



Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. What importance does it hold for India? (250 Words)

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Approches

- Brief introduction about SCO
- Explain the aim and goals of SCO and challenges.
- Discuss the importance of SCO for India.
- Conclude by writing some challenges and developments of being member of SCO.

Introduction

Created in 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation aiming to maintain peace, security, and stability in the region. India became a permanent member of the SCO in 2017.

Body

SCO aims to strengthen relations among member states. But India-Pakistan-Russia-China relations create a complex matrix of diverging and conflicting interests. To illustrate, China has shown little respect to an international rule-based order. 'Chequebook' and 'wolf warrior' diplomacy, human rights violations, etc. raise fundamental questions on Chinese commitments to the aims and objectives of SCO.

Moreover, under the guise of economic co-operation, China has pushed its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects through SCO.

Likewise, SCO seeks to safeguard regional peace, security, and stability. But, China (in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Ladakh), Russia (in Ukraine) and Pakistan (in Jammu & Kashmir) are accused of destabilizing regional peace, security, and stability.

Importance of SCO for India

- SCO is part of India's stated policy of pursuing "multi-alignments" and "strategic autonomy".
- The challenges of terrorism, radicalism, and instability pose a grave threat to Indian sovereignty and integrity. SCO's counter-terrorism body, the Regional Anti-Terror Structure (RATS), may prove useful for India in this context.
- SCO allows India to deepen its strategic reach in Central Asia. India already has substantial soft power potential in Central Asia. India's membership of SCO can boost energy security by providing access to mineral and energy resources of the Central Asian countries.
- India's presence in the SCO will help in India's aim to link itself to the larger Eurasian region, and to Europe via INSTC.
- SCO membership will also help India, which is currently boxed in the South Asian region, to become a major pan-Asian player.
- SCO can play a vital role in deepening people-to-people engagement through cooperation in the field of education, medicine, tourism, etc.

Conclusion

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 building. However, India's benefits from the SCO will be limited due to the role of China and Pakistan in the organisation. Positive outcomes will depend on how Indian diplomacy deals with its rivals.

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