GS Article - Shanghai Cooperation Organisation - Qingdao (CHINA)

International Relation

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India has been at the forefront of vigorously engaging with numerous world powers, multilateral institutions as well as regional groupings.

Membership to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will strengthen India’s relations with Central Asia.

Many of the economic and political issues challenging economies across the world are essentially both global and regional. The forces of globalization and regionalization are unceasingly restructuring the contours of the prevailing international economic order.

**Context**

- Multilateralism provides the most holistic structure for political and economic relations in the world. For example, international problems, especially sustaining rules for trade and investment, inherently involve numerous countries concurrently.

- These international problems cannot be dealt with effectively within the national domain or even bilaterally.

- The problems are frequently so profuse and extraordinary that domestic goals cannot be accomplished without coordinated multilateral action.

- In the past seven decades, there have been abundant developments on multilateral action to create fair, just and lasting solutions to critical matters of peace and political, economic and social security.

**History & Background of Shanghai Cooperation Organization:**

- What started off as the “Shanghai 5” in 1996 for security and border peace between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia and Tajikistan has metamorphosed into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which today has an ambitious regional and global vision, coupled with a strong economic mandate.

- SCO is a Eurasian economic, political and security organisation headquartered in Beijing, China. The Declaration on establishment of SCO was signed in Shanghai (China) in June 2001 by six founding states – Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

- The groupings main objective is military cooperation between members. It also works towards intelligence-sharing, counter-terrorism operations in Central Asia. It is primarily centred on its member nations’ Central Asian security-related concerns, often describing main threats it confronts as being terrorism, separatism and extremism.

- the SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People’s Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan;
• the SCO counts four observer states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Republic of Belarus, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Mongolia;

• the SCO has six dialogue partners, namely the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Turkey, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

• The expansion of SCO last year to include India and Pakistan now makes this a powerful and strategic regional grouping, accounting for 40% of the world's population, almost 20% of its gross domestic product (GDP) and 22% of the world's land mass.

• This is the first time that India will participate as a full member of this grouping. In his acceptance speech at the summit in 2017, where India was inducted as a full member, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled India's historic ties with the grouping as an observer over the past 12 years: “We may have gotten the membership now but our relations with this group are long, around 12 years long.

• The relationship we share with the members of SCO are historical. We will continue to work together.”

**Significance for India**

For India, membership of this grouping will strengthen its relations with Central Asian republics and provide a new opportunity to pursue the “Connect Central Asian Policy”.

The SCO would also be a new channel to enhance bilateral ties with China and Russia in addition to robust engagement through Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and bilateral mechanisms.

**The key goals of the SCO**

- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness;
- Promoting effective cooperation in politics,
- Trade,
- The economy,
- Research,
- Technology and culture,
- Education,
- Energy,
- Transport,
- Tourism, and
- Environmental protection;

Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.
All the key goals of the SCO prove that the sustenance and celebration of an effective multilateral organization will significantly benefit the consolidation and expansion of these bilateral relationships.

To summarize, the sum of their multilateral interactions will be greater than the sum of their bilateral interactions and engagements. In this sense, the SCO platform provides new meaning for its member countries.

**India and Shanghai Cooperation Organization**

India has been at the forefront of vigorously engaging with numerous world powers, multilateral institutions as well as regional groupings. India’s aptitude to endure and confidently influence multilateral processes will have an unswerving bearing on its emergence as a great power.

**Way forward for India at SCO.**

- In line with the foreign policy priorities of India on SCO countries, the aim should be to further enhance connectivity, given the existing strong cooperation bilaterally with existing member countries.

- For example, connectivity through Chabahar will help India’s trade and economic relations with Central Asian republics. Other sectors, such as education, tourism and even medical tourism, can be focused upon to further strengthen the SCO platform.

- Economic cooperation, energy, connectivity, education, tourism, agriculture, trade and investment, amongst other security and anti-terrorism concerns, are expected to be on the summit agenda.

- India's interest in seeking membership of this multilateral grouping shows that foreign policy will no longer be driven by political necessities alone, but also by economic diplomacy.

- Indian industry has the responsibility of guiding the country's engagement with SCO member countries to deepen the ecosystem with this multilateral grouping.

- Pakistan - The summit provides an opportunity for the Indian and Pakistani leaders.

- They could meet informally on the sidelines of a multilateral event.

- The two sides are obliged to cooperate on issues of mutual interest without bringing in their bilateral disputes.

- Signing off on joint counter-terrorism exercises will be a new form of engagement between the two militaries.

- China - After the Wuhan meet, the SCO summit will provide another opportunity for cooperation.

- Russia - Russia has been India’s staunchest supporter in the SCO.

- It has lobbied hard with Beijing for years to ensure India’s entry into the grouping.
India is clear that its relationship with Moscow would not be impacted by the West’s approach towards it.

**Latest Developments**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi held separate bilateral talks with Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia on the sidelines of the SCO summit here to further strengthen India’s ties with the three resource-rich countries.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain shook hands and exchanged pleasantries after a press conference by the leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

**Qingdao declaration**

The 18th Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit concluded with the adoption of the Qingdao declaration. It was adopted by leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.

The Qingdao declaration calls for implementing three-year plan to combat terrorism, separatism and extremism. It also calls for implementation of treaty on long-term good neighbourliness, friendship and co-operation. SCO participating leaders also adopted total of 17 documents at the summit, which particularly include documents endorsing 2018-2022 Action Plan to implement Treaty for Long-term Good-Neighbourly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation between SCO states and 2019-2020 Program for Cooperation in countering terrorism, separatism and extremism. They also signed decision to approve 2018-2023 Anti-Drug Strategy and Action Plan to implement it. Besides, leaders of all SCO countries also signed an information statement.

India refused to endorse China’s ambitious One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project as part of Qingdao Declaration at the 18th SCO summit. At the restricted session of the SCO Summit, Indian Prime Minister Modi floated concept of SECURE: ‘S’ for security for citizens, ‘E’ for economic development, ‘C’ for connectivity in the region, ‘U’ for unity, ‘R’ for respect of sovereignty and integrity, and ‘E for environment protection.