

# The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

## Latest Update about Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

- 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.)
- SCP Heads of State Summit was hosted by Russia on 10th November 2020. India (Foreign Minister S Jaishankar participated in this summit.)

This article will describe in detail the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

These UPSC Notes on The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are aligned with the [UPSC Syllabus](#) and aspirants should prepare this topic for General Studies Paper-II.

[IAS Exam](#) aspirants can find more notes for UPSC Mains General Studies topics from the links given at the end of the article.

### Facts about SCO

Full-Form of SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCO Headquarter	Beijing, China
Creation of SCO	It was announced on 15th June 2001; while it came on force on 19th September 2003
SCO Official Language	Chinese and Russian
India Joined SCO on	8-9 June 2017 (SCO Astana Summit)
Supreme Decision Making Body of SCO	The Heads of State Council (HSC)
SCO Permanent Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCO Secretariat – Beijing</li> <li>• Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) – Tashkent</li> </ul>

The topic 'International Organizations' is important to be read for the preparation of [UPSC Mains GS 2](#). Read about similar organizations from the links below:

- [United Nations](#)
- [IAEA \(International Atomic Energy Agency\)](#)

- WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organization)
- SAARC
- BIMSTEC
- RECP
- ASEAN
- G7

## Fact about 19th SCO Heads of Government Summit

1. India hosted SCO Heads of Government Summit 2020 in November.
2. The summit had a virtual format amid the COVID pandemic.
3. 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, economic and cultural cooperation.
4. Pakistan was represented by its Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the SCO Summit 2020.

## The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

**The Topic of SCO comes under UPSC Mains GS 2: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.**

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

- 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.

### Members countries of SCO

There are **8 Member States**:

1. China
2. India
3. Kazakhstan
4. Kyrgyzstan
5. Russia
6. Pakistan
7. Tajikistan

8. Uzbekistan

There are **4 Observer States** interested in acceding to full membership:

1. Afghanistan
2. Belarus
3. Iran
4. Mongolia

There are **6 Dialogue Partners**:

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

**SCO's main goals are as follows:**

1. Strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among the member states;
2. To promote their effective cooperation in trade, politics, research, the economy, technology, and culture.
3. Education, transport, energy, environmental protection, tourism, and other areas;
4. Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure security, stability, and peace in the region;
5. Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, rational, and fair new international economic and political order.
6. 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**

- The supreme decision-making body in the SCO is the Heads of State Council (HSC).
- The HSC meets once in 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 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 3years.

## Strengths 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 the Central Asia and limit the American influence in region.
- SCO is seen as counterweight to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

## Challenges for Shanghai Corporation Organization

- The SCO security challenges includes combating terrorism, extremism and separatism;; drug and weapons trafficking, illegal immigration, etc.
- Despite being geographically close, the rich diversity in member's history, backgrounds, language, national interests and form of government, wealth and culture makes the SCO decision making challenging.

Candidates can go through the important links provided below for the comprehensive preparation of upcoming Civil Services Exam –

<a href="#">Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)</a>	<a href="#">The East Asia Summit (EAS): Background, Member</a>	<a href="#">List of Important Summits 2020-21</a>
<a href="#">India – China Relations</a>	<a href="#">Russia-India-China Virtual Meet</a>	<a href="#">Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)</a>
<a href="#">India-Russia Relations</a>	<a href="#">Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)</a>	<a href="#">India – Pakistan Relations</a>

## SCO Summits

The list of Shanghai Cooperation Organization summits is given below:

SCO Heads of State Summit		
Host	Location	Date
China	Shanghai	14th June 2001
Russia	Saint Petersburg	7th June 2002
Russia	Moscow	29th May 2003

Uzbekistan	Tashkent	17th June 2004
Kazakhstan	Astana	5th July 2005
China	Shanghai	15th June 2006
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	16th August 2007
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	28th August 2008
Russia	Yekaterinburg	15th-16th June 2009
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	10th-11th June 2010
Kazakhstan	Astana	14th-15th June 2011
China	Beijing	6th-7th June 2012
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	13th September 2013
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	11th-12th September 2014
Russia	Ufa	9th-10th July 2015
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	23rd-24th June 2016
Kazakhstan	Astana	8th-9th June 2017
China	Qingdao, Shandong	9th-10th June 2018
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	14th-15th June 2019
Russia	Saint Petersburg	10th November 2020

### SCO Heads of Government Summit

Host	Location	Date
Kazakhstan	Almaty	14th September 2001
China	Beijing	23th September 2003

Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	23th September 2004
Russia	Moscow	26th October 2005
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	15th September 2006
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	2nd November 2007
Kazakhstan	Astana	30th October 2008
China	Beijing	14th October 2009
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	25th November 2010
Russia	Saint Petersburg	7th November 2011
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	5th December 2012
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	29th November 2013
Kazakhstan	Astana	14th-15th December 2014
China	Zhengzhou, Henan	14th-15th December 2015
Kyrgyzstan	Bishkek	2rd-3rd November 2016
Russia	Sochi	30th November 2017
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	11th-12th October 2018
Uzbekistan	Tashkent	1st-2nd November 2019
India	New Delhi	30th November 2020

#### Importance of SCO for India:

- 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 too 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 (INSTC), 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 co-operation. 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.

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.

#### **India at SCO 2019:**

- This year (2019), our PM has come up with another innovative acronym called HEALTH which brings together the Indian experience in development, and India's experience in engagement with other countries.
- Indian PM also specifically spoke about 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.

## Challenges of SCO Membership for India

- Pakistan's inclusion in SCO poses potential difficulties for India.
- India's ability to assert itself would be limited and it may have to play second fiddle since China and Russia are co-founders of SCO and its dominant powers.
- India may also have to either dilute its growing partnership with the West or engage in a delicate balancing act – as SCO has traditionally adopted an anti-Western posture.

