**SCO Summit may offset Afghan mess**

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Today, the need for peaceful co-existence and enhanced regional-cum-global connectivity has become more pronounced than ever before.

A major part of the contemporary world is now trying to come out of the nightmarish hegemony and dictation-a key characteristic of superpowers. Hence, more and more focus and emphasis are on regional

connectivity and cooperation that would lead to “shared prosperity” (to borrow the term from Chinese visionaries). Obviously, this approach would simultaneously focus on finding ways and means for the resolution of conflicts and removal of

irritants in the way of regional or global peace.

Several regional cooperation endeavours have been undertaken; making strides towards the goals of shared prosperity and durable peace. ASEAN has, in particular, become a quotable reference on this count. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is another powerful platform moving forward on a fast track towards its set goals; becoming a counterpoise to the traditional hegemonic mindsets and interventions.

Pakistan’s proactive diplomacy has become the need of the hour in the wake of many uncanny happenings that have destabilised the region vis-à-vis Afghan imbroglio.

Pakistan is also poised to make use of SCO in a bid to “neutralise” the debris of the past, which has adversely impacted its journey of peace and prosperity. This is especially true in the backdrop of the long-drawn “war on terror” waged in the region, against Afghanistan by the US-spearheaded forces. Prime Minister Imran Khan has denounced the slavish “cooperation” rendered by Islamabad when General Pervez Musharraf was in the saddle. Obviously, things could be handled in a better way without surrendering so obsequiously (sic).

Whether all pivotal formations of Pakistan’s “power structure” could have reacted to the US’ threats the way Imran Khan suggests-or hopes, still remains a riddle.

As for the counteracting influence of SCO, it makes us think, quite rightly, that the SCO Council of Heads of State (SCO-CHS) Summit was recently held in Tajikistan’s capital Dushanbe, also attended by PM Imran Khan, spells hope for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. This optimism is

based on Pakistan’s proactive diplomacy, which has become the need of the hour in the wake of many uncanny happenings that have turned things topsy-turvy and destabilised the region vis-à-vis Afghan imbroglio.

In fact, Pakistan’s Foreign Office is now seizing every opportunity to exploit the things to the country’s advantage, dispelling and neutralizing negative hybrid wars and propaganda offensives bombarded

indiscriminately by the identified as well as hidden adversaries or their proxies. Pakistan’s present situation just cannot be detached from the Afghan scenario. Rather, it demands that opportunities should be created to vigorously and consistently pursue our national interests but obviously in a manner that is not considered a path of isolation and confrontation.

SCO – and, as such, the SCO Summit- has sufficient potential to repair the damage done to the people of Afghanistan by decades’ long state of

belligerence that owes to many players in the arena including the external and internal players.

Two key stakeholders of SCO, namely Russia and China, which are equipped with sufficient means to offset the mess, have already picked up the gauntlet. Even if the major part of the resourceful world delays humanitarian and economic assistance to the Taliban-led Afghanistan, at the behest of the US, Russia and China are fully inclined to provide timely assistance and support lest Afghanistan plummet into an extremely chaotic situation.

Prime Minister Imran Khan and his team of diplomats-guided, of course, by other key national institutions-are reportedly working on plans towards sustainable peace and stability in the region. Prime Minister Khan’s meetings in Dushanbe with other regional leaders on the sidelines of the SCO Summit are significant in all respects. As for the consolidation of the forthcoming gains, the unwavering support of the People’s Republic of China to Pakistan (through thick and thin) is a decided plus, despite a few hiccups in mutual, economic cooperation (Pak-China cooperation) whose redressal is, however, underway.

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