



## RATS-SCO

### Why in News

Recently, India assumed the Chairmanship of Council of **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (RATS-SCO)** in 2021 for a **period of one year**.

- In pursuance of this, the [National Security Council Secretariat \(NSCS\)](#) in association with [Data Security Council of India \(DSCI\)](#), organized a Seminar on **Securing Cyberspace in the Contemporary Threat Environment**.

### Key Points

#### ▪ About RATS-SCO:

- SCO-RATS is a permanent body of the SCO and is intended to **facilitate coordination and interaction** between the SCO member states in the fight **against terrorism, extremism and separatism**.
- The main functions of SCO-RATS are **coordination and information sharing**.
- As a member, India has actively participated in the activities of SCO-RATS.
- **India's permanent membership** would enable it to generate greater understanding among members for its perspective.

#### ▪ About Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO):

- The [Shanghai Cooperation Organization \(SCO\)](#) was established as a multilateral association to ensure security and **maintain stability across the vast Eurasian region**.
- It envisages joining forces to counteract emerging challenges and threats, and enhance trade, as well as cultural and humanitarian cooperation. It was **created in 2001**.
- Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001, **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five**.
  - **Shanghai Five** (1996) emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.
- Following the accession of Uzbekistan to the organisation in **2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO**.
- The SCO Charter was signed in 2002, and entered into force in 2003. The SCO's **official languages are Russian and Chinese**.
- SCO has two Permanent Bodies:
  - **SCO Secretariat in Beijing,**
  - Executive Committee of the **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent**.
- The Chairmanship of SCO is by rotation for a year by Member States.
- India and Pakistan became members in 2017.
- **Member countries:** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan.
  - Recently, Iran's bid to become a full member of the SCO has been approved.

## India & SCO

### ▪ Advantages for India:

- **Regional Security:** SCO will enable India, as an integral part of the Eurasian security grouping, to neutralise centrifugal forces arising from religious extremism and terrorism in the region.
- **Embracing Regionalism:** The SCO is one of the few regional structures India is a part of now, given a decline in its engagement with [SAARC](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Bhutan](#), [India](#), [Nepal](#) ([BBIN](#)) Initiative.
  - More importantly, cooperation in three critical areas— energy, building trade and transportation links, and dealing with traditional and non-traditional security threats.
- **Connect With Central Asia:** The SCO provides India with a convenient channel for its outreach — trade and strategic ties — to Central Asian countries.
  - SCO is also a potential platform to advance India's [Connect Central Asia policy](#).
  - The foundation of India's economic outreach to Central Asia is based on its 2012 Connect Central Asia Policy with its focus on the **4 C's - Commerce, Connectivity, Consular and Community**.
- **Foundational Dimensions of SECURE:** Acknowledging the strategic importance emanating from the region and SCO, the Indian Prime Minister had articulated the foundational dimension of Eurasia being 'SECURE'. The letters in the word SECURE are:
  - **S** for Security of our citizens,
  - **E** for Economic development for all,
  - **C** for Connecting the region,
  - **U** for Unite our people,
  - **R** for Respect for Sovereignty and Integrity, and
  - **E** for Environment protection.
- **Dealing With Pakistan & China:** SCO provides India with a forum where it can constructively engage both China and Pakistan in a regional context and project India's security interests.

### ▪ Challenges That India Needs to Navigate:

- **Absence of Direct Land Connectivity:** A major impediment in India's expanded engagement with Eurasia remains the **strategic denial of direct land connectivity between India and Afghanistan and beyond by Pakistan**.
  - The lack of connectivity has also hampered the development of energy ties between the hydrocarbon-rich region and India
- **Growing Russia-China Convergence:** One of the major factors for Russia pushing India's inclusion into the SCO was to **balance China's power**.
- **Difference Over BRI:** While India has made its opposition to [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\)](#) clear, all other SCO members have embraced the Chinese project.
- **India-Pakistan Rivalry:** SCO members have, in the past, expressed fears of the organisation being held hostage to India's and Pakistan's adversarial relationship, and their fears would likely have worsened in recent times.

## Way Forward

- **Improving Connectivity With Central Asia:** The opening of [Chabahar port](#) and India's entry into the [Ashgabat agreement](#) should be utilized for a stronger presence in Eurasia.
  - Besides this, a clear focus on operationalising [International North-South Transport Corridor \(INSTC\)](#).
- **Improving Relations With China:** It is imperative that **India and China set up a modus vivendi** (agreement allowing conflicting parties to coexist peacefully) for the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be

viewed through the lens of an Asia century.

- **Strengthening Military Corporation:** In the context of increasing terrorism in the region, it is **imperative for SCO countries to develop a 'cooperative and sustainable security' framework** and make the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure more effective.

**Source: PIB**

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