

**Q-1-Discuss the role of India in promoting regional stability and security through its participation in the shanghai cooperation organization (SCO).**

### **Approach -**

In this question candidates need to write about india's role in promoting regional stability and security through participation in shanghai cooperation organization.

### **Introduction -**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a permanent international intergovernmental organization. It covers 40% of the global population, nearly 20% of the global GDP and 22% of the world's land mass. It plays a strategically important role in Asia due to its geographical significance this enables it to control Central Asia hence India's role in promoting stability is crucial.

### **Body -**

The establishment of the SCO coincided with the broadening of India's strategic vision.

- With the defeat of the Taliban, a window of opportunity opened to connect with Afghanistan and the CARs. Since its inception, India had evinced interest in joining the grouping because of its stake in peace and stability in the region.
- At the Astana summit in 2005 India was accorded Observer status in the grouping.
- SCO is Part of India's stated policy of pursuing "multi-alignments".
- From the Indian perspective, the strategic and geographical space in which the SCO straddles is extremely important. The security, strategic, economic and geopolitical interests are also closely intertwined with developments in this area
- The challenges of terrorism, radicalism, and instability pose a grave threat to Indian sovereignty and integrity
- India requested access to intelligence and information from SCO's counter-terrorism body, the Tashkent-based Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS).
- A stable Afghanistan is in India's interest, and RATS provides access to non-Pakistan-centred counter-terrorism information
- With the landlocked states of Central Asia, and Uzbekistan even doubly landlocked, accessing these resources becomes difficult. In this regard, India has prioritized the construction of the International North-South Transport Corridor. SCO, it will help India to connect with South Asian states.
- The Central Asian region is richly endowed with vital minerals and natural resources.
- The major interest is in energy cooperation. But India will also have to deal with an assertive China, which will push its Belt and Road Initiative.
- SCO membership will help India to be a major pan-Asian player, which is currently boxed in the South Asian Region.

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- Central Asia is part of India's extended neighbourhood. India's relations with countries in the region have enormous potential for enhancing ties in areas such as economy, security, policy, investment, trade, connectivity, energy, and capacity development.
- One reason is simply that India does not share common land borders with the region, but another factor has been the infrequent visits at the highest level between India and Central Asian states.
- India's membership in the SCO will provide an opportunity for the leadership of India, including prime ministers, to meet with their counterparts from Central Asia, Russia, China, Afghanistan, and others regularly and frequently. India's participation in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) will be an added advantage to make this partnership more fruitful.
- India has demonstrated its keen interest in strengthening multi-faceted relations with Central Asia through Prime Minister's historic visit to the five Central Asian Republics in July 2015.
- Several agreements were signed and new initiatives were launched. The TAPI gas pipeline is an example of a mutually beneficial project.
- In the future, India's development experience, particularly in promoting agriculture, small and medium enterprises, pharmaceuticals, and information technology, can be of immense benefit to Central Asian countries.
- Indian PM raised issue of radicalization as well. In the acronym that the PM gave, called, "HEALTH", the alphabet "T" stands for countries that stand against terrorism.
- It is important to note that radicalization is an issue that bedevils the Central Asian Region in a very big way. India also called for an international conference on terrorism, the SCO can take a lead in that.
- Also in his 'HEALTH' acronym, the alphabet 'A' refers to alternative energy. It is here that he speaks about India's experience in terms of focusing on renewable energy. Prime Minister also touched upon regional cooperation and spoke about how India is willing to share its expertise in all these areas.
- Focus on Afghanistan (as a matter of fact, this is very significant), even though Afghanistan is not a member of the SCO, but India has a contact group on Afghanistan, and the Prime Minister underlined what India's fundamental position on Afghanistan is.
- Finally, it is important to note that the SCO provides an opportunity for the Indian leadership to connect with the leadership of the Central Asian countries.

### **Conclusion-**

India's membership of the SCO has given a big thrust to its regional policy. Indian policy is rooted in the region and has a regional outlook. The Central Asian members have welcomed India's participation as they share a wide perception of common concerns and interests. An active role by India will strengthen regional stability and security in the region.

**Q-2. Evaluate the impact of regional grouping such as SAARC and BIMSTEC on India's engagement with its neighbour and suggest ways to enhance their effectiveness.**

**Approach -**

In this question candidates need to write about impact of regional grouping such as SAARC and BIMSTEC on India's engagement with neighbour. In second part write about ways to enhance their effectiveness.

**Introduction-**

In Indian foreign policy there is continuous shift right from the time of the 1990's as "Look-East Policy", is converted to the now "Act-East Policy". Even now, with BIMSTEC being promoted. Both SAARC and BIMSTEC has enormous impact on India's neighbourhood policy.

**Body-**

Importance of SAARC -

- South Asia is important for India's national interest: Because South Asia, that is India's neighbourhood, is important for India's national interests. This is best captured in the current government's 'neighbourhood first' policy.
- SAARC, a pan south Asia reach: SAARC is the only intergovernmental organization with a pan-South Asia reach. India can judiciously employ it to serve its interests in the entire region.
- Weakened SAARC means heightened instability: A weakened SAARC also means heightened instability in other promising regional institutions such as the South Asian University (SAU), which is critical to buttressing India's soft power in the region.

Importance of BIMSTEC for India-

- India shifted its diplomatic energy from SAARC to BIMSTEC: In recent years, India seems to have moved its diplomatic energy away from SAARC to BIMSTEC. This resulted in BIMSTEC, after 25 years, finally adopting its Charter earlier this year.
- BIMSTEC is better than SAARC charter: The BIMSTEC Charter is significantly better than the SAARC Charter. For instance, unlike the SAARC Charter, Article 6 of the BIMSTEC Charter talks about the 'Admission of new members' to the group. This paves the way for the admission of countries such as the Maldives.
- However no flexible formula like 'ASEAN Minus X': Notwithstanding the improvements, the BIMSTEC Charter, to boost economic integration, does not contain the flexible participation scheme of the kind present in the ASEAN Charter.
- This flexible scheme, also known as the 'ASEAN Minus X' formula, allows two or more ASEAN members to initiate negotiations for economic commitments. Thus,

no country enjoys veto power to thwart economic integration between willing countries.

- Obstructionist attitude of Pakistan within SAARC: Given the experience of SAARC, where Pakistan routinely vetoes several regional integration initiatives, it is surprising that BIMSTEC does not contain such a flexible participation scheme.
- A flexible 'BIMSTEC Minus X' formula might have allowed India and Bangladesh or India and Thailand to conduct their ongoing bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations under the broader BIMSTEC umbrella.
- This would have eventually strengthened BIMSTEC by enabling the gradual and incremental expansion of these binding commitments to other members. India should press for this amendment in the BIMSTEC Charter.

Ways to enhance effectiveness of SAARC and BIMSTEC -

- It is also important to point out here that the SAARC shouldn't only be confined to summit level meetings. SAARC is much beyond that.
- Over the past 34 years, a whole range of mechanisms have evolved in areas such as agriculture, space research, remote sensing satellites (the South Asian satellite was launched by India recently).
- A whole range of sectors have had mechanisms to promote a more integrated SAARC.
- Even the establishment of the South Asian University is an example, where in the past ten years, the number of applications received have doubled. Thus, there are a whole range of mechanisms that together make up the idea of SAARC.
- Within SAARC, it is only the summit level meetings that have not happened so far. Also, there have only been 18 SAARC summit level meetings in the past 34 years, thus it is not the first time that the summit meetings have been delayed (although this time, it has been inordinately delayed).
- Also, it is important to note that Pakistan is not the only country that gets disconnected if India moves away from SAARC to BIMSTEC. Afghanistan is also a country that gets affected.
- Also, BIMSTEC can never be SAARC. As a matter of fact, the foreign minister has himself said that we need to be far more generous to our neighbour (this opens the space for the possibility of some back-door channels between India and Pakistan as well).
- So, BIMSTEC is not really an alternative to SAARC. As a matter of fact, the charter of BIMSTEC says that it is a bridge between SAARC and ASEAN.
- The organic unity of South Asia that has evolved, and the entire process of 'regionalization' that has happened under the SAARC over the past 34 years, is much stronger compared to the work done under BIMSTEC.
- BIMSTEC has had only 4 summit level meetings in about 22 years. Thus, the BIMSTEC is not meant to do what the SAARC is supposed to do. Also, it does not have the stature of what the SAARC is supposed to do.
- The SAARC has its own relevance, but yes, there is a certain policy direction which one observes that India is giving towards putting the SAARC on hold on one hand and encouraging the potential of BIMSTEC on the other.
- BIMSTEC should not end up as another SAARC: For this, its member countries should raise the stakes. A high-quality FTA offering deep economic integration,

something that Prime Minister Narendra Modi also advocated at the last BIMSTEC ministerial meeting would be an ideal step.

- India should try make the organizations flexible to ensure peace and prosperity in the region: Likewise, India should explore legal ways to move successful SAARC institutions such as SAU to BIMSTEC.
- These steps will give stronger roots to BIMSTEC and enable erecting a new South Asian regional order based on incrementalism and flexibility, ushering in prosperity and peace in the region.

### Conclusion

Since South Asia cannot repudiate regionalism, reviving SAARC by infusing political energy into it and updating its dated Charter will be an ideal way forward. However, in the current scenario, this is too idealistic. So, the next best scenario is to look at other regional instruments such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sect-oral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

**Q-3-At a time when Pakistan is facing a severe economic crisis what should be india's strategy towards Pakistan? Do you think Pakistan's call for dialogue and engagement should be taken on a serious note by India ? Critically examine.**

### Approach

In this question candidates need to write about india's strategy towards Pakistan as Pakistan is facing worst economic crisis . does pakisthan's call for dialogue is genuine or fake examine it critically.

### Introduction

Undoubtedly, Pakistan has been experiencing its worst economic crisis amidst food shortages, flash floods, and poverty. According to the State Bank, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves last week dropped to \$4.3 billion, the lowest level since February 2014 hence Pakistan has called for dialogue with India .

### Body

- Pakistan's economy has hit rock bottom, leaving its citizens struggling to meet basic needs such as food and energy.
- Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called for "serious and sincere talks" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on "burning points like Kashmir." Mr. Sharif said that Pakistan has learned its lesson after three wars with India and stressed that now it wants peace with its neighbour.It is up to us to live peacefully and make progress or quarrel with each other and waste time and resources,

- Meanwhile, the Pakistan PMO, in a series of tweets, clarified that PM Sharif had made it clear that talks with India will be possible only when the neighbour reverses the abrogation of Article 370 that grants autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir.
- With three wars with India, and they have only brought more misery, poverty, and unemployment to the people. We have learnt our lesson, and we want to live in peace with India, provided we are able to resolve our genuine problems,"
- Pakistan, which is battling a severe economic crisis, public discontent due to flour crisis and fuel shortage among others, is also faced with rising instances of terror attacks by the Three-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which had ended a ceasefire with the country's security forces late last year.
- "India is our neighbour country, we are neighbour . Let's be very blunt, even if we are not neighbour by choice we are there forever and it is up to us for us to live peacefully and progress or quarrel with each other and waste time and resources.
- "[India] usurped whatever semblance of autonomy was given to Kashmiris in their Constitution Article 370. They revoked that in August 2019, and minorities over there are pained, grossly mishandled. This must stop so that a message can go around the globe that India is ready to have talks, and we are more than ready," said Mr. Sharif.
- he said that both the countries have engineers, doctors, and skilled labourer."We want to utilize these assets for prosperity and to bring peace to the region so that both nations can grow."
- "Pakistan does not want to waste resources on bombs and ammunition. We are nuclear powers, armed to the teeth, and if God forbids, a war breaks out, who will live to tell what happened?" he said.
- PM has consistently maintained that Pakistan & India must resolve their bilateral issues, especially the core issue of Jammu & Kashmir, through dialogue and peaceful means," the Pakistan PMO tweeted.
- "However the Prime Minister has repeatedly stated on record that talks can only take place after India has reversed its illegal action of August 5, 2019. Without India's revocation of this step, negotiations are not possible," it said, adding "The settlement of the Kashmir dispute must be in accordance with the UN resolutions & aspirations of people of Jammu & Kashmir.
- India in November last year had lashed out at Pakistan for raking up the issue of Kashmir during a United Nations debate, terming it as "desperate attempts to peddle falsehoods".
- Pakistan's plans for economic development-Pakistan, and especially its army leadership, seem to be greatly inspired by China's economic rise and believe that Pakistan can benefit enormously from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship of Xi's Belt and Road Initiative.
- The CPEC's phase-II, which was signed between Pakistan and China in February this year, revolves around the creation of special economic zones, industrialization, and information technology with the Gwadar deep-sea port as the regional connectivity hub.
- Meanwhile, work on the third industrial revolution, which involves cyberspace connectivity by fibre optic cables, subsea cables, Huawei 5G wireless

connections, and BeiDou satellite navigation system, with special resolution rights for Pakistan, would be carried forward under CPEC phase-II.

- The fourth industrial revolution, which emphasizes on artificial intelligence (AI) and data, has already begun in Pakistan. With the help of Chinese companies, the country is building data centers. In August 2020, the Pakistan Air Force established a national nodal agency for AI and its applications, called the Centre of Artificial Intelligence and Computing (CENTAIC).
- However, to accomplish all these goals, Pakistan needs to have peace with India.

Why should India resume talks-

- What does India get in return? If the LoC becomes a soft border, India's two-front war strategy and the Cold Start doctrine against the Pakistan Army, which has not been war-gamed, will not be put to test.
- The Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory will achieve normalcy and the Indian Army can reduce counter-terror operations.

### **Conclusion -**

Resuming the dialogue will substantially reduce the Indian Army's strength, and with the ensuing savings, India could invest in the emerging dual use technologies. Therefore, if understood from this perspective, peace with Pakistan would be a win-win not only for the two nations but for the region as well.