

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): A Catalyst for Pakistan's Growth and Global Engagement

written by Ms Zarka Khan | December 28, 2023



The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an intergovernmental organization comprising eight member states, has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia. Since its inception in 2001, the SCO has played a crucial role in fostering regional cooperation, promoting economic integration, and addressing shared security challenges. For Pakistan, a full member of the SCO since 2017, the organization has been a catalyst for growth, development, and enhanced global engagement.

The legislation is being considered as a global standard for governments seeking to use AI's potential advantages while mitigating the threats associated with it. Amid a highly fragmented landscape of rules and regulations worldwide, the EU bill is regarded as the most comprehensive attempt to date to regulate AI.

Economic Transformation and Infrastructure Development

Within the SCO, an institution that strongly prioritizes energy cooperation among its member states, there has been discussion about cooperation in the energy sector. Joint ventures for energy production and exploration, as well as support for renewable energy initiatives, fall under the purview of the SCO and align with the overarching goals of fostering sustainable development and fortifying economic ties. Pakistan's incorporation into regional and international commercial networks has also been made easier by the SCO. It seeks to increase commerce among SCO member states by lowering tariffs on a variety of items. Furthermore, the SCO has played a significant role in advancing regional connectivity by means of programs like the SCO Road Transport Agreement and the SCO Railway Cooperation Plan.

Energy Security and Resource Diversification

Cooperation in the energy sector has been debated within the SCO, an organization that places a strong emphasis on energy cooperation among its member states. Within the framework of the SCO, joint ventures in energy exploration and production, together with assistance for renewable energy programs, are in line with the larger objectives of strengthening economic connections and promoting sustainable development. This can help Pakistan in combatting its needs for energy.

Security and Shared Challenges:

Pakistan's security concerns are deeply intertwined with the broader security dynamics of the region. The SCO, with its diverse membership and focus on regional cooperation, provides a valuable platform for Pakistan to address these concerns and collaborate with other member states on shared security challenges. Additionally, major actors in the SCO including Russia share a good relationship with India. Matters of cooperation can be ensured through platform of SCO to ensure peace in Asia.

Combating Terrorism and Extremism:

Pakistan's battle against terrorism and extremism heavily relies on the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO. Pakistan can effectively tackle these threats thanks to RATS, which makes intelligence sharing, cooperative exercises, and capacity building among member states easier. Combating cross-border terrorism and stopping the spread of extremist beliefs have benefited greatly from the organization's emphasis on exchanging best practices and promoting regional cooperation.

Afghanistan and Regional Stability:

Pakistan and the wider region are seriously concerned about security due to the current situation in Afghanistan. Through its ministerial meetings and summits, the SCO offers Afghanistan's neighbors a forum for communication and collaboration, fostering regional stability and preventing unrest from spreading to other nearby nations. Long-term peace in the area also depends on the organization's work to alleviate the humanitarian situation and aid Afghanistan's economic development.

Cyber security:

Pakistan is receiving more and more assistance from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to improve its cyber capabilities and tackle cybersecurity issues. Pakistan's cyber resilience has increased thanks in large part to the organization's emphasis on capacity building, information sharing, and regional cooperation.

Through its Working Group on Information Security collaboration, the SCO has created a framework for regional cybersecurity collaboration. The working group gives member nations a forum for exchanging intelligence regarding cyberthreats, creating cooperative cybersecurity plans, and working together on cybersecurity exercises. To help member states share cyber threat intelligence, the SCO established the Cyber Information Sharing Centre (CISC). Member states can exchange information regarding cyber

threats, vulnerabilities, and incident response protocols via a secure site offered by the CISC. Member states are better able to defend their vital networks and infrastructure against cyberattacks thanks to this information sharing. To assist Pakistan in improving its cyber capabilities, the SCO has put in place several training and capacity-building initiatives. Professionals in Pakistani cybersecurity is trained in subjects like digital forensics, incident response, and cyber threat analysis through these programs. The training enhances Pakistan's capacity to identify, stop, and mitigate cyberattacks.



Cyberterrorism concerns are being addressed by the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS). Cyberterrorism scenarios are part of the collaborative counterterrorism exercises that RATS undertakes. By participating in these exercises, member states can better coordinate and cooperate in the fight against cyberterrorism. Apart from these regional endeavors, Pakistan has received bilateral support in the field of cybersecurity from the SCO. For instance, Pakistan received equipment and training from the SCO in 2019 to aid in its efforts to combat cybercrime. The SCO will probably become more crucial in assisting Pakistan in addressing cybersecurity issues as the cyber threat scenario changes. The organization is dedicated to advancing cybersecurity cooperation with Pakistan and assisting the nation in creating a more secure and resilient cyberspace.

Global Engagement and Regional Leadership

Pakistan now has a platform to expand its international presence and fortify its relationships with powerful nations thanks to the SCO. Pakistan has benefited from the organization's summits and ministerial meetings, which have given it the chance to highlight its development accomplishments, advance its foreign policy objectives, and interact with important regional and global partners. Pakistan's standing as a regional leader has also increased because of its SCO membership. Pakistan now has a forum to discuss regional concerns including commerce, energy, and security from the standpoint of the organization. Pakistan's status as a responsible and constructive regional actor has been reinforced by its active

participation in SCO efforts.

Geopolitical Maneuvering:

SCO membership enhances Pakistan's position as a key player in Eurasian geopolitics. The SCO offers an alternative to Western-dominated institutions, allowing Pakistan to engage with a multipolar world order. This promotes a multi-faceted approach to global challenges and a stronger voice for developing nations. Increased interaction with regional partners like China, Russia, and Central Asian states strengthens Pakistan's strategic partnerships and fosters a multi-dimensional foreign policy approach. SCO provides a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution, where Pakistan can play a constructive role in mediating regional disputes and fostering greater understanding between India and other member states. SCO membership elevates Pakistan's international image as a responsible and proactive player in regional and global affairs. Increased engagement through SCO initiatives showcases Pakistan's commitment to regional cooperation and strengthens its image as a reliable partner. Cultural exchanges, educational collaborations, and other SCO-led initiatives create avenues for Pakistan to showcase its rich cultural heritage and project a positive image on the international stage.

By fostering communication and cooperation with other member states, Pakistan can address biased narratives and showcase its positive contributions to regional stability and development.

Conclusion

The growth, development, and international participation trajectory of Pakistan has been significantly impacted by the SCO. The organization's framework for comprehensive collaboration has promoted economic integration, boosted security cooperation, improved energy security, and given Pakistan a platform to further its international engagement. Pakistan is well-positioned to gain greater advantages from its participation in the SCO as it develops and broadens its reach, thereby enhancing stability, prosperity, and interconnectivity in the Eurasian area.