Syllabus subtopic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

Prelims and Mains focus: about the SCO meeting to be hosted by India this year; likely impact on Indo-Pak relations on the grouping and role of China

News: Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan will be invited to participate in the Heads of Government Council meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) that will be hosted in India this year, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. The invite move came hours after the UN Security Council discussed the situation in Kashmir.

Background

- Prime Minister Khan who assumed office in 2018 has been a tough critic of India’s continued lockdown of Kashmir. He has also taken up the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019 and the National Register of Citizens both domestically and on global platforms.

- Though his predecessor Nawaz Sharif had visited India in May 2014 for the “mini-SAARC summit”, Mr. Khan has not been invited to India till now. On Thursday, the Pakistani leader welcomed the discussion on Kashmir held at the UN Security Council in New York, saying that the meeting “reflects a recognition of the seriousness of the prevailing situation (in Kashmir).”

- Wednesday’s meeting on Kashmir was the second such China-backed meeting on “The India-Pakistan Question” at the UNSC since India ended the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019.

India-Pakistan at SCO

Since becoming full-time member of the SCO in 2017, both India and Pakistan have participated in multiple meetings of SCO and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) despite hostilities and tension in Kashmir. The Heads of Government Council meeting is attended by the Prime Minister-level leaders of the member states that deliberate on the regional body’s economic and other
pressing issues. The meeting also firms up SCO's annual budget.