The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit 2022

Why in news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi walked a fine line in Samarkand, Uzbekistan during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, given the current global stand-off between the West and Russia.

What is Shanghai Cooperation Organisation?

> *Uzbekistan is the current chair of SCO 2022 whereas India will be the next chair of the SCO in 2023.*

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is a central Asian security body formed in 2001.
- Before the inception of SCO, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the **Shanghai Five**.
- Later, it expanded to include Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan with a view to play a bigger role as counterweight to Western influence in the region.
- Since its inception, the SCO has mainly focused on
    - Regional security issues
    - Regional terrorism
    - Ethnic separatism
    - Religious extremism
    - Regional development

- **Members**- Russia, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan
- **Observer Countries** - Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia
- **Dialogue Partners** - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey
- **Significance-** The SCO is the world's largest regional organisation consisting of 40% of the world's population and 30% of global gross domestic product (GDP).
- The SCO has been an observer in the UN General Assembly since 2005.

What are the key takeaways of the Summit?

- **Samarkand Declaration**- The Samarkand declaration adopted by the council of heads of government of the SCO 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 chain
    - Increased protectionist measures
    - Other barriers to international trade
- **China-Russia Bonhomie**- The shared antipathy toward the western world's actions toward them has prompted both to describe their ties as a "no limits relationship."
- Xi-Jinping extolled 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 cliche" of nations to target third countries, presumably, pointing to regional groupings like QUAD and AUKUS.
- **A Revamped SCO**- The current SCO gathering saw Iran being made the permanent member of the organization from the Observer nation.
- **India's concerns**- Prime Minister Narendra Modi argued for more connectivity and transient right across the Eurasian region.
- He emphasized the need for better infrastructure and the free movement of people from south Asia to central Asia, thus arguing for a 'visa-free' regime in the SCO Member countries.
- For the first time, the Indian side publicly expressed its serious concerns regarding the Russian military actions in Ukraine.

What can be inferred from the summit?

- **New version of non-alignment**- India's expression of concerns in Russia-Ukraine war has been interpreted as a mild rebuke of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Mr. Modi thanked both Russia and Ukraine for the evacuation of Indian students from Ukraine, highlighting India's posture of equidistance between the two countries.
- The meeting underpins India's strategy of multi alignment in managing conflict.
- **Scope for oppurtunities**- Because of the US sanctions, India has to pay higher prices for crude and unable to utilise the Chabahar Connectivity Project.
- Iran's MoU to become a permanent member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2023 appears to be positive for India.
- **Ties with China**- As China-Russia relations become closer, they have the potential of adversely impacting the current warmth in India-Russia relations.
- India's foreign policy mandarins must look for opportunities for the betterment of relations at an opportune time.
- **Nuclear dimension**- An issue that needs consideration in the context of the Ukraine-Russia conflict is the nuclear dimension.
- India has been a firm adherent of 'No First Use Doctrine', a commitment to never use nuclear weapons first under any circumstances (as a pre-emptive attack or first strike or in response to non-nuclear attack).
- India's foreign policy establishment cannot afford to overlook the nuclear aspect, given that the country is wedged between two active and hostile nuclear powers - China and

Pakistan.

References

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