

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION: INTERNATIONAL RELATION

NEWS: Pahalgam excluded: India declines to sign SCO statement

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

India refused to sign the SCO Defence Ministers' draft statement after it excluded mention of the Pahalgam terror attack, highlighting concerns over selective condemnation of terrorism and calling for a consistent, zero-tolerance approach.

India's Refusal to Sign SCO Defence Draft Statement

- At the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting in Qingdao, India's Defence Minister declined to sign the draft joint statement.
- The refusal was prompted by the omission of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack reference, where 26 people were killed, while the statement did include mention of the Jaffar Express hijacking in Balochistan by the Balochistan Liberation Army in March.

Issues Highlighted by India

India's Position on Terrorism:

- India criticized the selective treatment of terrorism incidents and the lack of a unified global standard on counterterrorism.
- It called out the double standards practiced by some nations in dealing with terrorism, noting that peace and prosperity cannot coexist with terrorism, especially when Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) could fall into the hands of non-state actors.

Accusations Against Cross-Border Terrorism:

- India called for a policy of zero tolerance towards states using cross-border terrorism as an instrument of statecraft and providing shelter to terrorist groups.
- It emphasized that SCO must not hesitate to condemn such states explicitly and hold them accountable.

Pahalgam Attack and India's Response:

- India reiterated its sovereign right to self-defense following the Pahalgam attack.
- It highlighted Operation Sindoor, launched in response to the attack, as evidence of India's zero tolerance policy against terrorism.

Accountability for Terrorism:

- India demanded an unequivocal condemnation of terrorism from all SCO members, irrespective of motivations or ideologies behind such acts.
- It stressed the need to hold perpetrators, organizers, financiers, and sponsors of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice.

Tackling Radicalisation:

- India recognized the role of SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in countering radicalization and terrorism.
- It urged SCO members to proactively curb radicalization, particularly among youth, to prevent recruitment into extremist groups.

Growing Non-Traditional Security Threats:

- India expressed concerns over new-age security challenges, such as the use of drones and advanced technology by terrorists to smuggle weapons and narcotics across borders.
- Other emerging threats discussed included transnational terrorism, cyberattacks, hybrid warfare, and the spread of extremist propaganda via digital channels.

India's Global Stance:

- India called for reformed multilateralism to strengthen dialogue, cooperation, and conflict prevention.
- It noted that globalization is losing momentum, and multilateral systems are weakening, which hampers effective response to global crises like pandemics, climate change, and food and water insecurity.
- India underscored the importance of collective international action to tackle these complex, transboundary challenges.

Connectivity and Economic Growth:

- India reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing connectivity with Central Asian countries.
- It emphasized that improved connectivity will boost trade, strengthen trust among nations, and foster regional peace, stability, and prosperity.

Commitment to Afghanistan:

- India reiterated its support for Afghanistan, highlighting ongoing capacity-building efforts for Afghan people.
- India reaffirmed its role in contributing to regional stability, development, and security, particularly given Afghanistan's strategic position within the SCO region.

About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Origin:

- The SCO's origins trace back to the "Shanghai Five" group formed in 1996, consisting of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- The group emerged in response to security concerns following the USSR's dissolution, including threats from extremist religious groups and ethnic tensions in the region.

Establishment:

- The SCO was formally established on June 15, 2001, in Shanghai, with Uzbekistan joining as the sixth member state.

Full Members:

- The SCO currently has 10 full members: India, Belarus, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran.

Observer States:

- Afghanistan and Mongolia hold observer status in the SCO.

Significance:

- The SCO is one of the few major international organizations centered on security cooperation, primarily focused on Asia.
- Its agenda includes tackling terrorism, separatism, and extremism, promoting economic cooperation, cultural exchange, and fostering political dialogue among member states.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-refuses-to-sign-joint-statement-in-sco-summit/article69739189.ece>