

SCO Foreign Ministers Meet at Goa & its Aftermath

May 7, 2023

1. May 7, 2023: **Islamabad:** In a joint statement, issued after the fourth round of the Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, led by Bilawal and Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang, both sides opposed any unilateral actions that further complicate the already volatile situation.

This was considered as a response to India's Foreign Minister's demand at a press-conference at Goa, asking Pakistan to vacate the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.



The Chinese side reiterated at Islamabad that the Kashmir dispute was left over from history between India and Pakistan and should be properly and peacefully resolved in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements.

2. May 6-7, 2023: **The Dawn**, Pakistan's English newspaper, in an editorial titled: *Goa Takeaways* said that the SCO was not supposed to be an organization to bring up members' bilateral disputes. That is why Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's remarks at the Forum about the need to contain "cross-border terrorism" — a very thinly veiled reference to Pakistan — ensured that no bilateral encounters occurred on the sidelines of the SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting at Goa. The editor wrote that the response of Bilawal Bhutto, the foreign minister of Pakistan, was correct in reiterating the fact that terrorism

should not be weaponized for “diplomatic point-scoring”. Looking to the future, the editorial said that if both sides want to truly transcend the toxic relationship of the past seven decades, they must come to the negotiating table without stringent preconditions.

Abbas Nasir, a former Editor of Dawn applauded Mr. Bhutto-Zardari

- on calmly and firmly spelling out Pakistan’s stance on both India’s unilateral annexation of Indian-held Kashmir and how it was an obstacle to any bilateral dialogue and
- on rebutting New Delhi’s accusation of being a state sponsor of terrorism.

3. May 5, 2023: **Goa**: Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Minister of India, welcomed enthusiastic participation of all members in 100+ meetings. He said that he was particularly delighted that **Varanasi, the oldest city of the world**, hosted several events as the first SCO Cultural & Tourist Capital.

He noted that current crises have exposed a credibility and trust deficit in the ability of global institutions to manage challenges in a timely and effective manner. Therefore, Reform and modernization of SCO will aid a more contemporary outlook which India will actively support.

He welcomed the progress for the admission of Iran and Belarus as full Member States and making English as the third Official language of SCO also constructive steps in this regard.

Dr. Jaishankar pointed out that the menace of terrorism has continued unabated and taking our eyes off it would be detrimental to our security interests. He reiterated that there can be no justification for terrorism and it must be stopped in all its forms and manifestations including cross-border terrorism. He added that we must not allow anybody - individual or State - to hide behind non-State actors. The Foreign Minister of India said that while connectivity is key to progress, it must come with **respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all member states**.

Dr. Jaishankar highlighted that unfolding situation in Afghanistan remains at the centre of our attention and efforts should be directed towards the welfare of the Afghan people. He appreciated support of member countries for India’s proposal of creation of **two new working groups on Startups & Innovation and Traditional Medicine**.

The Foreign Minister of India said that India has furthered its priority of moving “Towards a SECURE SCO” during our presidency. Sought Member States’ support in timely finalization of documents for approval of our leaders at the SCO Summit in New Delhi.

He also brushed aside Pakistan’s objections to India hosting G20 tourism working group meeting in Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir in May.

“I don’t think there is a G20 issue to debate with anybody, certainly not with a country which is nothing to do with G20. Jammu and Kashmir was, is, will always be a part of India. The G20 meetings are held in all the Indian states and Union Territories, so it is completely natural that it is held there,” Jaishankar said.

May 5, 2023: **Goa:** SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting, through photographs:



There were a number of bilateral meetings at the sidelines of the SCO meetings. Some of them are reported in the next three pages.



Goa: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Dr. S. Jaishankar of India



Goa: China's foreign minister, Qin Gang and Dr. S. Jaishankar of India External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar addressed the media on May 05. While answering the questions of reporters about the India-China border issues, EAM Jaishankar reiterated that India-China relations are not normal and cannot be normal until peace in the border areas.

While reacting about China's comment that situation at the border is stable, EAM said, "I don't think stability at the border is an issue. I think the issue is that there is an abnormal position in the border areas along the boundaries and we had a frank discussion about it. It's not the first discussion. I had spoken to Chinese Foreign Minister on the sidelines of G20 as well. We have to take the disengagement process forward and I have made it very clear publicly as well."



DPM and FM Murat Nurtleu of Kazakhstan and Dr. S. Jaishankar of India



Baxtiyor Saidov of Uzbekistan and Dr. S. Jaishankar of India



Zheenbek Kulubaev of Kyrgyz Republic and Dr. S. Jaishankar of India



Sirojiddin Muhriddin of Tajikistan and Dr. S. Jaishankar of India

May 5: At the **Press Conference at the conclusion of the SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting at Goa**, India's foreign minister Dr S. Jaishankar said that he called out and countered, including at the SCO meeting itself, Pakistan's promotion and justification of the terrorism industry, which is the mainstay of Pakistan. Hosted colleagues in Goa to the Meeting of SCO Council of Foreign Ministers.

Since the aftermath in Pakistan has shown that China, the initiator of SCO, and Pakistan are working in tandem, some observers in India have started questioning the utility of the membership of India in SCO.

-----BACKGROUND-----

The SCO currently comprises eight Member States:

1. China,
2. India,
3. Kazakhstan,
4. Kyrgyzstan,
5. Russia,
6. Pakistan,
7. Tajikistan and
8. Uzbekistan.

SCO has four Observer States interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and 13 "Dialogue Partners" (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Maldives, Myanmar and United Arab Emirates).
