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1 Great Nicobar Island (GNI) Project (Source: The Hindu)

The Great Nicobar project envisions to develop the remote location considering its strategic location.

- *The island is positioned strategically at the mouth of the Malacca Strait which is one of the world's busiest maritime chokepoints.*

What are you need to know?

- Project is headed by NITI Aayog and implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation.
- It envisions in transforming the remote outpost into a major transshipment and defence hub.
- It consists of an integrated city-state designed to serve both commercial and military purposes.
- The project envisions an international Container Transshipment Terminal in Galathea Bay.
- A new greenfield airport serving both civilian and military needs is planned for 24/7 operations
- A new township to accommodate more than 3.5 lakh people who are expected to live here after the project starts. The township will be powered by a new 450-MVA gas- and solar-based power plant.

Issues raised against the project

- Protection of coral reef colonies,
- Nesting sites of leatherback turtles
- Located in ecologically protected zones.
- The rights of the Nicobarese and the Shompen communities can be affected.

2 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (Source: The Hindu)

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

About SCO

- A permanent intergovernmental international organisation established in 2001 in Shanghai, China.
- Evolved from the "Shanghai Five" (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) formed in 1996.
- Aims to strengthen mutual trust, friendship, good-neighbourliness and cooperation among member states.
- Headquarters: Beijing, China.
- Official languages: Chinese and Russian.

Member States (10)

China

India

Kazakhstan

Kyrgyzstan

Pakistan

Russia

Tajikistan

Uzbekistan

Iran

Belarus (2024)

Other Members

Afghanistan
Observer States (2)

Mongolia

Dialogue Partners (14)

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Egypt, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, UAE, Bahrain

Guest Status

ASEAN, CIS, UN and other international organisations.

Objectives

- Strengthen mutual trust and good neighbourliness.
- Promote cooperation in political, security, economic, cultural, scientific and humanitarian fields.
- Maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Build a new democratic, fair and rational international political and economic order.

Key Areas of Cooperation

- Security and counter-terrorism
- Economic and trade cooperation
- Connectivity and infrastructure
- Energy security
- People-to-people and cultural exchanges
- Science, technology and innovation
- Environmental protection
- Public health cooperation

Key Features

- Largest regional organisation by geographical coverage and population.
- Focuses on the "Three Evils" – terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- Non-military, non-bloc, open and inclusive organisation.
- Decision-making by consensus.
- Emphasises respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference and peaceful coexistence.
- Hosts the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) for security cooperation.

Organisational Structure

Council of Heads of State
(supreme decision-making body)

Council of Heads of Government
(oversees multi-sectoral cooperation)

Council of Foreign Ministers
(prepares decisions)

SCO Secretariat
(Beijing)

Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
(RATS) – Tashkent

Significance

- Important platform for regional peace, stability and dialogue.
- Helps manage security challenges, including terrorism and extremism.
- Promotes economic cooperation and connectivity (e.g., SCO development strategies, transport corridors).
- Enhances India's engagement with Eurasian region.
- Provides platform for dialogue with key neighbours and regional powers.
- Growing role in energy, digital economy, climate change and people-to-people ties.

Challenges

- Divergent interests among member states.
- Dominance of China and Russia in agenda-setting.
- Limited economic integration compared to other groupings.
- Presence of rivalries (e.g., India-Pakistan).
- Slow progress in connectivity projects.
- Balancing relations with Western-led groupings.
- Need to enhance institutional capacity and effectiveness.

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3 Morocco (Source: The Hindu)

- **Location:** Morocco is a country in the Maghreb region of North Africa.
- **Capital:** Rabat
- **Border Countries:** Algeria
- **Bordering Waterbodies:** Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea
- **Associated Geographical Feature:** Border western Sahara to south .
- **Climate:** Mediterranean climate
- **Membership in International Organisation:** African Union (AU), Arab League, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Non-Aligned Movement.

