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Rajnath Singh at SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in Bishkek — India's Zero-Tolerance on Terrorism

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SECURITY & DEFENCE

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Rajnath Singh at SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in Bishkek — India's Zero-Tolerance on Terrorism

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WHY IN NEWS

Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** attended the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting** in **Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan** on April 27-28, 2026. India's agenda at the meeting: **zero tolerance for terrorism and extremism**, enhanced counter-terrorism frameworks, deepened intelligence-sharing, and joint military exercises. Singh also held bilateral meetings with defence ministers of several SCO member states. The meeting takes place months after India's **Operation Sindoor** (May 2025) — which established a new precedent in India's counter-terror posture.

SCO — KEY FACTS

FEATURE	DETAIL
Full name	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
Founded	2001 (Shanghai)
Predecessor	Shanghai Five (1996)
Headquarters	Beijing, China
Secretariat	Beijing
Current chair	Kyrgyzstan (2025-26 rotation)
Official languages	Russian and Chinese
10 Full Members	India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Belarus
Observers	Afghanistan, Mongolia, Turkey (candidate), others
Dialogue partners	Several countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar
India joined	2017 (at Astana summit, along with Pakistan)
SCO Charter	Security + economic + cultural cooperation

INDIA'S SCO AGENDA — KEY THEMES

1. Zero Tolerance for Terrorism

India consistently uses SCO forums to push its counter-terrorism agenda. Key India position: terrorism must be condemned without any linkage to so-called “legitimate” causes or political contexts. Pakistan’s presence at SCO has historically made consensus on terrorism declarations difficult — Pakistan often blocks language that would apply to cross-border terrorism from its territory.

2. RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure)

RATS is the SCO’s counter-terrorism body based in Tashkent. India is a member of RATS but has differences with China and Pakistan on its application. India advocates for RATS to take more action on Pakistan-based groups.

3. Counter-Extremism — Three Evils

SCO's core security **mandate** targets the “**Three Evils**” — terrorism, separatism, and extremism. India supports this framework but seeks specific action on extremist groups rather than generalized declarations.

4. Joint Military Exercises

India participates in **PEACE MISSION** exercises under SCO. Post-Operation Sindoor, India's position on cross-border terrorist infrastructure has hardened — Rajnath Singh used the Bishkek forum to convey this.

POST-OPERATION SINDOOR CONTEXT

Operation Sindoor (May 7-10, 2025) — India's precision strike on 9 terrorist camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir following the Pahalgam attack (April 22, 2025, 26 killed) — significantly changed the regional security dynamic. India's messaging at Bishkek carried this new reality: India has demonstrated its willingness to use force against terrorist infrastructure across the border, and expects SCO partners to not support state sponsors of terrorism.

The **ceasefire** of May 10, 2025 was brokered under US pressure; India Army messaging since then has maintained “Operation Sindoor continues” as a posture of strategic resolve.

BILATERAL MEETINGS IN BISHKEK

Rajnath Singh held bilateral meetings with:

- **Kazakhstan** — defence industrial cooperation; military training
- **Kyrgyzstan** — as host, broader security cooperation
- **Russia** — continuing defence cooperation despite Western sanctions on Russia
- Pakistan's defence minister was present at the SCO meeting — **Rajnath Singh is not expected to hold bilateral talks with Pakistan's minister** (India's policy of no formal bilateral military engagement with Pakistan until cross-border terrorism ceases)

INDIA'S SCO DILEMMA

India faces a structural contradiction in the SCO:

- ❶ **China** — India's primary strategic rival, permanent SCO member; occupies territory India claims (Aksai Chin)
- ❷ **Pakistan** — a fellow SCO member and state-sponsor of terrorism targeting India
- ❸ **Russia** — a strategic partner now under Western sanctions; India balances relationships

India participates in SCO primarily for its **central Asia engagement** and its seat at the Eurasian security table — not because of full alignment with SCO’s China-Russia-dominated agenda.

UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — IR	SCO; India’s multilateral diplomacy; counter-terrorism frameworks; India-Pakistan relations in multilateral settings
GS3 — Security	RATS; Three Evils; Operation Sindoor; cross-border terrorism
GS2 — Governance	India’s defence diplomacy; bilateral vs multilateral security frameworks

Mains Keywords: SCO Defence Ministers meeting, Bishkek, Rajnath Singh, zero tolerance terrorism, RATS, Three Evils, Operation Sindoor, SCO membership, India-Pakistan SCO dynamics

Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Meeting venue	Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan
Meeting dates	April 27-28, 2026
SCO current chair	Kyrgyzstan
SCO full members	10 (India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Belarus)
India joined SCO	2017
RATS headquartered	Tashkent, Uzbekistan
SCO Three Evils	Terrorism, separatism, extremism
India’s stated position	Zero tolerance for terrorism and extremism
Operation Sindoor	May 7-10, 2025; 9 terror camps struck
SCO founded	2001 (Shanghai)

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