

## ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, one of the major goals of developing countries is to achieve a higher rate of economic growth. To meet this, accordingly to the progressive process of international convergence and globalization, incorporating internationally in trade is a basic means in today agenda of such countries. In addition, since developing countries are often faced with a long way for the completion of the trade liberalization as a necessary condition for globalization, regional cooperation is very effective to integrating national economies with global economy. Rationalization, there fore is the most popular type of integration that can have various effects on economic condition, comprising rises in trade flow, economic welfare improvements scale economies, and a more among members of a bloc.

Post World War II era on the one hand gave rise to the Cold War and regional military pacts like NATO and WARSAW and to regional groupings and cooperation like the EEC on the other. The origin of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), lie in such a Cold War era treaty organization, which brought together Turkey, Iran and Pakistan on the southern rim of the Soviet Union. An economic dimension, known as Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) was added in 1964 but its basic charter, the Treaty of Izmir, was signed in 1977. The RCD had little impact but dragged on till the final years of the Shah Raza Shah Pahelvi's reign and it ceased to function in 1979 after Imam Iranian revolution led by Khominie.

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), was founded in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey to promote economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the member states. It was explicitly the successor organization to the RCD and the Treaty of Izmir remained its basic charter. In 1992 seven new members, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan joined ECO. The ten member states of the organization contain 325 million people spread over almost eight million square kilometers. ECO provided them with a forum to discuss regional disputes and peaceful cooperation between ECO members.

The member countries have many common factors. They all lie west of India. They are a chain of predominantly non-Arab Muslim majority area. They are linguistically divided into Persian speaking and Turkic speaking people with the exception of Pakistan and Afghanistan. These areas have little shared history but have influenced each other culturally. One can oversimplify by saying that it has brought all the non-Arab Muslim countries west of India together and has some cultural and religious unity.

All has not been well for the ECO as there are alternate regional groupings to attract like the CIS and EU. The CIS countries are pulled northwards, and Turkey is pulled westwards by its customs union with the European Union. Central Asian Republics are landlocked, relatively poor, peripheral, fearful, defenseless, Muslim states. This has brought them together and it this very fact that is pulling them apart. Three original ECO members compete for pipeline and transport routes between the landlocked ECO members and the open sea. All of Afghanistan's neighbors are involved directly or indirectly on the various sides of that country's internal conflicts.

The terrorist act on Sept.11, though tragic, provided the Bush administration for a legitimate reason to invade Afghanistan, to oust the recalcitrant Taliban and, coincidentally, smooth the way for the pipeline. Two years later Iraq was over run. The rich oil and gas reserves of this area force the only super power to establish its hold on the lifeblood of the modern economy, the oil and gas. So a new great game has been started in this region around Oil and Gas politics.

ECO could be useful fora in developing cooperation with various international organizations in the international field and opening new horizons for regional cooperation but the recent events have pushed it into the background but it's not going to be so for long. The regional groupings will once again take the centre stage.

It is here that Pakistan will be required to play its role in making this organization more attractive for all the players of the new great game. On the account of its geographic location and its relation with ECO, Pakistan has an advantage, which the country can use to its greater benefit. Infrastructure, trade, economy, culture and religion are some of the avenues, which, if explored properly, would certainly give it, a leading position in trade with Central Asia and other ECO members. In the geo- strategic perspective, cordial relation with ECO members would enhance Pakistan's importance. Pakistan would be a Gateway to join Central Asian States and South Asia. In the rapidly changing world, the importance of regional organizations is increasing. The ECO has the potential and will be a concrete example for regional organizations.