

GS Paper 2

International Relations

India and Extended Neighbourhood

SCO

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The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent international intergovernmental organization.

Members countries of SCO :There are 9 Member States:

- China
- India
- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Russia
- Pakistan
- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan
- Iran

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There are **2 Observer States** interested in acceding to full membership:

- Belarus
- Mongolia

There are **6 Dialogue Partners**:

- Armenia
- Azerbaijan
- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Kuwait
- Maldives
- Myanmar
- Nepal
- Qatar
- Saudi Arabia
- Turkey
- UAE

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Main Goals of SCO

- 1) Strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighbourly relations among the member countries;
- 2) Promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture as well as education, energy, transportation, tourism, environmental protection and other fields;
- 3) Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region,
- 4) Moving towards the establishment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order.

Proceeding from the Spirit of Shanghai the SCO pursues its internal policy based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equal rights, consultations, respect for the diversity of cultures and aspiration towards common development, its external policy is conducted in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, non-targeting anyone and openness.

Strengths/ Potential of Shanghai Corporation Organization

- The SCO covers 40% of the global population, nearly 20% of the global GDP and 22% of the world's land mass.
- The SCO has a strategically important role in Asia due to its geographical significance – this enables it to control Central Asia and limit the American influence in the region.
- SCO is seen as a counterweight to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

SECURE Strategy

S- Security of citizens (**SCO RATS**: Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is a permanent body based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. RATS possess information on terrorist organisations and terrorists)

E– Economic development for all

C- Connecting the region

U- Uniting our people

R- Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity

E- Environmental protection

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September 2022---India took over the chairmanship of the 9-member mega grouping and will be holding key ministerial meetings and the summit in 2023.

March 29, 2023----Saudi Arabia's cabinet approved a decision to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as Riyadh builds a long-term partnership with China despite U.S. security concerns.

March 2023---India, as the current chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), hosted a meeting of National Security Advisors (NSA) and top officials in New Delhi

17th March 2023---India mooted an action plan to mark 2023 as the year of tourism development in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) region at the tourism minister's conference in Varanasi.

April 2023---SCO defence ministers' meeting is scheduled to take place in New Delhi.

May 4-5, 2023----SCO's foreign ministers' meeting which will be held in Goa (India)

India and SCO

Ques/- Analyse the importance and relevance of SCO for India.

OR

Does India gains from its membership of SCO?

Previous year Question:

Q/- Virus of Conflict is affecting the functioning of the SCO'. In the light of the above statement point out the role of India in mitigating problems. (2023)

Q/-Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. what importance does it hold for India. (2021) (250 words) 15 marks

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SCO Summit 2023: 4th July 2023---Highlights

- India chaired the SCO virtual Summit.
- Call was made for the creation of a “more representative” and multipolar world order in the global interest.
- Iran officially joined the SCO as the Ninth Member Country.
- The presidency of the SCO for the forthcoming period is handed over to the Republic of Kazakhstan. The next meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State will be held in 2024 in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

SCO Summit 2023: Key Highlights

(I) India's perspective

1) Theme of Indian chairmanship and the vision of SCO:

India said, “We have based all our efforts on two fundamental principles. Firstly, **"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"**, which means the whole world is one family. This principle has been an integral part of our social behaviour since ancient times. It continues to serve as a source of inspiration and energy for us in modern times. The second principle is **SECURE, which stands for Security, Economic development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Environmental protection.**

2) Presiding the summit, Indian PM said, “In the past two decades, the SCO has emerged as a significant platform for peace, prosperity and development in the entire Asian region. The thousands of years old cultural and people-to-people ties between India and this region are a living testament to our shared heritage. **We do not see this area as an "extended neighborhood", but as an "extended family".**

3)New Delhi Declaration

- It was signed by the member nations, which states that it is important to build up joint coordinated efforts by the international community to counter the activities of terrorist, separatist and extremist groups, paying special attention to preventing the spread of religious intolerance, aggressive nationalism, ethnic and racial discrimination, xenophobia, ideas of fascism and chauvinism.
- **India has established five new pillars of cooperation within the SCO:**
 - ✓ **Startups and Innovation,**
 - ✓ **Traditional Medicine,**
 - ✓ **Youth Empowerment,**
 - ✓ **Digital Inclusion, and**
 - ✓ **Shared Buddhist Heritage.**

- India highlighted new and modern dimensions to SCO cooperation – like
 - ✓ Cooperation on emerging fuels in the energy sector.
 - ✓ Collaboration on decarbonization in the transportation sector and digital transformation.
 - ✓ Cooperation in the field of digital public infrastructure.
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- India highlighted that nations are facing significant challenges like conflicts, tensions and pandemics; foIndia asked---Is SCO evolving into an organization that is fully prepared for the future? In this regard, India supports proposals for reforms and modernization within the SCO.
 - od, fuel, and fertilizer crises. Under India's chairmanship, new initiatives have been taken to enhance contact and engagement among people. For the first time, the SCO Millet Food Festival, Film Festival, SCO Surajkund Craft Mela, Think Tanks Conference, and International Conference on Shared Buddhist Heritage were organized.

- India shared its **AI-based language platform, Bhashini**, with everyone to remove language barriers within the SCO. This can serve as an example of digital technology for inclusive growth.
- **The first tourism and cultural capital of the SCO, the eternal city of Varanasi**, became a center of attraction for various programs.
- India also highlighted how **SCO can also become an important voice for reforms in global institutions, including the UN.**
- India expressed its happiness on Iran joining the SCO family as a new member and on signing of the **Memorandum of Obligation for Belarus' SCO membership.**
- It was highlighted that it is essential for SCO to maintain its primary focus on the interests and aspirations of the Central Asian countries.

- **On Terrorism**

India said, “ Terrorism has become a major threat to regional and global peace. Dealing with this challenge requires decisive action. Regardless of its form or manifestation, we must unite in our fight against terrorism. Some countries use cross-border terrorism as an instrument of their policies, provide shelter to terrorists. SCO should not hesitate to criticize such nations. There should be no place for double standards on such serious matters. **We need to enhance mutual cooperation in dealing with terror financing as well. The RATS mechanism of SCO has played a significant role in this regard. We should also take proactive steps to prevent the spread of radicalization among our youth.**”

- **On Afghanistan issue:**

India said, “The situation in Afghanistan has directly impacted the security of all of us. India's concerns and expectations regarding Afghanistan are similar to those of most of the SCO countries. We must come together to strive for the well-being of the people of Afghanistan. Humanitarian assistance to Afghan citizens; the formation of an inclusive government; the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking; and ensuring the rights of women, children, and minorities are our shared priorities.”

- **On Connectivity**

It was said that strong connectivity is crucial for the progress of any region. Better connectivity not only enhances mutual trade but also fosters mutual trust. However, in these efforts, it is essential to uphold the basic principles of the SCO charter, particularly respecting the sovereignty and regional integrity of the Member States. Following Iran's membership in the SCO, work can be done towards maximizing the utilization of the Chabahar Port. The International North-South Transport Corridor can serve as a secure and efficient route for landlocked countries in Central Asia to access the Indian Ocean.

- **India's Reservations on BRI**

India refused to sign off on the paragraph supporting Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India had refused to sign on a similar formulation in the Samarkand Declaration of 2022 as well. India has always opposed the BRI, because the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which is part of the Initiative, violates India's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

- **India also did not sign off on the SCO Economic Development Strategy**, which had Beijing's imprint.

Other Perspectives:

(I) China

- China , while celebrating the ten-year anniversary of the BRI, mentioned its new Global Security Initiative (GSI).
- It also appealed to SCO members to formulate independent foreign policies and remain vigilant against any external attempts to instigate a new Cold War or camp-based confrontation in the region.

(II) Russia

The Russian President, attended his first multilateral gathering since the failed rebellion by Wagner Group. He thanked SCO leaders for “expressing their support for the Russian leadership in defending the constitutional order, lives, and security of its citizens”.

- The Member States categorically oppose militarization of information and communication technologies (ICTs). They support development of universal rules, principles and norms of responsible behavior of states in this area, and in particular, welcome the development under the auspices of the UN of a comprehensive international convention against the use of ICT for criminal purposes.
- They stressed the need for a joint and balanced approach to countering trafficking of illicit drugs and their precursors, and noted the importance of implementing the international drug control conventions and other relevant legal regulatory instruments.

- The Member States emphasize the importance of the Convention on Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BTWC) as one of pillars of the global security architecture.
- The Member States consider sustainable implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Action Plan on the Iranian nuclear program to be important and, in accordance with Resolution 2231 of the UN Security Council, urge all the participants to strictly fulfill their obligations for comprehensive and effective implementation of the document.

Ques/- Analyse the significance of new membership in SCO with regard to SCO Summit 2023 (250 words)

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Practice Question

Ques/-Analyse the significance of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) for India. Keeping into mind the latest summit in 2023, analyse the challenges and opportunities it offers to Indo China bilateral ties. (250 words)

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Challenges for Shanghai Corporation Organization

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Way Forward

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