

# Shanghai Cooperation Organization [UPSC Notes]

## What is Shanghai Cooperation Organisation?

The creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was announced in June 2001 in Shanghai (China) by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Republic of Uzbekistan, The Russian Federation, and the Republic of Tajikistan. Its headquarters are in Beijing, China. Russian and Chinese are the two official languages of SCO. It has two Permanent Bodies -

- SCO Secretariat in Beijing
- Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent.

In the historical meeting of the Heads of State Council of the SCO held in June 2017 in Astana, the status of a full member of the Organization was granted to the Republic of India and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in this meeting. The Chairmanship of SCO is by rotation for a year among member states.

## Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Countries Involved

There are 9 Member States -

1. China
2. India
3. Kazakhstan
4. Kyrgyzstan
5. Russia
6. Pakistan
7. Tajikistan
8. Uzbekistan
9. Iran

There are 3 Observer States interested in acceding to full membership:

1. Afghanistan
2. Belarus
3. Mongolia

There are 6 Dialogue Partners:

1. Armenia
2. Azerbaijan
3. Cambodia
4. Nepal
5. Sri Lanka

## 6. Turkey

### Goals of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an outstanding example of regionalization and hybrid and new mixed model of interstate multifaceted cooperation.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation aims to fulfil the following goals:

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states;
- Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, rational, and fair new international economic and political order.
- Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure security, stability, and peace in the region;
- To promote their effective cooperation in trade, politics, research, the economy, technology, and culture.
- Education, transport, energy, environmental protection, tourism, and other areas;
- The organisation pursues its internal policy based on the principles of mutual benefit, mutual trust, mutual consultations, equality, respect for cultural diversity, and a desire for common development, while the external policy is conducted under the principles of non-targeting and non-alignment.

### Structure and Working of the SCO

The supreme decision-making body in the SCO is the Heads of State Council (HSC). The HSC meets once a year and adopts guidelines and decisions on all important matters of the SCO.

- The SCO Heads of Government Council (HGC) meets once a year to discuss the organization's multilateral cooperation strategy and priority areas, to resolve current important economic and other cooperation issues.
- The organization has two permanent bodies — First is the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent and the second is the SCO Secretariat based in Beijing.
- The Director of the Executive Committee of the SCO RATS and SCO Secretary-General are appointed by the Council of Heads of State for a term of 3 years.

### SCO Summit Latest News UPSC

India took the Chairmanship of the Council of Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of SCO (RATS-SCO) in 2021 for a period of one year.

- The SCO Heads of Government Summit was hosted by India on 30th November 2020.
- It is the first time India has hosted the SCO Summit since it became a member of the group in 2017. It was a virtual summit (Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted this summit).
- India became the chairperson of the SCO Council of Heads of Government on 2nd November 2019 and completed its chairmanship tenure with the onset of this summit on 30th November 2020.
- India focussed on three pillars – Startups and Innovation, Science and Technology and Traditional Medicine.
- India also emphasised strengthening trade, and economic and cultural cooperation.
- Pakistan was represented by its Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the SCO Summit 2020.

- At the 20th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, India said that raising bilateral issues is counterproductive to the spirit of the SCO. This violates the well-established principles and norms of the SCO Charter.

## Importance of SCO for India

The Central Asian region is richly endowed with vital minerals and natural resources. India also has a major interest in security, trade, geopolitical and energy cooperation.

- SCO membership has also helped India to be a major pan-Asian player, which was recently boxed in the South Asian Region.
- It is important for India's stated policy of pursuing "multi-alignments".
- From the Indian perspective, SCO is extremely important as the security, strategic, economic and geopolitical interests are closely intertwined with developments in this area.
- The challenges of terrorism, radicalism, and instability pose a grave threat to Indian sovereignty and integrity.
- A stable Afghanistan too is in India's interest, and RATS provides access to non-Pakistan-centred counter-terrorism information.
- With the landlocked states of Central Asia, accessing these resources becomes difficult. In this regard, India has prioritized the construction of the International North-South Transport. Joining SCO will help India to connect Central Asia with South Asia.
- 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.
- After India's membership in the SCO, it has provided 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 has demonstrated its keen interest in strengthening multi-faceted relations with Central Asia through the 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.

## Aims and Objectives of SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation has the following aims and objectives:

- To strengthen the relations between member states, by deepening political, security and economic cooperation.
- To strive for joint cooperation between the members to confront threats emanating from terrorism, extremism and separatism.
- SCO aims to move towards developing a democratic and equitable international political order.
- To ensure joint efforts in maintaining peace, security and stability in the region.
- To deepen engagements in the field of trade/commerce, transport, tourism, environment, cultural linkages, education, research and technology.

## What is Shanghai Spirit

It is the core value of SCO. As the undergirding values and guidelines for the SCO, it features mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and pursuit of common development.

## Challenges to SCO

The SCO mechanism provides an important guarantee for its multilateral cooperation ahead. Though, the challenges lie ahead, which are:

- The intensification of the great power game in the region. It includes combating terrorism, extremism and separatism, drug and weapons trafficking, illegal immigration, etc.
- The weakness of the sense of community between its member states
- The transformation of cooperation pattern faces after expansion. Despite being geographically close, the rich diversity in members' history, backgrounds, language, national interests and form of government, wealth and culture makes the SCO decision-making challenging.

## Iran's inclusion in SCO- Future Aspects

The benefits of SCO membership are potentially significant for Iran. Due to its geopolitical location and energy resources, Iran could become an important trading partner and will certainly work to forge even closer ties with other member states.

- Iran's membership could bring economic benefits to the country and promote cooperation in the energy sector. Iran could serve as an important supplier of energy, especially with China which could be very useful due to the sanctions imposed on the country.
- Iran's membership in the SCO could also make the country less vulnerable to Western sanctions, making it more difficult to increase pressure on Iran in future nuclear or other diplomatic talks.
- Iran's membership could enable it to negotiate from a position of greater strength in the future as the country becomes less isolated.