

The historic silk road city of Samarkand in Uzbekistan witnessed heightened diplomatic activities as it hosted the 22nd Head of states meeting of the Shanghai cooperation organization (SCO).

The SCO is an eight-member intergovernmental organization comprising Russia, China, India, and Pakistan, and the central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Bloc also includes Observer and Non-partner nations as part of the deliberative mechanism.

## **A many first**

The Eurasian economic, social and political meeting came at the backdrop of significant geopolitical churn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and exacerbated by Russia's special operations against Ukraine and china's attempt to change the status quo across the Taiwan island. Chinese premier Xi-Jinping had embarked on his first foreign visit since the pandemic occurred. Similarly, the Russian federation president Vladimir Putin's presence was the first since the Kremlin's 'special operations' against the Ukrainian territories and the sanctions the West imposed. The prime minister of India, Narendra Modi, met with their counterparts from Russia, China, Iran, and other Central Asian countries at the sidestep of the organization. The meeting was significant for Prime Minister Modi as it was his first non-western high-level gathering apart from QUAD or 2+2 dialogue.

At the SCO Summit in Samarkand, emphasised on the constructive role SCO can play in the post-COVID era particularly in furthering economic recovery and strengthening supply chains. Highlighted India's emphasis on people-centric growth which also gives importance to technology. [pic.twitter.com/kwF5bDESkR](https://pic.twitter.com/kwF5bDESkR)

— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) [September 16, 2022](#)

## **Samarkand Declaration**

The Samarkand declaration adopted by the council of heads of government of the shanghai cooperation organization pointed out the series of challenges and headwinds to be faced by humanity in the 21st century. It mentioned climate change, Terrorism, Technological disruptions, global reduction in investment flows, instability in supply chains, increased

protectionist measures, and other barriers to international trade. The declaration called for the member states to adhere to the SCO charter without being involved in the ideological and confrontational approaches to address the problems of international and regional developments.

## **China-Russia Bonhomie on full display**

The much-awaited moment was the bilateral meetings between the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, and China's premier, Xi-Jinping. Recently, both countries have come closer since the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. The shared antipathy toward the western world's actions toward them has prompted both to describe their ties as a "no limits relationship." Russia and China see the West, especially the United States, as a roadblock to their rise in the world order.

Both Xi-Jinping and Vladimir Putin have chastised the current rules-based liberal world order as a shadow of western powers to dominate the global system and subdue the efforts of non-western powers, especially China and Russia, to be an alternate power.

During the meeting, President Putin thanked the Chinese premier for their continuous support in the military action against Ukraine. China has declined to join the call by the western nation to impose tough sanctions against the Russian regime. Instead, the Ukrainian crisis has strengthened the relationship between the Kremlin and Beijing. Economically China has increased its oil imports from Russia after the western countries imposed targeted sanctions on the Russian oil sector. Instead, China has increased its oil import from Russia by more than 50 percent, becoming one of the favourable oil partners of the sanctioned battered regime. It would be wise to say that china's oil purchases have cushioned the impact of sanctions imposed by America and its allies. The meeting also saw Xi-Jinping extolling the member nations to be aware of western motives of putting "color revolutions" in non-democratic countries for regime change. He also cautioned the world of the rising instances of formation of "small clique" of nations to target third countries. Presumably, he was pointing to regional groupings like QUAD and AUKUS.



Leaders from the SCO members state/ Image source: @narendramodi/Twitter

## India's growing concerns

During the Address to the Head of the states, Prime Minister Narendra Modi argued for more connectivity and transit right across the Eurasian region. He emphasized the need for better infrastructure for trade in goods and the free movement of people from south Asia to central Asia, thus arguing for a 'visa-free' regime in the SCO Member countries.

Traditionally India wanted to access the parts of Europe and Central Asia for its trade in goods and services but was repeatedly blocked by the state of Pakistan because of its anti-India sentiments. That was an attempt by the Indian prime Minister to corner the Pakistan state on the international platform for its repeated denial of the transit rights to the Indians.

The meeting between the Indian prime minister and the President of the Russian Federation saw exciting developments. For the first time, the Indian side publicly expressed its serious concerns regarding the Russian military actions in Ukraine. According to the Press statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs, India's Prime Minister reiterated his call for early cessation of hostilities and the need for dialogue and diplomacy. The statement

gained significance as the world is reeling under the high inflation, supply chain disruption, and energy insecurity. India, too, is facing a crisis on the domestic front because of a high level of inflation which is hovering above the 7 percent rate, higher than the required bandwidth of 2 to 6 percent. According to the Reserve Bank of India, the inflation in food is mainly fed by the disruption in supply chain networks due to the war in Europe.

Because of the war, India has to balance the western powers and Russia, its traditional ally. India has been under repeated attacks from the USA and its partners for not toeing its line to sanction Russia. Instead, New Delhi has deepened its working relationship with Moscow. Recently Russia has become India's second-largest oil supplier, displacing Iraq.

## **A Revamped SCO**

The current SCO gathering saw Iran being made the permanent member of the organization from the Observer nation. India welcomed the move as it would balance the power in the grouping. The current Balance of power in the Bloc was in favour of China and its other partners like Russia and Pakistan. The Induction of Iran as a permanent member will significantly balance the Chinese Influence in the SCO.

## **Stick to the mandate**

Every attempt is to portray SCO as the bulwark against the western Influence in the region. Both Russia and China want to see the Bloc as a way to counter the western actions of the unilateral sanction imposed on them. But the member nations should be mindful of the pitfalls of engaging in power rivalry as it will seriously compromise its core economic and political union mandates. Countries like India do not want to take sides of either nation as it will seriously impede its manoeuvring in global politics. As Written by Suhasini Haidar in its editorial piece in The Hindu, SCO provides a perfect platform for India to pursue its ambition of multi-alignment.



**CERTIFICATE COURSE IN  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

SIX-WEEK ONLINE COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
BY THE KOOTNEETI

**JOIN TODAY!**

team@thekootneeti.com  
courses.thekootneeti.in  
(+91) 120 4565994

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kootneeti Team*

Facebook Comments