



By: TA | AP Brief

Xi, Putin and Modi at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit



The leaders of China, Russia and India are among the heads of state gathering in Kyrgyzstan this week for the summit of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization**, a group billed as a counterweight to U.S. global influence.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are scheduled to attend the events in Bishkek, the capital of the Central Asian nation.

Multiple one-on-one meetings are scheduled on its sidelines, including one between Putin and Xi on Monday, as well as talks between the Russian leader and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday, the day of the official SCO sessions.

Russia, now 4½ years into its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and Iran, **six months into a war** with the United States and Israel, see the summit as an important platform to strengthen their relations with non-Western partners.

The SCO was founded in 2001 by China, Russia and four Central Asian states as a security forum.

Over the past quarter-century, it has grown in size and influence, although its goals and programs remain vague and its brand recognition low.

It now includes 10 nations: Russia, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Many other countries have the status of “dialogue partners.”

Along with Russia, China has presented the SCO as an alternative to Western-aligned organizations like the G7, and in recent years has wanted to expand the scope and influence of the organization, pledging development and financial assistance.

China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs said last week that the organization has successfully “explored a new path for regional

cooperation.” Beijing has consistently promoted the idea of an alternative world order with Russia’s support.

Summit attendees have significant disagreements

For many SCO members, the summit will be an opportunity to show that they maintain strong ties on the global stage despite souring relations with the West.

The organization is not a unified political or military bloc, however, and analysts note that its members have significant disagreements and their own distinct interests.

For countries such as India, however, experts say the summit is likely to be more about optics and strategic signaling than substantive outcomes.

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Dinakar Peri, a fellow in security studies at Carnegie India, said the SCO gives India a seat at the table in a region increasingly shaped by competition among the larger powers, allowing it to protect its interests, track shifting geopolitical currents and project itself as a reliable stakeholder.

“While it may not entirely shape the agenda, it gives New Delhi a first-hand view of the region and allows it to hedge its position with others,” Peri said.

Turkey, which holds partner status within the SCO, also seeks to use the platform to strengthen its position in the region.

It views SCO membership as part of a balanced

foreign policy that seeks to maintain its traditional ties with the West as a part of NATO, while strengthening its influence in Eurasia.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who brought his country into the SCO as a “dialogue partner” in 2012, has repeatedly stated that he wants Turkey to become a permanent member.

While Turkey has close trade ties with the European Union under a 1995 trade deal, its EU membership bid has stalled for more than 25 years.