



Number: R&P-03

June 05, 2023

INDIA'S DOUBLE STANDARDS ON TERRORISM IN THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

Author(s):

Syed Taimoor Shah
(Research Associate)

Edited by:

Dr Imran Chaudhry

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) aims to promote cooperation in the fields of security, economy, culture, science and technology. The Shanghai Spirit derives the core value of SCO based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equal rights, consultations, respect for the diversity of cultures, aspiration towards common development, non-alignment, no-targeting anyone and openness.¹ The organisation has two permanent bodies, i.e., Secretariat in Beijing and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. RATS deals with combatting terrorism, extremism and separatism regionally and globally.²

The inclusion of Pakistan and India within the organisation in 2017 generated mixed signals of optimism and pessimism. Optimists believe this platform would allow respective countries to address their bilateral issues and potentially yield favourable outcomes. Pessimists, conversely, caution that tension between member states, especially between Pakistan and India, would hinder the progress within the organisation. However, it is no surprise that the present situation gives greater relevance to the pessimistic outlook. India's false propaganda against Pakistan, a persistent tactic employed for years, has been extending to the platform of SCO. Presently, India holds the SCO Chairmanship and has been exploiting its position of influence by maligning Pakistan for promoting and abetting terrorism at its meetings. Indian External Affairs Minister, in a recent SCO meeting held at Goa, very blatantly twisted the facts by saying, "Victims of terrorism do not sit together with perpetrators of terrorism to discuss terrorism."³

In a recent seminar on the SCO Armed Forces Contribution in Military Medicine, Healthcare and Pandemic (New Delhi - March 21, 2023), Pakistan was practically denied active participation upon displaying its official map.⁴ Another noteworthy event happened at SCO Defence Ministers' meeting held in New Delhi on April 27, 2023, when Indian Defence Minister avoided shaking hands with his



Chinese counterpart, causing a fractious atmosphere. Furthermore, the Indian Foreign Minister, while using the SCO platform, made aggressive, unrealistic and derogatory remarks accusing his Pakistani counterpart of being a "spokesperson of the terror industry."⁵ These undiplomatic occurrences reported on the SCO platform clearly show India is trying to politicise the organisation for its strategic objectives. This approach appears to be similar to what it has demonstrated at SAARC, which put the regional organisation in limbo.

India is the only country in SCO hosting all 'three evils' indicated by RATS, i.e., terrorism, extremism and separatism. There are numerous occasions where India has expressed its commitment to eradicate these evils; however, its actions at home and abroad demonstrate otherwise. India is deeply involved in state terrorism, promoting the extremist agenda of *Hindutva*, suppressing minorities nationwide for Hindu supremacy, and committing heinous war crimes in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Its deteriorating human rights record has faced criticism from international organisations repeatedly. The US State Department Country Reports of Human Rights Practices (2021),⁶ Annual Report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2023),⁷ Amnesty International Country Profile (2022),⁸ Human Rights Watch Report (2021)⁹ and Freedom House Report (2022)¹⁰ have raised serious concerns over India's harsh discrimination, including arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial killings,

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this Insight are of the author(s) alone and do not necessarily reflect policy of the NDU.

religious persecution of minorities and media policy restricting the use of the internet. Indian leadership equally accused its minorities with derogatory terms, such as *Corona Jihad* and *Corona Terrorism*, during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many Covid-19-positive cases were found among Muslims.¹¹ Furthering the extremist ideology of *Hindutva*, it aims to reshape India by pursuing communal policies (Citizenship Amendment Act – 2019)¹² by targeting Muslim and Christian minorities that have sparked religious, ethnic and racial intolerance and xenophobia. The recent killings of Christians and burning of Churches in Manipur (Northeast India) manifest Indian state-sponsored terrorism and extremist approach towards *Hindu Maharashtra*.¹³ In reality, people's resentment in Manipur lies with demands for equal civil rights and against the ruling party, BJP, involved in unequal communal policies.

Besides the deteriorating domestic situation, India is also involved in malicious activities across its borders. Since India has been vocal in its accusation against Pakistan, mounting evidence (shown in the figure below) suggests India's direct involvement in proliferating terrorism in Pakistan. Indian intelligence operators have been implicated in sabotage activities, meddling in state affairs and state-sponsored terrorism. Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is actively involved in conducting subversive activities by providing financial support through bank transactions worth millions of dollars and material support to multiple UN-designated terrorist organisations. In this regard, Pakistan has already shared a dossier with the UN containing irrefutable evidence of India's involvement in numerous terror activities in Pakistan.¹⁴ Furthermore, the Western intelligentsia has also exposed DisinfoLab's false propaganda network, building a deceptive narrative against Pakistan.



India once again maliciously blames Pakistan for a recent terrorist attack in the Poonch district ahead of a controversial G20 meeting on tourism in Srinagar to create a diversion from its human rights violations. It seems to call out other countries when it is being condemned on

international forums for its antagonistic behaviour towards its minorities. India calls it interference in its internal affairs but has been conducting disrupting activities in other countries. Former TTP spokesperson Ehsanullah Ehsan and commander Latif Mehsud verified the RAW-NDS-TTP nexus.¹⁵ Expert Bharat Karnad and Indian National Security

India's rhetoric on terrorism, extremism and separatism at the SCO platform contradicts Shanghai Spirits and disregards factual evidence.

Advisor Ajit Doval have openly discussed India's use of non-state actors to exploit Pakistan's vulnerabilities.¹⁶ A recent report by Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction titled "Why the Afghan Security Forces Collapsed?" mentioned that the Indian consulate provided financial support to anti-Taliban warlords to create resistance in North Afghanistan.¹⁷ Recently, Qatar has also exposed the Indian intelligence agency's involvement in anti-state activities. Eight Indian naval officers are facing a possible death penalty for spying on the submarine programme for another Middle Eastern country.¹⁸ Indians were also found to be involved in instigating critics of Qatar's hosting of the world cup. India always plays a double game and spoils efforts to bring peace and stability. Though the BJP government is cognizant of its policies' falsehood and radical approach in running diplomatic affairs through hardcore intelligence apparatus, it seems an effort to justify its political standing behind RSS-radical ideology and safeguard unethical practices.

As an SCO member, India is responsible for upholding the values and goals outlined in the Shanghai Spirits; however, it seems to contradict these principles by failing to follow international law and treaties, such as UN resolutions on Kashmir. This non-compliance indicates India's malicious intentions, particularly in opposition to initiatives like BRI and CPEC that aim to promote regional development and connectivity. India's political rhetoric and covert actions appear to be misaligned, as its activities in South Asia and Eurasia reflect the geopolitical interests of the US in competing with and containing China.

India's instrumentalisation of the SCO forum for its strategic interests represents a deviation from its obligations. To address India's baseless claims, it is important for other SCO member states to work together and present factual evidence of India's double standards. The theme of this year's SCO Summit is SECURE, an acronym that stands for Security, Economy and Trade, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity. India should start with introspection for course correction. It must take

responsibility for promoting peace and stability in the region and beyond by reflecting on its actions and making necessary changes in its behaviour. India should respect the sovereign rights of other nations, avoid interference, refrain from

irredentism, and tackle terrorism, extremism and separatism domestically. It must align with the international community in creating a conducive environment for peaceful coexistence.

References

¹The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Retrieved from <http://eng.sectsco.org/docs/about/faq.html>.

²Li Xiang, "Xi urges fight against 'three evils' as India, Pakistan joins SCO." June 2017. Available at https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d6b7a4d7949444e/share_p.html.

³Kaushik, "India and Pakistan trade blame for frosty ties after SCO meeting," Reuters. 5 May 2023. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-india-talks-hurt-by-indias-decision-end-kashmir-special-status-pakistan-2023-05-05/>.

⁴Kamran Yousaf, "India denies Pakistan entry at SCO", Express Tribune. 22 March 2023. Available at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2407445/india-denies-pakistan-entry-at-sco-meeting>.

⁵Shubha Jit Roy, "SCO Foreign Minister's Meet: Jaishankar slams Pak, calls Bilawal promoter of terrorism industry", The Indian Express. 6 May 2023. Available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/sco-meet-bilawal-bhutto-jaishankar-india-pak-terrorism-8593875/>.

⁶2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: India. Available at <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/india/>.

⁷United States Commission on International Religious Freedom – 2023 Annual Report. Available at https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/2023%20Annual%20Report_1.pdf.

⁸Human Rights in India. Amnesty International. Available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/report-india/>.

⁹India: *Events of 2021*. Human Rights Watch. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/india>.

¹⁰Freedom in the World 2022. Freedom House. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2022>.

¹¹Jayshree, "Corona Jihad is the Only Latest Manifestation: Islamophobia in India has been Years in the Making", Human Rights Watch. 1 May 2020. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/01/coronajihad-only-latest-manifestation-islamophobia-india-has-been-years-making>.

¹²Citizenship Amendment Bill: India's new 'anti-Muslim' law explained", BBC. 11 December 2019. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50670393>.

¹³ Madeleine Davies, "Churches burned in ethnic violence in Manipur, north-east India", Church Times. 11 May 2023. Available at <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/12-may/news/world/churches-burned-in-ethnic-violence-in-manipur-north-east-india>.

¹⁴Baqir Sajjad, "Specific proof of Indian terrorism in Pakistan unveiled", Dawn. 15 November 2020. Available at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1590441>.

¹⁵Yousaf, "Former spokesperson Ehsanullah Ehsan rips apart TTP in confession video", Express Tribune. 26 April 2017. Available at <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1393995/ispr-releases-former-ttp-spokesperson-ehsanullah-ehsans-confessional-video>.

¹⁶Bharat Karnad, "Afghanistan, Pakistan and the F-16 Mattis has to hard sell these issues on his visit to India", The Hindustan Times. 21 September 2017. Available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/afghanistan-pakistan-and-the-f-16-mattis-has-to-hardsell-these-issues-on-his-visit-to-india/story-qvL9NS6wgl17sy756hE2WN.html>.

¹⁷Why The Afghan Security Collapsed. 23 February 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/evaluations/SIGAR-23-16-IP.pdf>.

¹⁸ Eight ex-India navy officers accused of spying on Qatar for Israel, Middle East Monitor. 20 April 2023. Available at <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230420-8-ex-india-navy-officers-accused-of-spying-on-qatar-for-israel/>.