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Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Geopolitics of Eurasia



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The advanced mechanism in international relations has been going through a profound transformation and evolutionary development. New regionalism or regionalization has emerged as a



significant trend in international affairs. Now, countries have deepened cooperation among other states and regions. On the other side, technological transformation in various areas, i.e., transport, communication, information sharing and inclusive economic development projects, contributes to establishing a cohesive global community of states countering common global issues. Along with the explicit benefits these processes bring, fundamental pillars of the new regionalism are institutions and organizations that provide integrated platforms to the countries. It builds qualitatively modern forms of interactions. The interdependence of markets exerts reciprocal influence on the dynamics of economic processes in various regions and strengthens trade relationships. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a great model of extensive partnership and regionalism. Regional integration via SCO would pave the way for supranational regulatory systems and a flexible model of future alignments. Therefore, the article analyses the role of SCO in the development of inter and intra-state relations in the Eurasian region. The study also highlights the prospects for multifaceted cooperation with the changing geopolitics of Eurasia.

SCO: Model of Hybrid Interstate Partnership

Established in 2001, the SCO has continued towards its evolutionary path to meet its agendas amid regional security, stability, and economic development. In this aspect, multifarious cooperation has attracted more



countries. Thereby, SCO depicts a hybrid interstate model. Eurasia has a system for regional interaction based on the principles and approaches formulated on consensus. Multilayered dynamics of the SCO's development are driven primarily by substantial requirements and various agreements adhering to the relevant principles and characteristics of cooperation. The SCO sets its ultimate goal for the prosperity of its people. Its structure was originally conceived with three fundamental pillars:

- a. Regional security and stability
- b. Trade and economic activities
- c. Establishing humanitarian and cultural ties.

Moreover, SCO represents a hybrid model of the regional organization as it cooperates in various sectors, i.e., agriculture, Information Technology (IT), health, tourism, environment, climate etc. The organization has eight member countries, i.e., China, Pakistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and India, including four observer States interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus,

Iran, and Mongolia) and six Dialogue Partners (Turkey, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Armenia).

The enlargement of SCO with the inclusion of Pakistan in 2017 has enhanced its geopolitical weight. The accession of the powerful and influential South Asian State has allowed the SCO to strengthen its capacity and enhance the spectrum of its opportunities and combat existing and emerging menaces. Furthermore, on 25 May 2021, Pakistan hosted the sixteen virtual meeting of the SCO forum. The forum was conducted virtually, and representatives of the SCO member states participated. In this aspect, it can be witnessed that Pakistan has been playing a key role in integrating the regional nations at the SCO platform.

The SCO Partnership as a Model of New Realities of Eurasian Development

The organization has versatility manifests that the Eurasian countries have gained numerous economic advantages, enhanced production capacity, technological competencies and financial potential. Thereby, these mutually



complementary aspects establish an integrated platform for extended trade and economic cooperation. Its economic potential can be determined by its total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as it accounts for almost 20% (\$18 trillion) of the global GDP. It has been anticipated that SCO's total GDP will enhance by 30% in future. In this



aspect, the prospects for wider cooperation and collaboration in other areas are high, resulting in a positive-sum game for each state involved.

The SCO composition in the Eurasian region will stimulate the need for further structural reforms. The SCO framework paves the way for the states to counter the emerging Non-traditional security (NTS) threats. The idea of cooperation for environment security is another significant step taken by the organization. Furthermore, the increased efforts of big Eurasian countries depict that the organization can adjust to the transforming developments, objective needs, and changing realities. Presently, the SCO has expanded the sphere of its economic potential. The countries are actively enhancing collaboration in trade, transport, science & technology and many other sectors.

The giant member countries, i.e., Russia and China, are the high-tech and science-intensive centers. Having the full spectrum of mineral wealth, these giants leave no stone unturned to sustain the production cycle, i.e., from the extraction of raw materials to their processing with a high degree of added value. The communication established within the SCO based on multilateral accords, joint experience and unified goals for achieving economic prosperity has paved the way for their quest for a greater Eurasian region.

SCO International Dimension and Prospects

The vision of linking efforts to implement large-scale projects has been broadly highlighted. Therefore, countries must find an optimal mechanism for adapting and

merging schemes within the ambit of SCO. Provided the multifarious nature of integration in implementing different initiatives, the most substantial contours are harmonizing national interest based on negotiations, political coordination, mutually acceptable solutions to the problems and solid steps for collective activities. In this aspect, academic cooperation within the SCO region would establish progressive grounds for joint ventures. It will enhance cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections.

In the multipolar world order, the effectiveness and prestige of any international or regional institutions have been measured by the pragmatic approach or steps that bring tangible results in one sphere or another.



Therefore, various dimensions of Eurasian alignment have been highlighted, taking into account the direct coordination among the member states. The synergy of the SCO region would enhance its capacity for regional collaborations and reinvigorate wider economic or security interests into the phenomena of regionalism. Therefore, the mentioned options should be incorporated in the broader SCO agenda for enhanced international cooperation:

- China is the greatest ally of Pakistan in the South Asian region. Moreover, Russia's pivot to Asia has also reflected its growing alignment with Pakistan. The



SCO provides many opportunities to Pakistan to strengthen its relationship with Eurasian states. Therefore, SCO activities should be focused on adopting new strategies in the changing dynamic of regional socio-politico and economic discourse.

- Achieving consensus in the decision-making process is one of the significant aspects. In this regard, SCO countries must join hands to implement the developmental programs practically and combat emerging perils.
- SCO plays the role of a unifier of Eurasia, where the major partners combine their efforts to ensure peace and stability. The role of SCO regional states is significant in the Afghan peace process. SCO is an optimal dialogue platform for discussing regional or international issues. Therefore, SCO as an integrated organization can play a pivotal role in bringing peace to the region and end decades-long war.
- For the future expansion of the SCO countries, all member states must revise the infrastructure connectedness plans, including road and maritime routes, which play a crucial role to promote trade. The smooth outreach to the common commodities can bring economic revolution.
- The SCO Framework for 2017 – 2021 for initiating various projects explains substantial contours of the economic developmental process. In this context, Section 7 is devoted entirely to cooperation in the field of transport. Therefore, it provides a plethora of opportunities for the countries to upgrade transport infrastructure.