries. Consequently, there has been a steady growth in military collaboration (Panda, 2013a: 112). India's military technology and commercial cooperation with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan is expanding. India has been concurrently executing programs to partner with many CAR countries in various sectors including as information technology, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, small and medium-sized enterprises, entrepreneurial growth, human resource development, and capacity building. India has the potential to become a major investor in the critical sectors of many Central Asian countries. While China has made significant progress in meeting its energy and economic security demands, Russia has not achieved the same level of success. However, this situation might potentially alter via increased coordination between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) (Gershman, 1993). The SCO formally adopted a Memorandum of Obligation in June 2011, which allows non-member states to apply for SCO membership. India promptly expressed its intention to become a full member in light of this circumstance. The previous minister of foreign affairs, S.M. Krishna, said that India's inclusion in the SCO would not only provide value but also elevate the organization's status. Additionally, India's full membership will contribute significantly to the influence of the Shanghai regional group. India has thus recognized that joining the SCO would be very advantageous, with some of the key benefits including: India's strategic interest in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) is primarily motivated by economic and energy factors. India should thus collaborate with the SCO to enhance trade and fulfill its energy requirements. India is actively pursuing the development of the TAPI Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and has periodically entered into energy deals with Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan. As an example, the Satpayev oil block includes a contractual arrangement between India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh Limited and KazMunai Gaz, as well as NPCIL (Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited) and Kazatomprom, for the provision of uranium to India. In addition, Kazakhstan and India have entered into five agreements related to civil nuclear energy, space research, and hydrocarbons. Notwithstanding these advancements, India and the CAR countries nonetheless ought to enhance their energy collaboration for various factors, such as: (a) It is projected that by 2020, India's dependence on imported oil would increase to 85% of its overall oil requirements, compared to the previous 70%. India now ranks as the fourth-largest consumer of energy globally, behind the United States, China, and Japan. According to Kaplan, it is projected that by 2025, it would surpass Japan to become the third-largest net importer of oil in the world. As a result, many Indian security experts anticipate that India's primary strategic objective in the next 25 years will be to ensure energy security. The CAR is considered the primary energy region to fulfill its energy needs due to the significant gas and oil reserves in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, estimated to be around 300 trillion cubic feet and 90 to 200 billion barrels, respectively (Evans & Newnham, 1998).

Additionally, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan possess substantial hydroelectric energy resources (Panda, 2013a: 111). In addition, Russia and Kazakhstan, who are prominent non-OPEC energy producers and members of the SCO, have significant resources that they may provide to India. (a) The United States' exertion of influence on India to refrain from engaging in trade with Iran, the hesitation of Indian companies, and, to a certain extent, the influence of China are all factors that are causing a delay in India's efforts to successfully establish the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. (c) Currently, India relies significantly on Indonesia and the Middle East to meet a substantial amount of its energy requirements.

India should thus aim to acquire and enhance its energy resources from Central Asia via overland transportation, considering the uncertain political and security obstacles it has with neighboring countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan. Hence, India has the potential to attain its objective of energy security via the SCO meeting, a feat that may not be attainable alone. Furthermore, despite its successful political and strategic involvement, India's economic ties with the CARs remain the least satisfactory. India has the potential to enhance its collaboration in several domains like as energy, commerce, infrastructure, transportation, and the creation of new corridors. The SCO system may also enable the revival of previous trade channels via China, providing India with fresh prospects for economic collaboration in the area (Roy, 2012: 648). India has the potential to share its expertise in areas such as microfinance, capital markets, and banking. India's participation in the SCO will provide it more influence and opportunity in the Eurasia region, which has strategic significance for India's growth. India's maximum potential can only be realized when it garners the backing of the majority of its constituents upon joining regional alliances or organizations. Similarly, the same applies to the SCO, where Russia and the other CARs strongly endorse India's participation, even though India has fulfilled all its obligations according to the accepted rules established at the SCO Summit in June 2010. India has actively engaged as an observer member in several efforts of the SCO, including energy clubs, the anti-terrorist framework, and programs related to transportation, new technologies, agriculture, research, and education. In April 2012, Russia's Foreign Minister, Mr. Sergei Lavrov, recognized and said that India has the potential to become a full member of the SCO without any restrictions (The Hindu, 2011: 14). India's full participation in the SCO since 2002 has been seen as beneficial for the organization's growth, as stated by Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (Baruah, 2002 and 2003). The strong backing from Russia and numerous Central Asian Republics (CARs) may be attributed to the following reasons: (a) India has a strong and enduring historical connection to the Eurasian region, which is further strengthened by its strong and growing bilateral relationships with both Russia and the Central Asian Republics (CARs). (b) Russia and the states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CARs) endorse India's bid for membership based on its growing influence in Asia and its capacity to act as a counterweight to China. (c) India plays a crucial role in the establishment of a unified Eurasian energy market for Russia. It is a key partner in the Asian area and has the potential to become a natural ally in the SCO (d) The members of the SCO recognize that in order to fully cooperate with the current observer nations in areas such as counterterrorism, environmental problem-solving, ensuring food and energy security, and economic cooperation, including banking, it is necessary for these governments to have full membership status. (e) The hydrocarbon fuel and ample energy resources possessed by Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan could greatly enhance the energy security of all the countries in the region if they were collectively and judiciously explored and used. The regions of South, South-West, and Central Asia would greatly benefit from an expanded SCO. India's standing in the SCO has more potential for expansion with the backing of these influential countries. Principle of Non-Intervention refers to the concept that states should not interfere in the internal affairs of other states. India consistently opposes and would persistently reject any unilateral intervention in another country's internal matters, save for cases involving the United Nations. The SCO distinguishes itself from NATO by focusing on regional peacekeeping and refraining from military participation or assistance in any war or security situation under its jurisdiction. After the invasion of Georgia in August 2008, Russia officially acknowledged the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia from Georgia. The Western nations were mostly responsible for denouncing this Russian move, with some of them advocating for the intervention of the United Nations or NATO. However, the collective members of the SCO expressed their disapproval of

any kind of engagement in Georgia and took no action other than observing the Russian invasion. In April 2010, amidst the turmoil in Kyrgyzstan which led to sporadic violence and a change in government, the SCO chose not to intervene. Instead, they issued a statement expressing their apprehension about the situation, offering condolences to the victims, and promoting peace, security, and political stability (Swanstrom, 2008). Despite these occurrences demonstrating the SCO's ineffectiveness poor managing a regional disaster, the organization is essentially guided by non-interventionist ideals. Since it is based on the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of its member countries, this also has advantages for India.

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Afghanistan and its stability:

India, like other countries, is dedicated to ensuring lasting stability in Afghanistan, especially after the withdrawal of US-led troops by July 2014. India is a major foreign donor to Afghanistan, having provided the nation with almost \$2 billion in aid, the majority of which has been non-military. India is concerned about the possibility of a power vacuum in Afghanistan after Western soldiers go. India believes that China will make every effort to fill this vacuum, both directly and via the SCO framework. To safeguard its strategic interests, India must guarantee that China's entry to Afghanistan beyond 2014 is not without limitations. To a certain extent, this may be achieved by enhancing its engagement with the SCO.

India might use the SCO to further its interests in Afghanistan, given that Afghanistan has observer status within the organization. In December 2012, Sanjay Singh, the Indian Secretary (East), highlighted the importance of the situation in Afghanistan for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). He expressed India's intention to enhance its collaboration with a specific SCO entity called RATS. RATS aims to bolster counterterrorism cooperation with ASEAN and has been actively involved in formulating the action plan for implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, 2010 World Expo, and 2011 Asian Winter Games, RATS offered security support and effectively carried out criminal interdictions, arrests, and issued prior warnings to other SCO states. Therefore, India can safeguard its interests in Afghanistan by using the SCO security framework. Moreover, China and Russia possess greater influence in the region, leading the United States to acknowledge Russia's role in promoting stability in Afghanistan. India may achieve its objective of ensuring enduring stability in Afghanistan by enhancing its involvement with the SCO as a full member.

US engagement with SCO and concerns:

The bilateral connection between the United States and India has significantly deepened throughout the years. However, India has the task of finding a harmonious equilibrium between the United States and its own strategic concerns in many regions and countries, such as the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Iran, Myanmar, and the Indian Ocean region. The United States and India have divergent perspectives on this particular component of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). For instance, it is widely held in India that being a member of the SCO would bring them significant benefits. Nevertheless, there is a divergence of viewpoints in the United States about the SCO. India's full membership in the SCO would thus have a significant effect on the strategic partnership between the United States and India. There is ongoing controversy in the United States about the general policy of the SCO. Some individuals hold the belief that the organization's main objective is to unite the CAR states and establish a regional security alliance that is unfriendly towards the United States (Germanovich, 2008: 21). There is a valid risk that China and Russia may collaborate to establish a military alliance in Eurasia inside the SCO with the purpose of opposing NATO. The United States' attempt in 2005 to get observer status in the SCO was rejected, confirming this stance (Kavalski, 2012: 1946). In contrast to this perspective, there is another viewpoint that argues that the SCO does not pose a substantial military, political, or economic threat to US interests. This is because there are more factors inside the forum that contribute to fragmentation rather than integration. In this particular

context, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that the United States is not at risk from the SCO's Peace Mission 2005 or any subsequent military exercises (China Daily, 2005). Another compelling perspective is that, while the US is not under a direct danger from the SCO, it is nonetheless beneficial for the US to closely monitor the organization's activities and seek cooperation with it. The United States may enhance its economic, political, and military objectives in the Central African Republic by collaborating with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The mentioned interests include safeguarding the security of pipelines, enhancing energy security for both the United States and the European Union by diversifying suppliers and export routes, encouraging private investment from the United States, and maintaining stable global pricing by continuing to produce oil and gas from the area (Germanovich: 23). Moreover, the United States' participation in Afghanistan is impeded by the Uzbek government's expulsion of US forces from Karshi-Khanabad Airbase (K2) in 2005 due to pressure exerted by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Therefore, enhancing the United States' connections with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) would more effectively serve US interests. It would be intriguing to see how the US would navigate the challenges of its formal engagement with the SCO, even if US interests would be more effectively advanced by collaboration with the SCO rather than pursuing an independent approach. One of the challenges that the US may encounter is the increasing influence of China and Russia in the Eurasian region. (a) The inclusion of Iran, Pakistan, and India as additional members to enhance the power of the groupings. (c) The majority of arms exchanges between these states, including those between China and Pakistan and India China and Russia; Iran and Russia. Hence, the stimulation of economic growth, scientific progress, and technological expertise is motivating Russia, China, India, and Pakistan to upgrade their military capabilities. The United States' attempt to isolate Iran has been nullified by its subsequent collaboration with members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), giving it access to various import and export markets. Considering this, the engagement of the United States with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will provide positive results if it can effectively address the previously listed concerns. However, the cooperation between the United States and India in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) might help achieve significant energy and economic objectives, while also contributing to the containment of China and Russia's collective power in the Eurasian region. Overall, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has emerged as a prominent center of influence in the contemporary period of multilateralism. It functions as a means for fostering enduring regional collaboration in Central Asia via diplomatic discussions and formal accords between member countries. It is well recognized that the SCO is actively contributing to the peace, security, and stability of the area. It has the potential to become a leading and dynamic network for emerging Asian nations, and India should not be excluded from it. To promote progress and ensure peace and security in the Eurasian region, as well as to optimize its economic, energy, and other strategic benefits, it is advisable for India to seek permanent membership in this organization.

Pakistan's security Challenges and SCO strategic partnership;

Pakistan's primary objective is to maintain a strategic equilibrium in her relations with China and the US. Pakistan should exert heightened vigilance to achieve its geopolitical goals, which revolve on fostering economic development and fostering positive relations with SCO states. The concepts of "Long War versus Rising Peacefully," advocated by the United States and China, respectively, amalgamate the dynamics of "conflict and peace," giving rise to a novel narrative within the global framework that diverges from the Cold War era. Pakistan's primary objective is to develop a pragmatic diplomatic approach considering this situation. Pakistan has a distinctive position in the present regional and global

circumstances. Pakistan's foreign policy is facing challenges in establishing a credible position within the evolving global order. Pakistan has faced significant challenges on both domestic and international fronts in the more than 10 years after the tragic events of 9/11. Pakistan strongly desires to attain a rightful status within the community of nations, where its significant efforts in combating terrorism are duly acknowledged. Despite Pakistan's prominent role in the global counterterrorism efforts, it remains one of the countries most impacted by terrorism and is regarded with suspicion by other nations. Pakistan has been a focal point for acts of terrorism, extremism, and militancy due to its vigorous efforts to combat these threats. In order to improve its image internationally, Pakistan must effectively explain its efforts to resist these tendencies. Pakistan's resolve requires enough projection to address these challenges.

The political establishment remains nascent and has yet to attain a level of maturity that enables it to function efficiently and provide the essential advantages of democracy. In order to address the deficiencies and lack of success inside one's own household, the key requirements are effective governance, maintenance of law and order, and the establishment of socioeconomic equity. Furthermore, it is essential to augment its standing as a society that is known for its moderation, tolerance, and progressiveness. The statutes of the SCO lack the necessary level of specificity to effectively facilitate the expansion of the organization. Two significant members, Russia and China, do not seem to be actively advocating for its expansion. The Secretary General of the SCO has also said that the cooperation's inter-verification might be affected by its expansion. Pakistan's interests and stakes in the SCO are considered to be of comparable importance. The following paragraphs outline the potential advantages that Pakistan may get from its association with the SCO.

Criteria for Strategy and Security

After the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) left Afghanistan in December 2014, it is crucial for all concerned parties to prioritize the evolving regional security situation at present. Pakistan may derive strategic benefits by aligning with the alliance's basic security strategy, which involves promoting mutual trust, averting conflict, and countering terrorism. India's admission to the organization is a prerequisite for becoming a member of SCO. Nevertheless, India seems to lack enthusiasm in joining the SCO due to the strategic collaboration between the United States and India. India's repeated absence from the SCO summit highlights its lack of interest and disregard for the organization. Considering these issues, Pakistan's involvement in the SCO seems uncertain. The talents of a diplomat are measured by how they react to a challenging issue.

Currently, military personnel from the SCO are involved in several combat operations. Pakistan's participation in such collaborative endeavors is likely to enhance its proficiency in joint services planning. Pakistan's armed forces mostly rely on Western-made weaponry and equipment, which are quite costly. Pakistan will be afforded the opportunity to investigate alternate avenues for technology exchange and enhance military collaboration with the SCO alliance, particularly with Russia, inside the SCO framework. The visit of General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, the former Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan, to Moscow in October 2012 strongly suggests that this is likely to happen. Afghanistan serves as the primary source of drugs worldwide, with the bulk of these substances being transferred to neighboring areas primarily via Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Pakistan stands to gain from the collaborative anti-drug trafficking exercises conducted by the SCO. This includes not only the opportunity for personnel training via the Anti-Narcotics Task Force, but also the potential for intelligence exchange that may help uncover the intricate network of drug obstacles.

Opportunities for Pakistan in SCO

SCO and Pakistan partnership:

The SCO is the largest regional organization globally, including about 80% of Eurasia, 32% of the world's GDP, and 20–25% of international trade. China is the predominant trading nation inside the SCO. Russia plays a crucial role in global trade, especially via its energy exports. Despite the lesser contributions of other members, especially the Central Asian Republics (CARs), the trade dynamics are significantly enhanced by their natural resources, including minerals, oil, and gas. Let us now discuss the magnitude of Pakistan's exports to SCO member states. In 2023–2024, Pakistan's overall trade volume with China amounted to \$16 billion. A substantial trade deficit of \$10.8 billion occurred, with imports totaling \$13.5 billion and exports amounting to \$2.7 billion. This may stem from the 2010 free trade agreement between China and the ASEAN countries, which eliminated 93% of tariff lines. The absence of preferential treatment for Pakistani exporters in Chinese markets has led to a decline in the nation's export growth in vital sectors, particularly garments and textiles. Consequently, reducing preferential tariffs on high-potential Pakistani goods might substantially enhance exports to China. Pakistan's exports to Russia declined from \$144.5 million in 2019–20 to \$78 million in 2023–24. Research suggests that Russia has a \$2.8 billion export potential, mostly fueled by textiles, agricultural products, surgical supplies, chemicals and associated items, footwear, and plastics (Anwar, 2024). In 2023–2024, Pakistan's trade with the Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) was limited to \$325 million. Pakistan had a trade surplus of \$243 million, with imports amounting to \$41 million and exports totaling \$284 million. The yearly export potential for CARs is \$6 billion, and this surplus may increase further.

In 2023–2024, Pakistan's exports to all SCO members amounted to \$3 billion, in contrast to a potential exceeding \$15 billion yearly. The CARs provide substantial markets for Pakistani goods and services, and the SCO platform may facilitate commercial growth. Pakistan has a competitive advantage in several sectors, including agriculture, pharmaceuticals, sporting goods, cotton and its derivatives, sugar, and cement—all of which are urgently needed in the Central and Eastern Regions. Conversely, Pakistan needs access to natural resources, particularly the easily available oil and gas in the Central African Republic (CAR), along with petroleum products, metals, and raw cotton. Regional integration with Central Asia's energy resources might enhance Pakistan's energy security. Pakistan might get advantages from the Belt and Road Initiative and other associated Shanghai Cooperation Organization initiatives for infrastructure development. The turmoil in Afghanistan has impeded Pakistan's trade with the Central Asian Republics. Connecting Pakistan via Tajikistan to the regional supply chains of the Central Asian Republics (CARs) may enhance commerce and logistics via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The SCO's focus on regional connectivity, including port, rail, and road infrastructure, may facilitate Pakistan's evolution as a commercial and transportation hub linking South Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia. By participating in the SCO's connectivity projects, Pakistan might strengthen its trade relations with the Central Asian Republics and broaden the markets for its goods and services. The SCO member states, comprising 40% of the global population and around 32% of its GDP, provide a vital potential for members to substantially impact the future trajectory of the world. In addition to fostering economic collaboration, the SCO aims to address security concerns, enhance regional stability, and cultivate culturally connections among its member states. The organization's commitment to effectively tackling the challenges posed by terrorism, regional conflicts, and other forms of instability is evident in its multifaceted strategy (Najum, 2024). The Shanghai Five, established in 1996 by China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, are the precursors of the SCO. The organization started to

exhibit the traits of the contemporary SCO with Uzbekistan's accession in 2001. India and Pakistan became members of the SCO in 2017, while Belarus is expected to join in 2023. Iran will participate in the future as well. The organization's increasing importance as a platform for regional cooperation and communication among nations with diverse political, economic, and cultural interests is underscored by its expansion. Critical issues pertaining to security, economic collaboration, and environmental difficulties are slated for discussion during the summit. The principal aims of member states will be to combat terrorism, enhance regional stability, and promote trade and investment initiatives (Editorial, 2024).

Pakistan, the host nation of the summit, has a unique opportunity to position itself as a crucial nexus in the region by fostering dialogue on trade connectivity, youth engagement, and economic collaboration. The discussions about regional issues and the organizational decisions aimed at enhancing collaboration among member states are expected to attract significant attention during the summit. Nonetheless, India's intricate ties with its neighbors complicate Pakistan's efforts to enhance its standing within the SCO. India, a prominent member in the SCO, has recently shown hesitance to engage. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to abstain from the latest summit in Astana and the conversion of last year's SCO summit into a virtual format exemplify this shift in thinking. Such moves undermine India's commitment to the SCO framework and its ability to navigate the intricate dynamics of its bilateral disputes with China and Pakistan alongside regional collaboration. India has always shown hesitance to engage comprehensively in the SCO, partially owing to apprehensions of China's preeminence. This might jeopardize the organization's overarching goals. India cannot refute that the SCO offers a considerable possibility for meaningful collaboration on critical regional issues, notwithstanding its cautious approach to managing ties. The significance of collaboration in combating terrorism and addressing ongoing conflicts cannot be overstated, especially in an area where geopolitical rivalries often jeopardize security. India's bilateral conflicts with China and Pakistan raise concerns over its enduring commitment to regional collaboration and its stated objectives inside the organization. The Western perspective on the SCO further complicates the situation. Western nations express apprehension over the organization's objectives, as it is progressively seen as a strategic coalition aimed at countering US influence in the region (Kaleem, 2024). Western nations, particularly the United States, have expressed skepticism over the objectives of the SCO, seeing it as a mechanism for China and Russia to augment their power across Eurasia. The organization's expanding membership, including countries that have historically opposed the West, intensifies this perspective. Consequently, Western governments may hesitate to support the SCO's initiatives, thereby diminishing the organization's efficacy as a platform for regional collaboration. The leaders of the SCO Council have articulated their aspiration for a "new democratic and equitable political and economic world order" in their declarations, heightening Western apprehensions over the organization's potential efficacy. Pakistan has the capacity to alleviate Western concerns over the objectives of the SCO by positioning itself as a mediator and facilitator of dialogue among its member states. The next SCO summit in Pakistan serves not only as a discussion starter but also as a chance to reevaluate the organization's role in the contemporary geopolitical context. The summit of heads of state will undoubtedly facilitate discourse on critical issues; nevertheless, it is equally imperative for member states to collaborate in a cooperative and mutually advantageous manner. The achievement of the SCO's collective power depends on collaborative efforts that promote regional integration and shared prosperity. For Pakistan, this necessitates fostering a climate that promotes open dialogue and collaboration, allowing members to address pressing issues like as environmental sustainability, trade barriers, and terrorism. The outcome

of this meeting may dictate the future trajectory of the SCO, underscoring the significance of multilateralism in an increasingly linked world. To provide the circumstances for a more prosperous and cohesive region, Pakistan must embrace its role as a facilitator of communication and cooperation in preparation for this significant event. By doing this action, Pakistan may enhance its worldwide standing and bolster its domestic reputation, while simultaneously assisting the SCO in addressing the most pressing issues of our day.

Strengthening Pakistan's Role in RATS and SCO Security Exercises

This is the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), the most efficient operational security institution in the SCO, although Pakistan at best has been involved in its work. To realize RATS to the fullest capability, Pakistan must institutionalize its involvement by permanently deploying liaison officers in Tashkent, officializing inter-agencies communication procedures linking ISI, CTD, FIA, NACTA and military intelligence, regularly updating information on the extremist organizations operating along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and seeking technological co-operation accords on digital surveillance and cyber-security instruments. One of the significant in RATS intelligence sharing is the disproportionality of member states in terms of depth of contribution with Pakistan being a consistent net provider of actionable intelligence because it is geographically close to militant networks. To tackle this imbalance will involve Pakistan promulgating standardized forms of threat reporting, advocacy to ensure joint counterterrorism task forces are established and real time quick alert capabilities. Besides, the involvement of Pakistan in the Peace Mission and other SCO counterterror drills have to go beyond the simple military drills to include combined hostages rescue missions, counter-IED exercises, urban warfare tactics, and joint command and control systems. These regions need to be improved in terms of the interoperability of operations to effectively deal with decentralized militant groups operating within border area, mountainous terrain, and urban safe houses.

Making SCO a Platform for Stabilizing Afghanistan

Since Afghanistan is a central location in determining the border stability and internal security of Pakistan, the SCO holds a valuable though untapped system of diplomacy to form regional consensus. With time, the pattern of SCO security collaboration will be more and more conditional on the reintegration of Afghanistan into the broader Eurasian security systems. Pakistan must hence recommend a systematic framework which incorporates Afghanistan in SCO mechanisms as a permanent observer, a formal discussion colleague and a technical member to RATS scheduling gatherings.

Pakistan can take three short term policy directions

(a) Border Security and Intelligence Integration:

Pakistan can suggest creating a Quadrilateral Border Intelligence Mechanism between Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and China. This framework would explicitly respond to the most pressing security priorities, such as the infiltration of militants across borders, chains of terrorism, the arms smuggling, and the control of the refugee flows.

To accomplish this goal, the United States exhibits policy actions aimed at enhancing economic security.

(b) Economic Security Diplomacy:

An economic regulation process should be associated with a long-term security settlement in Afghanistan. This involves Tran's trade surveillance, creation of border economic zones, security treaties to regional pipelines, and protection measures to new railways. Incorporating economic stability into security collaboration renders war more expensive and the maintenance of peace more desirable to all parties concerned.

Under these circumstances, the multilateral pressure against Non-State Actors may be used to protect the interests of the state and its people.

(c) Multilateral Pressure against Non-State Actors: In such cases, the multilateral pressure against Non-State Actors may be applied in order to defend the interests of the state and its citizens.

Pakistan also has to strive to take the threat of militants groups, like TTP, Daesh-Khorasan and other insurgent formations, to the global arena by introducing such SCO discourses as global extremist networks, transnational jihad movement, and regional militant spillover actors. The application of multilateral language makes it a collective obligation to deal with the security threats in Afghanistan which shifts the regional discussion no longer relies on the script in which Pakistan is solely responsible in the collapse of security in the region.

Leveraging SCO for Security–Economic Integration

Pakistan needs to establish a solid security planning on the basis of economic security, which forms the core of the overall regional strategy of China. With these priorities in place, Pakistan is likely to make its SCO membership a kind of strategic defense of an economic sort, especially concerning CPEC and other major investments in the region. Some of the primary concerns must be the joint protection strategies of special economic zones, regional counter-smuggling and anti-piracy laws, the pipeline routes securities in the form of multilateral agreements, and the laws to protect investments at the nation-level.

Pakistan should initiate an SCO Infrastructure Security Charter to help in protecting the substantial development plans. The charter may contain measures to secure rail corridors, inspection of construction sabotage, the creation of joint intelligence departments that would be focused on infrastructure security, and the adoption of cyber security standards of energy grids and logistics network. These efforts can also make Pakistan become more of a provider of security in the SCO than a security consumer, thus able to show leadership in conventional and unconventional security matters.

Expanding Military and Defense Diplomacy

Pakistan needs to use SCO to diversify and modernize defense alliances:

Joint operations: increase joint military activities with China, Russia, and Central Asia will enhance the tactical coordination and operational preparedness. Counterterrorism exercises, cyber defense, and border management exercises should be focused.

Capacity-building programs: Pakistan is able to coordinate on expertise training in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) which will help in conventional and unconventional threat preparedness.

Defense industrial cooperation: It is possible to discuss joint research and technology transfer contracts with the SCO members that would improve the defensive potential of Pakistan and decrease dependency on the Western weapons suppliers.

Through strengthening its defense diplomacy, Pakistan will be able to strengthen its deterrence posture, demonstrate stability, and minimize its susceptibility to regional conflict.

Conclusion

Pakistan's membership in the SCO alters its security environment by linking national security priorities to broader regional frameworks. The organization provides Pakistan with valuable opportunities for counterterrorism collaboration, intelligence sharing, and joint action against extremism, separatism, and transnational crime. SCO platforms like RATS help Pakistan address internal threats such as TTP, border militancy, narcotics trafficking, and hybrid insurgencies. At the same time, Pakistan faces complicated obstacles, notably given India's membership in the SCO and opposing geopolitical ambitions inside the

organization. Afghanistan's instability and cross-border terrorism remain major challenges, necessitating ongoing multinational intervention. The fight for regional power between China, Russia, and the United States complicates Pakistan's geopolitical situation. However, the SCO offers diplomatic space to diversify political options and assist geo-economic activities like CPEC and energy corridors.

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