



Why is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in the SCO meeting significant?

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Why in News?

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit is scheduled to be held in Tianjin, China, from August 31 to September 1, 2025. More than 20 world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will attend this summit, among them Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and other prominent leaders.
- This will be the largest SCO summit in history, with discussions on issues such as security, economic cooperation and cultural collaboration.
- The summit carries several important implications, particularly for India, India-China relations and global geopolitics.



Significance of the SCO summit

Potential improvement in India-China relations:

- This will be Modi's first visit to China since 2019, signaling a possible thaw in India-China relations after the 2020 Galwan clash.
- In recent months, both countries have taken steps to reduce border tensions, such as resuming direct flights, permitting the Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage and enhancing trade cooperation. The summit could provide an opportunity for bilateral talks between Modi and Xi Jinping, potentially advancing progress on border disputes and trade issues.
- Analysts believe this meeting could help ease regional tensions and reshape diplomatic equations in Asia.

India's firm stance on terrorism:

- India is expected to strongly raise the issue of cross-border terrorism at the summit.
- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh had refused in June 2025, during the SCO Defense Ministers' meeting, to sign a statement that diluted anti-terrorism commitments, reflecting India's firm stance.
- In the presence of Pakistan's representative, India will push for a clear condemnation of terrorism, reinforcing its perspective on regional security.

Unity of the Global South:

- The summit serves as a platform to showcase the unity of Global South countries. China is attempting to present it as an alternative to a Western-dominated world order.



- India, which will chair BRICS in 2026, will use the summit to strengthen its position with countries like Russia and China and to emphasize its strategic autonomy on the global stage.

Strategic autonomy and multi-alignment:

- India's foreign policy of multi-alignment is evident in this context.
- The summit allows India to balance its relations with the US, Russia and China, especially when the US is pressuring India regarding its energy ties with Russia.
- The meeting provides India the opportunity to signal that it is neither under Western pressure nor tied to any single bloc.

SCO and Regional Cooperation:

- The SCO includes India, Russia, China, Iran and Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.
- The organization promotes regional security, economic cooperation and cultural exchange. India has introduced innovations in the SCO, such as the Start-up Forum and working groups on traditional medicine. This summit will provide an opportunity to further strengthen these initiatives.

Global and Regional Context – U.S. Pressure and Triangular Diplomacy:

- Amid U.S. commercial and strategic pressure on both India and China, the summit offers India a chance to demonstrate its independent foreign policy.

China's Growing Influence:

- China will use the summit to showcase its global influence, particularly alongside the military parade in Beijing on September 3, marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in World War II.

Terrorism and Regional Stability:

- The effectiveness of the SCO on issues like India-Pakistan tensions and regional terrorism has been limited.
- India will leverage this platform to raise these issues and strengthen its position.

Potential Outcomes:

Stability in India-China Relations:

- The summit could bring a "strategic pause" in India-China relations, focusing on reducing tensions and building trust.
- However, immediate resolution of major issues like the border dispute is unlikely.

India's Position on the Global Stage:

- Modi's presence will establish India as an independent and influential global power, actively engaged in platforms like QUAD, BRICS and SCO.

Economic and Cultural Cooperation:

- Through the SCO, India will promote its startup and traditional medicine initiatives and encourage regional connectivity projects, such as the Chabahar Port.

Conclusion:

- The SCO Summit 2025 is not only a key opportunity for India-China relations but also a platform to reinforce India's strategic autonomy, regional security and the unity of the Global South.
- It allows India to assert its voice on critical issues like terrorism and strengthen its standing in global diplomacy.
- This summit represents a strategic step rather than a complete reset, laying the foundation for long-term stability and cooperation.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** is an intergovernmental international organisation that promotes **regional security, economic cooperation and cultural exchange**.

It has emerged as an important geopolitical and economic platform in the **Eurasian region**, mainly led by **China and Russia**, with significant participation from Central Asian countries. With the inclusion of India and Pakistan, its scope and influence have grown further.



Formation and History

- **Established:** 15 June 2001, in **Shanghai, China**.
- It evolved from the “**Shanghai Five**” (founded in 1996), which originally included **China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan**.
- **Founding Members:** China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Expansion

- **2017:** India and Pakistan became full members.
- **2022:** Iran became a full member.
- **2024:** Belarus became a full member.

Current Status

- **Full Members (10):** China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, Iran, Belarus.
- **Observer States (2):** Afghanistan, Mongolia.
- **Dialogue Partners (14):** Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bahrain, Cambodia, Egypt, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates.

Significance

- Represents around **40% of the world's population**.
- Accounts for over **30% of global GDP**.
- Plays a key role in **regional security (counter-terrorism, extremism, separatism), economic connectivity (trade, energy, transport) and people-to-people cultural exchanges**.

In short: The SCO has grown from a regional security alliance of five states into a major **pan-Eurasian organisation** with global relevance, balancing **security, economic cooperation and strategic diplomacy**.

Other Participants

- Apart from member states, **ASEAN, CIS, Turkmenistan** and some other organisations/countries often take part in **SCO Summits as guests**.

Objectives of SCO

1. Regional Security

- Cooperation against the “**Three Evils**”: terrorism, extremism and separatism.
- Border security and military cooperation.
- Peaceful resolution of regional conflicts.

2. Economic Cooperation

- Promoting **trade, investment and energy cooperation**.
- Regional connectivity projects, such as China’s **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** and other infrastructure projects.

3. Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation

- Collaboration in **education, culture, health and people-to-people exchanges**.
- **Environmental protection** and **disaster management** initiatives.

4. Global Significance

- Provides a platform for **non-Western countries** as an alternative to Western-dominated institutions.
- Promotes the idea of a **multi-polar world order**.

Organisational Structure of SCO

The SCO has a well-defined institutional framework with the following key bodies:

1. Council of Heads of State (HOS)

- The **highest decision-making body** of the SCO.
- Meets annually at **SCO Summits**.
- Decides the organisation’s strategy, priorities and future direction.

2. Council of Heads of Government (HOG)

- Focuses on **economic, trade and non-military cooperation**.

3. Meetings of Defence Ministers

- Deals with issues of **regional security and military cooperation**.

4. **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**

- Headquarters: **Tashkent, Uzbekistan.**
- Works on **intelligence-sharing, coordination and action** against terrorism, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking.

5. **Permanent Secretariat**

- Located in **Beijing, China.**
- Acts as the administrative and coordination hub of SCO.

6. **SCO Business Council & SCO Interbank Consortium**

- Promote **business, finance and investment cooperation** among member states.

Functioning and Significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Functioning of the SCO

Summits:

- The SCO holds an annual summit where Heads of State and Government of member countries participate.
- The summit decides on the organisation's policies and strategies.

Decision-Making:

- All decisions are taken by consensus, which effectively grants veto power to every member.

Chairmanship:

- The chairmanship of the SCO rotates among member states.
- As of 2025, **China holds the chairmanship.**

Official Languages:

- Russian and Chinese.

Importance of SCO for India

India became a full member of the SCO in **2017**, and since then, the grouping has played a significant role in India's foreign policy.

1. Engagement with Central Asia:

- SCO provides India a platform to strengthen relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- It is crucial for India's *Connect Central Asia Policy* and projects like the **Chabahar Port.**

2. Counter-Terrorism Cooperation:

- Through the SCO's RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure), India raises concerns on cross-border terrorism, especially emanating from Pakistan.

- India has consistently called for a clear definition of terrorism and concrete actions against it.
3. **Economic Opportunities:**
 - SCO allows India to cooperate in energy, trade, and infrastructure.
 - India has launched initiatives such as the **SCO Startup Forum** and a **Working Group on Traditional Medicine**.
 4. **Strategic Balancing:**
 - SCO helps India engage with Russia and China as part of its **multi-alignment policy**.
 - It complements India's participation in other platforms like **QUAD** and **BRICS**.
 5. **Dialogue with China and Pakistan:**
 - SCO provides a rare multilateral platform for India to engage with China and Pakistan despite bilateral tensions.

Achievements of SCO

- **Regional Stability:** Strengthened security in Central Asia, especially in combating terrorism and drug trafficking.
- **Economic Cooperation:** Signed several agreements promoting regional trade and connectivity, including the Interbank Consortium.
- **Cultural Exchanges:** Through SCO University and cultural programmes, people-to-people ties have grown stronger.
- **Global Influence:** The SCO has emerged as an alternative platform for non-Western countries, amplifying their voice in global governance.

Challenges of SCO

1. **Bilateral Tensions Among Members:**
 - India-Pakistan and India-China disputes undermine the organisation's unity.
 - India does not endorse China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, a core Chinese agenda within the SCO.
2. **Chinese Dominance:**
 - China's growing economic and diplomatic influence in the SCO raises concerns for other members, including India.
3. **Disagreements on Terrorism:**
 - Divergent views on defining terrorism, particularly between India and Pakistan.
4. **Limited Policy Impact:**
 - Due to consensus-based decision-making and diverse interests, large-scale policy changes remain limited.

Conclusion

The SCO is a key regional organisation promoting **security, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange in Eurasia**. For India, it offers opportunities to deepen ties with Central Asia, strengthen counter-terrorism efforts, and pursue strategic autonomy.

However, the SCO also faces challenges, including internal tensions, Chinese dominance, and limitations of consensus-based decision-making. The **2025 SCO Summit in Tianjin** will not only enhance the organisation's global influence but also provide India an opportunity to assert its diplomatic presence and advance its strategic interests.



Uttar Pradesh government has granted State Guest status to astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla

Why in News?

- The Uttar Pradesh government has granted **State Guest status** to astronaut **Shubhanshu Shukla**, but he will not be able to visit his home yet.

What is State Guest status?

- State Guest status is a special honor granted in India to distinguished individuals, usually those who have made significant contributions at the national or international level.
- It is commonly extended to foreign dignitaries, political leaders, or personalities like astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla.
- This status is given by the government to ensure **special honor, security, and facilities** for the individual.

Honor and Protocol

- It is a **formal recognition** of a person's achievements and national/international importance.
- In Shubhanshu Shukla's case, this honor was granted for his **historic achievement of becoming the first Indian astronaut to visit the International Space Station (ISS)**.
- As a State Guest, he is welcomed with **special protocols**, such as reception by senior government officials and ceremonial events.
- For example, he received a grand welcome at Delhi Airport by Union Minister **Jitendra Singh** and Delhi Chief Minister **Rekha Gupta**.

Security Arrangements

- State Guests are provided **high-level security**.
- The UP government has appointed a **Deputy SP-rank officer** to oversee Shubhanshu Shukla's security.
- He is also provided with an **escort vehicle** to ensure safe movement.

Accommodation and Facilities

- State Guests are accommodated in **official guest houses** (e.g., State Guest House in Lucknow).
- The government takes care of their **travel, lodging, and other requirements**.

Monitoring and Protocols

- Every activity of the State Guest is monitored by the government and security agencies.
- Any public event requires **prior information and security arrangements**.

- For example, Shubhanshu Shukla's plan to visit his home was **postponed** due to security and law-and-order concerns, since narrow lanes around his house could lead to heavy crowding and traffic problems.

In the context of Shubhanshu Shukla:

Why was this status given?

- Shubhanshu Shukla spent **18 days aboard the International Space Station (ISS)** under the **AXIOM-4 mission**, where he conducted **seven Indian scientific experiments**, including stem cell research and crop cultivation in microgravity.
- His remarkable achievement has given a **new direction to India's space program**, especially the **Gaganyaan Mission**. For this reason, the **Uttar Pradesh government honored him with the State Guest status**.

Impact

- This recognition not only enhances his personal honor but also reflects **India's space achievements and national pride**.
- The status ensures **security, facilities, and protocol**, allowing him to share his experiences without disruption.
- His journey serves as an **inspiration for the nation**, particularly for young scientists and students.

Conclusion

Granting **State Guest status** to Shubhanshu Shukla is a **special honor** recognizing his space mission and scientific contributions. It symbolizes **India's progress in space exploration** and stands as a **mark of national pride**.