

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://atimes.com/2015/07/shanghai-cooperation-organization-turns-pan-asian/>

Shanghai Cooperation Organization turns Pan Asian

BY SERGEI BLAGOV

JULY 11, 2015

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) finally delivered on its earlier pledges to enlarge the grouping. The organization — that currently includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — accepted major South Asian nations thus moving towards a new reincarnation of Pan-Asianism.



The SCO hopes to strengthen the grouping by inviting major South Asian nations India and Pakistan

The organization that originated from bilateral border talks between China and the former Soviet Union now becomes truly multilateral. At the summit meeting in Ufa on July 10, Russia

approved entry of India and Pakistan into the SCO. The SCO apparently aimed to strengthen the grouping by inviting the subcontinent's major states.

In his summing up remarks, President Vladimir Putin said the upcoming accession of India and Pakistan into the SCO would help the organization to face current challenges and threats. For the first time in its 15-year history, the SCO made a decision on its enlargement, he said.

Putin also noted the interest of several nations of South Asia, South-East Asia and the Middle East in gaining the status as SCO dialogue partner and observer nation.

In the meantime, Belarus' status was raised from a dialogue partner to an observer nation, while Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia and Nepal became SCO's dialogue partners.

The summit also approved the SCO development blueprint till 2025 that prioritizes regional stability and conflict resolution, Putin said. The summit discussed the Islamic State threat in Afghanistan and adopted another blueprint, Cooperation Program to Counter Terrorism and Separatism in 2016-2018, he said.

In their joint statement, the SCO leaders called for settlement of political crises in the Middle East and North Africa without "outside interference."

The next SCO summit meeting is due in Tashkent in 2016, and Uzbekistan assumed the SCO's rotating presidency.

However, the SCO seems to remain undecided about Iran's membership. Answering a direct question about the SCO's further enlargement plans, Putin noted Iran's intention to join the organization but said the accession of India and Pakistan should be completed first before accepting other new members.

Moscow has long argued that the SCO expansion would serve to strengthen its international status. However, ahead and during the summit meeting, Russian officials have been careful to avoid confrontational rhetoric.

The SCO is not directed against any third party, Valentina Matviyenko, speaker of the Federation Council, the upper house of the Russian parliament, said on July 8. She added that India and Pakistan are due to become full members of the SCO in 2016.

The SCO has long been seen as aiming to uniting Asian nations in their opposition to the perceived US expansionism. However, the grouping remained reluctant to be seen as a military body in-the-making. On July 7, the SCO Secretary General Dmitry Mezentsev said the SCO would not be transformed into a military bloc.

The SCO was preceded by bilateral border talks between China and the former USSR. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, China faced four negotiating partners: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. So the SCO's predecessor was formed as a five-member 'Shanghai Five' group in 1996. The SCO was formally created on June 15, 2001 in Shanghai and Uzbekistan joined the grouping.

From January 1 2004, the SCO started operations as a full-fledged international organization. From 2004, the SCO had a secretariat in Beijing and a Regional Anti-Terrorist Force in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.

Almost since its inception, the SCO has been eyeing enlargement. India has been touted as a potential candidate to join for more than a decade. India's joining in could raise the SCO's significance, Putin stated back in 2002.

The grouping has long prepared itself for accepting new member countries. The SCO in Tashkent in 2010 approved rules on accepting new member-states. According to the rules, the SCO new members must be Eurasian nations, have diplomatic relations with all current member states, and have either observer or dialogue partner status. However, the rules stipulate that would-be member countries must not be subject to UN sanctions, and not be involved in any armed conflict.

In 2011, Russian officials argued that the SCO was reluctant to accept India and Pakistan as full members due to the continued territorial dispute between them. But later Moscow appeared to change its position by indicating interest in the SCO membership of India and Pakistan despite their differences.

Moscow's increased interest in the SCO is hardly surprising against a backdrop of Russia's continued acrimony with the West over Ukraine. The Kremlin apparently prioritizes the SCO and BRICS as means to counter perceived Western attempts to isolate and marginalize Russia.

The upcoming entry of India and Pakistan is also set to change the balance of power in the SCO, the organization previously dominated by China, economically and politically. And the possible entry of new members from South-East Asia and the Middle East has a potential to turn the SCO into a truly Pan-Asian body in the future.

In the past, the SCO member states advocated increased trade, the introduction of new international currency and the regional unified energy system. There were also calls to create the SCO's currency based on the gold standard. However, all these plans remained slow to materialize.

Therefore, the latest SCO top-level meeting came to indicate the grouping's increasing global ambitions. But it remains to be seen whether the organization will be able to expand its international clout and evolve into a new form of Pan-Asianism.