

1. **SCO provides immense opportunities for India provided India understands the dynamics of the region and of individual nations of SCO. Critically analyze the statement in light of the recently held SCO summit. (250 words)**

Answer:

Background:-

Recently held SCO summit is the first SCO summit attended by India as a full-fledged member

Relevance of SCO to India :-

- SCO's relevance for India lies in geography, economics and geopolitics.
- SCO members occupy a huge landmass adjacent to India's extended neighbourhood, where India has important economic and security interests.
- With Pakistan joining the Organisation and Afghanistan and Iran knocking on the doors for membership, the logic of India's membership becomes stronger.

Immense opportunities for India :-

- Russia pushed strongly for India to join it, to somewhat balance China's economic dominance in Central Asia.
- **India Pakistan relationship :-**
Harmonious cooperation in the SCO may pave the way for an India-Pakistan rapprochement. SCO membership had facilitated resolution of China's boundary disputes with Russia and Central Asian countries.
- **Non western perspective on global issues:-**
Besides expanding opportunities for India in Central Asia, the SCO is a platform for articulating a non-Western as distinct from anti-Western perspective on global issues. This includes opposition to selective advocacy of regime change, self-serving homilies on human rights and intrusive advice on domestic policies. It suits India that the SCO is not stridently anti-West in its pronouncements.
- **Security is priority:-**
- Qingdao Declaration by the SCO member states leaders calls for prioritising the implementation of the Cooperation Programme to fight terrorism, separatism and extremism for 2019-2021 and speeding up the coming into effect the SCO Convention on Countering Extremism.
- India is believed to benefit from SCO's regional anti-terrorist structure that provides key intelligence inputs on terror outfits, cyber security and drug trafficking. Also, counter terror exercises and military drills that Indian army will be exposed to, are likely to infuse more energy into the army.
- The SCO Anti-Drug Strategy for 2018-2023 and the Programme of Action for its implementation, as well as the Concept for the Prevention of the Abuse of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances adopted at the Qingdao summit, reveal security to be a priority of the SCO.
- **Trade:-**
- The memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding export of non-Basmati rice, earlier denied access on phytosanitary grounds, was signed. The MoU assumes significance in the light of India's widening trade deficit (which stood at \$51 billion in 2016-2017) with China, one of the world's biggest rice markets.
- In economic spirit, SCO holds immense opportunities for India to bolster its trade linkages with Central Asia, a resource rich region.

- SCO membership is also positively linked with development of International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar port, both directed towards expanding transport and reducing costs of trade.
- **Hydrology:-**
- Another MoU signed during the recent summit concerned the sharing of hydrological information on Brahmaputra
- The agreement enables China to provide hydrological data in flood season from May 15 to October 15 every year.
- It also enables the Chinese side to provide hydrological data if water level exceeds mutually agreed level during non-flood season.
- India would be able to seek mutually beneficial partnerships with SCO members in human capital creation, technology, education, and policy convergence in regional trade.

Issues:-

- **India- Pakistan:-**
- SCO will nudge both India and Pakistan to cooperate in sensitive areas. One example is the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO, which coordinates cooperation for security and stability, through intelligence-sharing on criminal and terrorist activities.
- **Defence cooperation** : Enhanced linkages between armed forces is an SCO objective. India has agreed to participate in the SCO's counter-terrorism military exercises in Russia later this year, when Indian and Pakistani troops will operate together.
- Reconciling Indian and Pakistani perspectives in the SCO's initiatives on Afghanistan would be yet another challenge.
- **Increasing Chinese dominance of the SCO:-**
- There have been frequent instances of contradictions in the two nations international ambitions like China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a part of which falls into Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.
- Another example of China-India disagreement is India's NSG membership and China's constant denial of support.

Way forward:-

In essence, a zealous partnership with old ally Russia, unexplored Central Asia and growth competitor China will act as a catalyst for India to extend markets, and establish geopolitical relations in extended neighbourhood.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. Assess the performance of GST regime so far and discuss challenges going forward? (250 words)
2. Offshore wind generation offers several benefits over onshore wind energy generation but there are many challenges involved. Discuss. (250 words)