

Baba's Foundation Course (FC) - 2023

MAINS SYNOPSIS (SAMPLE)



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BABA'S FOUNDATION COURSE (FC) 2023 MAINS SYNOPSIS MODEL (SAMPLE)

1. Describe the major outcomes of the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). What are the commitments made by India in this conference? (250 words, 10 marks) (UPSC CSE 2021)

Approach:

Answer should contain the following parts:

- Introduction – The place where it was held & the significant outcome.
- Major Outcomes of COP26
- Disappointments/Concerns of COP26 (even though it is not explicitly asked, one can write it in brief)
- India's commitments in COP26
- Conclusion (summarising the Conference)

Key Words:

- Paris Rulebook
- Methane Pledge
- Reverse Forest Loss
- Adaptation Finance
- Panchamrit Pledges (Net Zero)

Introduction

During the COP26, nations adopted the Glasgow Climate Pact, aiming to turn the 2020s into a decade of climate action and support.

Body

Major outcomes of COP26 (at least the ones highlighted in red must be mentioned in your answer. Other points are added for your learning perspective)

- **Tacit consensus on 1.5o target:** The notional target of limiting the global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (Paris Agreement) remains but the international discourse is now firmly anchored in the more ambitious target of limiting the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees to match the scale of the climate emergency.
- **Accelerating action:** With present climate plans – the Nationally determined Contributions — falling far short on ambition, the Glasgow Climate Pact calls on all countries to present stronger national action plans in 2023, instead of in 2025, which was the original timeline.

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- **Moving away from fossil fuels:** For the first time, nations were called upon to phase down coal power and a phase-out of “inefficient” fossil fuel subsidies.
- **Stepping up support for adaptation:** The Glasgow Pact calls for a doubling of finance to support developing countries in adapting to the impacts of climate change and building resilience. Presently finance for adaptation made up only about ~25 per cent of all climate finance (with 75 per cent going towards green technologies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions).
- **Completing the Paris rulebook:** Nations also completed the Paris Agreement’s rulebook as it relates to market mechanisms and non-market approaches and the transparent reporting of climate actions.
- **Forests:** 137 countries took a landmark step forward by committing to halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030. The pledge is backed by \$12bn in public and \$7.2bn in private funding.
- **Methane Pledge:** 103 countries, including 15 major emitters, signed up to the Global Methane Pledge, which aims to limit methane emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, compared to 2020 levels. Methane is responsible for a third of current warming from human activities.
- **Push towards Electric Vehicles:** Over 30 countries, six major vehicle manufacturers and other actors, like cities, set out their determination for accelerating the decarbonization of road transport (push for electric vehicles), which currently accounts for about 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Private finance for Net Zero:** Private financial institutions and central banks announced moves to realign trillions of dollars towards achieving global net zero emissions. Among them is the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, with over 450 firms across 45 countries requiring its member to set robust, science-based near-term targets.
- **Compensation for loss and damage for developing countries:** This is now part of the multilateral discourse and the US has agreed that it should be examined in working groups. That is a step forward but is unlikely to translate into a meaningful flow of funds any time soon.
- **Clarity on Article 6 of Paris agreement–** There is greater clarity on how bilateral carbon trades can proceed and the creation of a centralised hub that replaces Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism.
- **Pressure by Youth:** There was incredible and passionate advocacy of urgent action by young people across the world. This is putting enormous pressure on governments and leaders and if sustained, may become irresistible

Disappointments/ Concerns with COP26

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- **Inadequate Adaptation Finance:** Climate finance for adaptation is currently only \$15 billion, doubling will mean \$ 30 billion. This remains grossly inadequate. According to UNEP, adaptation costs for developing countries are currently estimated at \$70 billion annually and will rise to an estimated \$130-300 billion annually by 2030.
- **Insufficient action on coal:** Many countries, and NGOs, expressed dissatisfaction that the language on coal was significantly weakened (from phase-out to phase-down) and consequently, was not as ambitious as it needs to be.
- **Bigger methane emergency in Permafrost Problem:** Cutting methane emissions, which is generated mainly by livestock, is certainly useful but there is a much bigger methane emergency as the earth's permafrost areas in Siberia, Greenland and the Arctic littoral begin to melt that would release huge volumes of carbon and methane.
- **India declining to join new initiatives:** India is not a part of the methane pledge group. India also did not join the reverse deforestation group due to concerns over a clause on possible trade measures related to forest products.
- **Lack of Concrete actions:** There is more ambition in the intent to tackle climate change but little to show in terms of concrete actions. These have been deferred to future deliberations. Enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are expected to be announced at a meeting next year. There are no compliance procedures, only "name and shame" to encourage delivery on targets.

India has surprised observers within and outside India with the following ambitious and what at this point appear to be unconditional pledges

- Increase non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatts) by 2030.
- Meet 50 percent of energy requirements from renewable energy (RE) by 2030.
- Reduce the total projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes (BT) by 2030.
- Reduce the carbon intensity of the economy by less than 45 percent.
- Achieve net zero carbon by 2070.

Many environmentalists hailed these five pledges ("Panchamrit")

- It is expected to put India on a **firm path towards decarbonisation**.
- For commercial entities betting on green investments to pay-off handsomely, the announcements offer the comfort of certainty that government policy will protect their returns.

Conclusion

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Although the conference was unsatisfactory in delivering the action and commitments needed to reach the targets from the Paris Agreement, COP26 has raised the global ambition on climate action.

Value Additions and Facts/Figures

- CO2 emissions began to rise more steeply from the 1950s (6 billion metric tons), and by 2000 had reached 25.23 billion metric tons of CO2.
- Emissions soared 32 percent between 2000 and 2010, and in 2020 totalled 34.81 billion metric tons. That year the outbreak of COVID-19 caused emissions to plummet five percent.

Climate Change & Forests

- Eleven percent of all global greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans are due to deforestation — comparable to the emissions from all of the passenger vehicles on the planet
- Tropical forests are incredibly effective at storing carbon, providing at least a third of the mitigation action needed to prevent the worst climate change scenarios. Yet nature-based solutions receive only 3% of all climate funding.
- Natural climate solutions such as restoring degraded forests could create as many as 39 jobs per million dollars spent — that's a job-creation rate more than six times higher than the oil and gas industry

Climate Change & Health:

- Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approx. 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.
- The direct damage costs to health (i.e., excluding costs in health-determining sectors such as agriculture and water and sanitation), is estimated to be between USD 2-4 billion/year by 2030.

Climate Change & Blue Carbon

- Just 0.7% of the world's forests are coastal mangroves, yet they store up to 10 times as much carbon per hectare as tropical forests
- If we continue to lose mangroves at this rate (**800,000 hectares lost every year**), they may disappear within the next century. This loss, removes an important buffer from extreme weather for coastal communities and releases immense amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Climate Change & Cost

- Conserving ecosystems is often more cost-effective than human-made interventions. In the Maldives, preserving the natural coral reef is four times

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cheaper than building a sea wall for coastal protection, even after 10 years of maintenance costs.

- **US\$ 140 billion per year:** This is what it would take to make the changes humanity needs to adapt to a warming world. It may sound like a lot, but it's less than 0.2% of global GDP. And the cost will only increase the longer we take to act ambitiously.

2. Critically examine the aims and objectives of SCO. what importance does it hold for India? (250 words, 10 marks) (UPSC CSE 2021)

Approach:

Answer should contain the following parts

- Introduction – What is SCO
- Main Goals of SCO
- Critical analysis of the aims & objectives of SCO
- Importance for India
- Challenges for India
- Conclusion

Key Words:

- Central Asia
- Russia-China Axis
- Anti-NATO
- China's Hegemonic ambitions
- Energy Security
- Trade & Connectivity
- Belt and Road Initiative



Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation founded in 2001 in Shanghai (China) by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China and Russia. In 2017, India and Pakistan became full members of this organisation.

- SCO counts four observer states -Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.

Body

The SCO's main goals are as follows:

- strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states;

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- promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, environmental protection, and other areas;
- making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region;
- moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

Critical Examination of the SCO

- In 2005, the **Astana declaration** called for SCO countries to work on a “joint SCO response to situations that threaten peace, security and stability in the region”, indicating the group’s **strategic ambitions**.
- The SCO has a strategically important role in Asia due to its geographical significance. Since it is heralded by China, the organisation enables it to control the Central Asia and **limit the American influence** in region.
- It is also pointer towards strengthening **Russia-China axis** in geopolitical affairs as it is these two powers which largely determines the course of the organisation.
- SCO was the key motivator behind **China’s BRI concept** and Beijing has now pledged additional billions for the initiative in the region. Thus, we can see China increasing its economic & diplomatic presence in the resource rich Central Asian region.
- Initially, the SCO focused on mutual intraregional efforts to curb terrorism (through its permanent body of **Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)**), separatism and extremism in Central Asia. SCO actively participated in bringing back stability in Afghanistan.
- The SCO Charter doesn’t allow any **bilateral dispute** to be taken up, but it provides a comfortable platform for finding common ground and eventually, creating conditions for dialogue between countries. In 2020, SCO host, Russia, encouraged and facilitated meetings between India and China to discuss the stand-off at the LAC
- However, there are also concerns with the organisation
 - China is accused of using this platform to fulfil its **hegemonic ambitions**.
 - Despite being geographically close, the rich diversity in member’s history, backgrounds, language, national interests and form of government, wealth and culture makes the SCO **decision making challenging**.
 - The SCO describes one of its main goals as establishing new international political and economic order, clearly showing that it is having anti-west inclinations. The West perceives SCO as a **counterweight to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)**.

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- Central Asian Republics were earlier a part of erstwhile USSR and Russia sees it natural dominant influencer in these countries. Increasing Chinese presence in the region through SCO can cause irritant in Sino-Russia relationship where **Russia doesn't want to be a junior partner.**
- There are also question raised on **Human rights issues** of the member countries (except India) given the track record of China and Russia in treating their minorities.

Importance of SCO to India

- **Deepens Geopolitical Presence:** Central Asia is a part of India's Extended Neighbourhood – SCO provides India an opportunity to pursue the “Connect Central Asian Policy”. SCO allows India to deepen its strategic reach in Central Asia. India already has substantial soft power potential (Buddhist linkages, Bollywood movies etc.) in Central Asia, which it can exploit through SCO.
- **Strategic:** The historic and deep Russia-India relationship will help both these countries to keep China in check. It is also a platform for India to engage with its traditional rivals, China and Pakistan.
- **Security & Counter-terrorism:** India through RATS can improve its counterterrorism abilities by working toward intelligence sharing, law enforcement and developing best practices and technologies. Cooperation on common challenges of terrorism and radicalisation.
- **Trade:** SCO provides direct access to Central Asia – overcoming the main hindrance in flourishing of trade between India and Central Asia. SCO acts as an alternative route to Central Asia.
 - India's presence in the SCO will help in India's aim to link itself to the larger Eurasian region, and to Europe via an INSTC. Thus, boosting connectivity in the region.
- **Energy:** India being an energy deficient country with increasing demands for energy, SCO provides it with an opportunity to meet its energy requirements through regional diplomacy.

However, India may not gain much from SCO due to various contradiction

- Pakistan's inclusion in SCO poses potential difficulties for India.
- India's ability to assert itself would be limited and it may have to play second fiddle since China and Russia are co-founders of SCO and its dominant powers.
- India joining the SCO has been seen as puzzling foreign policy move, as it has come at a time when New Delhi is looking more keenly at the West, and in particular at the maritime 'Quadrilateral' with the U.S., Japan and Australia.

Conclusion

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India may also have to either dilute its growing partnership with the West or engage in a delicate balancing act - as SCO has traditionally adopted an anti-Western posture.

Value Addition and Facts/Figures

- Central Asia sits at the heart of Eurasia and, historically, made up half of the ancient Silk Route. The region is strategically vital for many countries like China, Russia, India, the US and Europe, as it served as a pivot for geopolitical transformations within the world island. Indeed, as geographer Halford Mackinder observed, "he who controls the heartland controls the world".
- Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan (Kyrgyz Republic) and Tajikistan popularly known as Shanghai Five had come together in the post-Soviet era in 1996, in order to work on regional security, reduction of border troops, and terrorism. In 1997, they signed an agreement which resolved border disputes paving way for SCO.
- SCO represents around 42 per cent of the world's *population* and 20 per cent of the global GDP.
- The total amount of reserves in Central Asia accounts for about 16.9 percent of the world's total uranium resources.
- By 2016, half of the external debt of Kyrgyzstan (US\$ 1.4 billion) and Tajikistan (US\$ 1.1 billion) comprised of loans from China's EXIM Bank. Debt from all other global institutions including the World Bank, IMF, Asian Development Bank and others, made up the other half
- Central Asia saw one of the worst environmental disasters made by humans on the planet is the shrinking Aral Sea, which was actually a lake fed by two rivers and bordering Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

