



## 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit

**For Prelims:** [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation](#), [Pahalgam attack](#), [Kailash Manasarovar Yatra](#), [BRICS](#), [Line of Actual Control](#)

**For Mains:** India's foreign policy and strategic autonomy, India-China bilateral relations and border management

[Source: PIB](#)

### Why in News?

The Prime Minister of India participated in the 25th Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#), held in **Tianjin, China**.

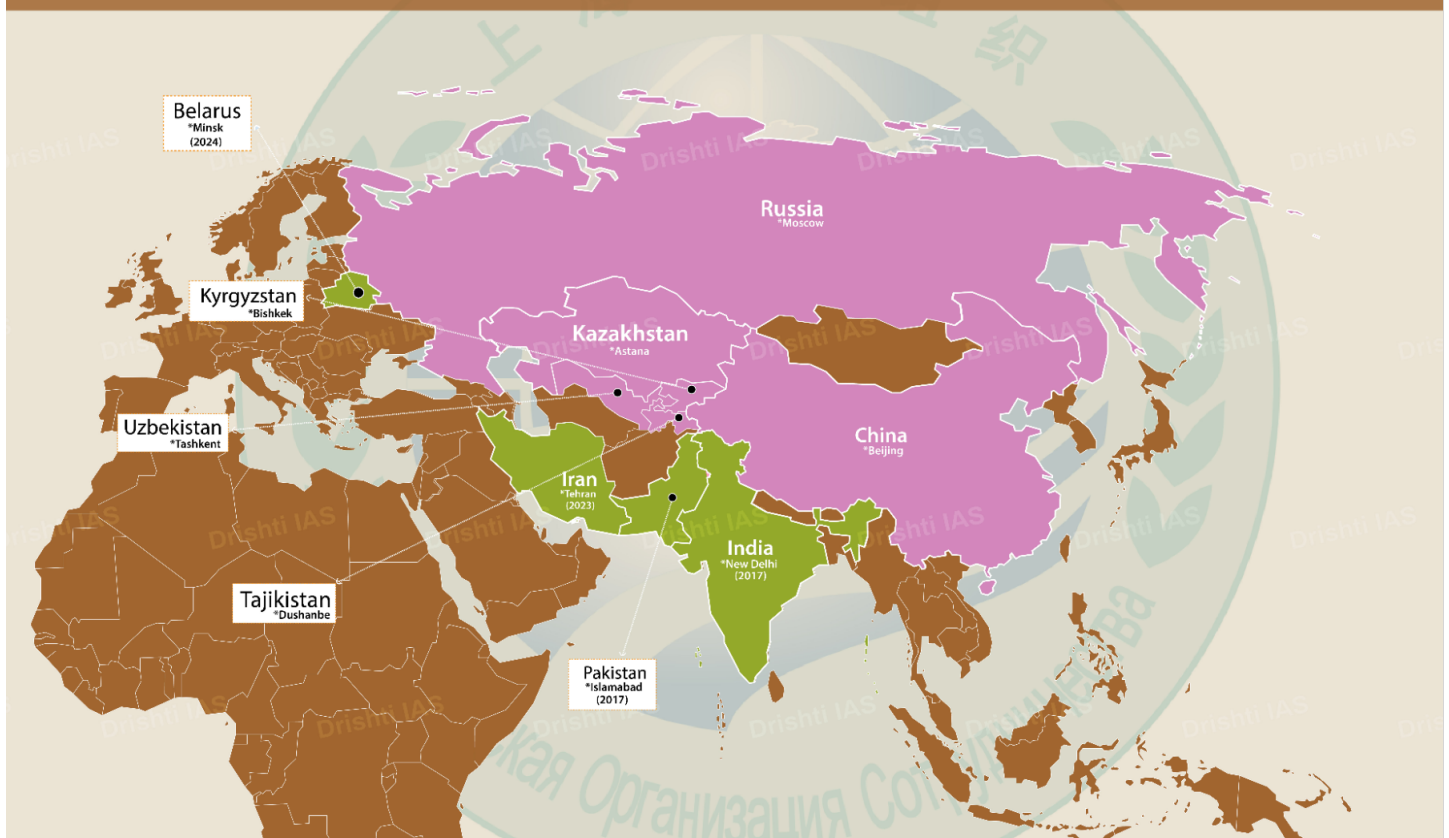
### What are the Key Outcomes of 2025 SCO Summit?

- **Counter-Terrorism:** **Tianjin Declaration** strongly condemned terrorism, including the [Pahalgam attack](#), and called to end **cross-border movement of terrorists**, and opposed use of extremist groups for mercenary purposes.
- **Membership & Partnerships:** **Laos accepted as a partner country**, taking SCO's total strength to 27 (10 members (including India) + 17 partners).
- **Global Governance:** The **Global Governance Initiative (GGI)** was proposed to promote sovereign equality, multilateralism, and a just global order. GGI reflects India's vision of **'One Earth, One Family, One Future'**.
  - Additionally, member states opposed **unilateral coercive measures**, including economic sanctions, that contravene [United Nations and World Trade Organization \(WTO\)](#) principles.
- **Promotion of Cultural and Social Values:** It welcomed UNGA resolution against glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism, racism, and xenophobia.
  - Reaffirmed people-to-people engagement and the importance of mutual respect and collaboration among member states.
  - The summit condemned military actions in [Gaza and Iran](#) and emphasized inclusive governance in Afghanistan for lasting peace.
- **Economic & Development Cooperation:** The summit emphasized stabilizing global trade, expanding bilateral trade and investment, and setting up an **SCO Development Bank**.

# Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Founding Members (2001):

Recent Members:



## Key Facts:

- **Established:** 2001, in Shanghai, China
- **Charter Signed:** 2002; came into force on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2003
- **Goals:**
  - Strengthen regional peace, stability, & cooperation
  - Combat terrorism, separatism, & extremism
  - Foster economic, political, & cultural collaboration
- **Structure**
  - **Supreme Decision-making Body** - Council of Heads of State
  - **Permanent Bodies** - Secretariat (Beijing) & Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (Tashkent)
- **Official Languages:** Russian & Chinese
- **Headquarters:** Beijing, China
- **SCO & India:** Varanasi has been nominated as the first ever SCO Tourism and Cultural Capital at the SCO summit in Samarkand, 2022



## What is the Role of SCO in Global Multilateralism?

- **Expanding Geopolitical Reach:** SCO has grown beyond its Central Asian origins, now representing about 23% of global GDP and 42% of the world's population.
  - Its widening membership and partnerships (e.g., Turkey, a [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#) member, as dialogue partner of SCO) showcase its ability to challenge traditional Western alliances.
  - It provides space for [Global South](#) voices to resist being confined to outdated global frameworks.

- **Security and Counter-Terrorism:** SCO addresses security voids left by NATO, especially in Afghanistan, through mechanisms like the Afghanistan Contact Group (ACG).
  - The [Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure \(RATS\) of SCO](#) in Tashkent, Uzbekistan strengthens cooperation against terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- **Connectivity and Economic Integration:** SCO acts as a connectivity catalyst in Central Asia, fostering corridors and projects like the [International North-South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\)](#) and [Chabahar Port](#), which enhance trade and trust.
  - The SCO Business Council and Interbank Consortium push forward multilateral economic projects.
- **Platform for Civilisational and Developmental Cooperation:** India's initiatives within SCO (start-ups, traditional medicine, Buddhist heritage, digital inclusion) show its potential to go beyond governments and foster people-to-people ties.
  - SCO is positioning itself as a forum for inclusive development, aligning with the aspirations of the Global South.
- **Reforming Global Institutions:** SCO members push for UN reform and more inclusive global governance, challenging the dominance of post-World War II structures.
  - By advocating sovereign equality and multipolarity, SCO seeks a more democratic and just world order.

## What are the Challenges Undermine SCO's Effectiveness?

- **Weak Security Mechanisms:** The RATS organizes exercises but does little against actual terrorist organizations. Inclusion of states like Pakistan themselves linked with terrorism undermines credibility.
- **Unequal Power Dynamics:** Central Asian states often feel dominated by China and Russia, rather than treated as equal partners.
  - The "Shanghai Spirit" of equality and mutual respect remains more rhetoric than reality.
- **Ineffective Economic Integration:** SCO agreements (like the Transport Agreement) remain poorly implemented. Intraregional trade within Central Asia remains in single digits, far behind [ASEAN's](#) 25%.
  - Trade growth in Central Asia is driven by local dynamics, not by SCO initiatives.
  - Unlike ASEAN, which manages disputes while keeping institutions functional, the **SCO is increasingly compared to SAARC, active in summits but weak in delivering results.**
- **Failure to Institutionalize Cooperation:** Despite multiple attempts, SCO has failed to establish strong frameworks in development, energy, and free trade.
  - Formal structures (banking, finance, business councils) function more as networking forums than decision-making bodies.

## What are India's Concerns Regarding SCO?

- **China's Dominance:** China is trying to reshape the SCO into a China-led platform serving its geo-economic and strategic interests, especially to promote the BRI, which India opposes. This risks sidelining India's role within the grouping.
- **Connectivity Projects:** India opposes BRI (especially [China Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#) through PoK), but majority of SCO members strongly support it.
  - India remains outside key connectivity initiatives, limiting its economic and strategic influence.
  - **China's [String of Pearls](#) strategy (naval bases in Maldives, Sri Lanka, South China Sea) threatens India's regional security. India counters with its "Necklace of Diamonds" strategy, but this rivalry weakens trust within SCO.**
- **Anti-Western Perception:** SCO is often seen as an anti-West bloc, dominated by China, Russia, and now Iran. This complicates India's foreign policy, as India maintains strong ties with the US, EU, and QUAD partners.
- **Terrorism and Pakistan Factor:** Despite SCO's RATS, Pakistan continues to support cross-border terrorism. India's push for naming Pakistan-based groups is often blocked by China and Pakistan.

## How can India Balance Differences and Foster Cooperation within the SCO?

- **Strategic Multialignment:** India avoids rigid bloc politics, engages in both **Western-led (Quad, G20) and China-led (SCO, BRICS) platforms**. It reflects **India's pursuit of strategic autonomy and multipolarity**.
- **Selective Engagement:** India engages selectively in SCO initiatives like RATS, avoids commitments that threaten sovereignty, separates contested (borders, security) from cooperative areas (trade, technology), and limits China cooperation to non-sensitive sectors such as renewables, EVs, and AI.
- **Leverage Strategic Partnerships:** Cooperation with Russia ensures India has an equal voice and counters Chinese dominance. Russia acts as a bridge in India-China multilateral engagement.
  - Russia is pushing to revive the RIC (Russia-India-China) trilateral suspended since the 2020 Galwan clash; for India, it provides a channel to engage China without bilateral isolation.
- **Border Management with Dialogue:** India maintains LAC troop readiness while pursuing disengagement agreements (**Depsang, Demchok 2024**) and high-level dialogue to reduce friction.
- **Regional and Global Forums:** India uses SCO/BRICS to influence Eurasian and Global South narratives while using **Quad/Indo-Pacific frameworks to balance China's regional assertiveness**.

### ***Drishti Mains Question:***

**Q.** Discuss the challenges that undermine the effectiveness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

## **UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

### **Prelims**

**Q.** Belt and Road Initiative' is sometimes mentioned in the news in the context of the affairs of (2016)

- (a) African Union
- (b) Brazil
- (c) European Union
- (d) China

**Ans: (d)**

**Exp:**

Proposed in 2013, the 'Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)' is an ambitious programme of China for connecting Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks.

The BRI comprises a Silk Road Economic Belt – **a trans-continental passage that links China with Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Russia and Europe by land** – and a **21st century Maritime Silk Road**, a sea route connecting China's coastal regions with Southeast and South Asia, South Pacific, Middle East and Eastern Africa, all the way to Europe. **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

### **Mains**

**Q.** The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is viewed as a cardinal subset of China's larger 'One Belt One Road' initiative. Give a brief description of CPEC and enumerate the reasons why India has distanced itself from the same. (2018)

**Q.** China and Pakistan have entered into an agreement for the development of an economic corridor. What threat does this pose for India's security? Critically examine. **(2014)**

**Q.** "China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia". In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbour. **(2017)**

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