

Daily Mains Practice Answer 1 - 09 - 2026

Q. "India's journey from an SCO observer to an active regional player reflects its growing engagement with the Eurasian strategic space." Discuss. (150 words, 10 marks)

Directions: Intro---From observer to an active regional player + Growing engagement + Significance + Limitations/challenges-----Conclusion.

Introduction:

Describe the SCO and India's engagement briefly.

Main Body

India's Journey in SCO

- 2005 - Became an Observer.
- 2017- Became a full member, along with Pakistan.
- 2022-23 - India assumed the SCO Presidency, organising more than 140 meetings and events.
- India adopted the "SECURE SCO" framework—Security, Economy and Trade, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity, and Environment.
- Its continued participation in SCO meetings in 2026 indicates that the organisation has become an important instrument of India's Eurasian diplomacy.

Growing engagement with the Eurasian strategic space

- Central Asian outreach - critical for India's interests in energy, critical minerals, connectivity and geopolitical stability - location at the crossroads of Eurasian connectivity.
- Recent India-Uzbekistan engagement - cooperation on critical minerals, uranium, defence and digital payments.
- Security and counter-terrorism - India has consistently advocated a firm and unequivocal approach towards terrorism, extremism, separatism and transnational crime.
- India's participation in the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).
- Connectivity - Projects such as Chabahar Port, International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) & connectivity with Central Asia - SCO complements India's broader Connect Central Asia approach.
- Economic and energy interests - The SCO region possesses substantial energy and

mineral reserves, helping India diversify energy sources, access strategic resources and expand trade and investment.

- Cultural and people-to-people links - During India's SCO Presidency, Varanasi was designated as the 1st SCO Cultural and Tourist Capital & also promoted cooperation in traditional medicine, youth engagement and cultural exchanges.

Significance for India

- Maintain dialogue with China and Russia simultaneously.
- Strengthen its presence in Central Asia, its extended neighbourhood.
- Pursue strategic autonomy rather than alignment with any single bloc.
- Participate in shaping the emerging multipolar Eurasian order.
- Address transnational threats through multilateral mechanisms.

Challenges

- China's dominance in SCO & India-China strategic rivalry.
- India-Pakistan tensions on security issues.
- SCO's weak economic integration compared to other regional organisations.
- Connectivity projects face geopolitical, financial and sovereignty-related constraints.

Conclusion:

Give a positive and balanced conclusion, also suggest some way forward measures.

India's SCO journey represents a transition from “watching Eurasia” to “shaping engagement with Eurasia.” The objective is not to make the SCO an alliance, but to use it as an instrument.