

## The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

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

- A recent summit of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) 2022** was held in **Samarkand, Uzbekistan**.
- The member nations signed the Samarkand Declaration.
- India assumes the SCO Presidency in 2023.

Read on to learn about the **highlights of the SCO Summit 2022**. This article talks in detail about the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and gives information on all the important summits, the challenges and the strengths of the SCO.

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 into 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 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 **9 Member States**:

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

Iran is the new member of the SCO, which was recently added to the permanent member countries in the 2022 Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, held in Uzbekistan. The eight SCO member states gave their consent for upgrading Iran's status from an observer to a full member. Iran applied to join the organization as a full member in 2008. It was an observer member for over 15 years. Iran has been admitted as a permanent member of the SCO at the Samarkand summit. Iran will attend the SCO as a full member from the Summit to be hosted by India in 2023.

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

## SCO's Main Goals are as follows:

1. Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness 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 toward 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 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 3years.

## Strengths of the 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.

## Challenges for Shanghai Corporation Organization

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

## 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
Tajikistan	Dushanbe	16th-17th September 2021 (Held Virtually)
Uzbekistan	Samarkand	15th-16th September 2022

### 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	2nd-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
Kazakhstan	Astana	25 November 2021
China		2022

### 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 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 cooperation. 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.

## Fact about the 19th SCO Heads of Government Summit

- India hosted the SCO Heads of Government Summit 2020 in November.
- The summit had a virtual format amid the COVID pandemic.
- 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 in the SCO Summit 2020.
- 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.)

## 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.

## SCO Summit 2022: Highlights

Samarkand, Uzbekistan recently hosted the 22nd Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) conference. Some of the important takeaways from the summit include the following:

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) rotating presidency was given to India by Uzbekistan during this session. India will therefore host the following SCO summit in 2023 while serving as the organization's chairman.
- Chinese and Indian leaders voiced their reservations to the Russian President on the conflict in Ukraine and also explained how Moscow's aggression may affect the rights of people all throughout the world.
- At the SCO summit, the Prime Minister stated that the Indian economy is anticipated to grow by 7.5 percent this year, making it the fastest-growing among the world's major economies.
- The Prime Minister also stated that India is moving closer to being a manufacturing centre.



- At the Samarkand conference, Iran was accepted as a permanent member of the SCO. Iran will participate in the SCO summit held by India in 2023 as a full member.

The important points discussed in the summit are as follows:

- In the Samarkand Declaration, it was emphasised that countries should “commit to peaceful settlement of differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation.”
- To create a unified list of terrorist, separatist, and extremist organisations whose activities are prohibited on the borders of the SCO member states, the member nations intend to develop common principles and procedures.
- It was emphasised that the foundation for the long-term growth of international relations is the shared respect for each other’s sovereignties, independence and territorial integrity as well as for equality, mutual benefit, non-interference in one another’s internal affairs, and refrain from using or threatening to use force.
- Russia recommended that the organisation consider hosting its own significant athletic event.
- As Western nations strive to reduce their reliance on Russian gas, Russia is also seeking more customers for its gas resources.

### Indian Viewpoints:

- **Food Security:** India emphasized the move to promote millet and solve concerns linked to food security as the entire globe is currently experiencing an unparalleled energy and food crisis.
  - India is making efforts to spread awareness of millets in this context because the SCO may significantly contribute to the designation of 2023 as the International Year of Millets.
- **Connectivity:** India urged members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to grant each other complete rights of passage as doing so would improve connectivity and aid in the creation of dependable and durable supply chains in the area.
- **Tourism:** To promote the rich cultural and historical heritage of the people and the tourism potential of SCO member states, Varanasi was named the SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2022–2023.
  - It would also encourage travel, cultural, and humanitarian exchanges between India and the SCO member nations.
  - Throughout 2022–2023, Varanasi will play host to a number of events that are part of this significant cultural outreach effort.
- **Working Group on Alternative Medicine:** In Gujarat, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched its Global Center for Alternative Medicines in April 2022.
  - The WHO developed this as the first and only conventional medicine centre in the entire world.
- It also highlights India’s long-standing cultural ties to SCO members, particularly the Central Asian Republics.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

### Q1. Which countries are members of the SCO?

Ans. Currently, nine countries enjoy the status of SCO full members: India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Iran and Uzbekistan; three countries — Afghanistan, Belarus and Mongolia — have



observer status with the SCO, and six countries — Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka — have a dialogue partner status.

## Q2. What is the SCO RATS?

Ans. The Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is the permanent body of the SCO RATS based in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure functions in accordance with the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism, the SCO Charter, the Agreement among the SCO member states on the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, as well as documents and decisions taken within the SCO framework.

## Q3. How does the SCO work?

Ans: The highest governing body in the SCO is the Heads of State Council (HSC). It meets once a year to make decisions and issue directives addressing any significant SCO activity-related topics. There is also Heads of Government Council (HGC), which meets once a year to decide on the annual budget for the Organization, to discuss a multilateral cooperation strategy and priority directions within the framework of the Organization, and to address significant and urgent issues relating to cooperation in the economic and other fields.

## Q4. What is the SCO Interbank Consortium?

Ans. The SCO Interbank Consortium (SCO IBC) was set up by the Council of Heads of Government on October 26, 2005, to offer financing and banking services for investment projects supported by the governments of the SCO member states. Ad hoc meetings of the SCO IBC Council are held at least once annually with the agreement of all participants. The Council's Presidency is exercised on a rotating basis.

## Q5. What is the SCO Business Council?

Ans: It is a nongovernment entity that unites the highly authoritative business community representatives of the SCO member states with an eye towards expanding economic cooperation, establishing direct relations and a dialogue between the business and financial communities, and facilitating the practical promotion of multilateral projects. The council places a strong emphasis on interstate cooperation between the SCO countries in areas like education, research, and cutting-edge technology, as well as healthcare and agriculture, in addition to energy, transport, telecommunications, loans, and the financial