

The Main Problems of SCO Enlargement at the Present Stage

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Abstract

Presently the most significant issues of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) include questions of its further extension, new country-members of SCO team, and what state could be full members of this organization. The issues of SCO extension is actual from 2004-2005 when Mongolia, Pakistan, India and Iran became as observers in SCO. This paper tries to do analysis on countries-observers due to strengthening of these processes when different states, particularly such antagonistic as India and Pakistan, consider their preferences to have partnership with SCO and why SCO accepts these countries.

This article is focused on SCO observers' interests and significance of these countries for SCO itself. Chinese and Russian politics on the new country-observers is also considered in the paper. It is argued that SCO extension perspectives are controversial and they demonstrate that SCO is not ready to increase this organization by including Mongolia, Pakistan, India and Iran to SCO at the present times. Preliminary conclusions are that SCO will not extend in the future and issues of SCO enlargement will not be resolved in upcoming years.

Keywords: Shanghai cooperation organization, international politics, SCO observers, security, regional security, economic partnership, central Asia, South-Eastern Asia

1. Introduction

According to Charter's article 13, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an international organization which is open to countries interested in partnership and have respect to purposes and principles of the SCO Charter and other SCO international agreements. SCO is also open to cooperation with other international and regional organizations (SCO Charter, 2006).

The act regulated relations between SCO and country-observers is the "Document of SCO Observers' Rights" approved on Tashkent Summit in 2004. Decisions on acceptance of new members to SCO are made by Council of States' Heads due to presentation of Council of International Affairs Ministries on official appeal of an interested state (The Regulations on Observer Status at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2011).

There are no any decisions on new SCO members for last years though the organization has several applications to enlarge it. SCO Summit in Shanghai in 2006 accepted the temporary moratorium on organizational extension (Swaminathan, 2009). Moreover, SCO Summit in Bishkek did not accept new members from former observers and no one was invited as new observers.

In the past problems of SCO extension were explained by technical reasons but presently it can be told that affiliation mechanism is composed by approving of appropriate documents and transparent procedure of applicants' acceptance was formed. Regulation on Observer Status at the SCO was approved in Tashkent in June of 2010. This document has clear requirements for potential SCO members. According to Regulation, interested state that wants to join SCO should be in Euro-Asian region, it should have diplomatic relations with all SCO

active members, it also should have observer's or partner's status, to develop trade-economic relations with SCO members as well as it should not be under sanctions of UN Security Council. Considering security issues and international responsibilities of country-observers they have to be alongside with international agreements and other SCO documents. Beside this Regulation, a country-applicant must not be in military conflict with other state or states. Finally, the model Memorandum on new SCO members was approved in Astana in June of 2011 demonstrated that organization became stable legally and procedurally and it is officially ready to further enlargement. In spite of Memorandum acceptance and transparent mechanism of perspective SCO members admission, it is stated that there many controversial issues are not resolved in the organization at the present period.

2. Methodology

This research use general and individual methods of scientific inquiry, in particular such methods as dialectics, system analysis, problem and chronology as well as geopolitical method.

Dialectical method based on uniting and fighting of contraries helps, for instance, to make clear controversies and problems of triangular interests' balance such as issues of state-candidates and international organization, state-members of international organization and international organization itself. Systematic method was used for analysis of membership criteria's system in international organization, membership criteria's system in SCO, also the complex of international legal principles of SCO and regulatory-legal data of organization were considered in the paper. Problematic-chronological method was used to study some participation issues of different countries in SCO according to historical and chronological order. Geopolitical method confirmed concrete geographical conditions as a factor which defines patterns of international relations development represents the core analysis of SCO regional concept and its geographical framework.

3. Overview of the Issues and the Problems

Development and reinforcement of energy cooperation are the most beneficiary aspects for all SCO country-observers. State-applicants for SCO members, particularly, express their interests in prospectively created SCO Energy Club that could be important in SCO's security system including also energy sector.

Energy partnership urges Iran to increase "Shanghai 5" with its participation that confirmed by visit of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to SCO Summit in Bishkek in August of 2007. Iran also plans to improve its interests in Central Asia using SCO membership. Iran intends to join SCO to overcome international isolation and to have strong allies in opposition to the USA due to its nuclear program. Iran membership in SCO aimed to decrease regional threats and participation in regional partnership of economic and defense areas for national interests and for improving of Iranian influence in the region. Additionally, Iran is capable to use economic, trade and transitional opportunities of Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Obviously SCO will prioritize Iran as a key player in global energy system. Iran is the second country after Saudi Arabia which has the largest oil and gas resources. Iran is important for SCO members as basic part of North-South transport corridor on which the agreement was signed between India, Iran and Russia in Saint-Petersburg in June of 2002.

From the other hand, key SCO members are not ready to aggravate relations with the USA that is inevitable if the organization starts to be closer with Iran. Russia and China are not interested in confrontation with the USA that would result political destabilization in Central Asian region and would not be helpful for positive solving of security issues and further economic cooperation. Official acceptance of Iran to SCO can lead to prohibition of negotiations between SCO, USA and European Union so as Iranian nuclear program challenges negative attitude of the West. As a result, perspectives of Iran acceptance into SCO membership are erratic.

It is necessary to note that according to the Regulation on Observer Status at the SCO asserted by Council of SCO country-members' Presidents in June 11 of 2010 (SCO, 2010), acceptance of Iran to the SCO was blocked due to UN Security Council (SC) sanctions against Iran. In spite of tight economic and energetic relations with Iran, China as UN SC permanent member supported new UN sanctions against Islamic Republic of Iran (Times of India, 2010). Moreover, according to the SCO Charter, mutual ground borders with SCO members are required for SCO acceptance. Iran has no such connected links with SCO members that impede Iran to join this organization. Hence, acceptance of Iran into SCO, most probably, will not be implemented in the future.

India and Pakistan are also interested in joining SCO. To consider economic cooperation, South Asia is the gate to Indian Ocean that can be beneficial for China, Russia and Central Asian countries to export their goods through Indian Ocean. India and Russia have discussed on high governmental level the building of transport corridor "South-North" connected Russian with Indian Ocean as well as Central Asian countries consider India and Pakistan

as a way to have an exit to the sea. So India and Pakistan represent a lot of economic benefits for further SCO development.

Pakistan intends to change its observer status to a constant SCO member. It is known that Pakistan is supported by China and, particularly, by Uzbekistan with which Pakistan has prosperous partnerships. For instance, there is extradition agreement between Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan from 2001 due that Tashkent can rely on Islamabad assistance to extradite extremists of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Furthermore, Pakistan urged Uzbek authorities in Andijan events.

From the other side, China is a main partner of Pakistan in military and technical cooperation as well as its major economic partner. Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan Hina Rabbani Khar supported Chinese politics on Taiwan, Tibet and Xinyang in 2001. It can be also mentioned that SCO membership for Pakistan would be very useful economically and to fight with terrorism so as majority of Taliban is representatives of Central Asia (Daily Times, 2014).

Pakistan plans to activate SCO members in building of Trans-Afghan gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan. It should be told that Turkmenistan is not SCO member but it intends to join SCO.

Besides energy projects, SCO membership lets Pakistan to diverse its foreign policy in contrast of estrangement relations with the USA and to reinforce negotiations between Pakistan and the West. In addition, Pakistan can improve its authority and influence in Central Asia as a part of the SCO. At the same time, if Pakistan enters to the SCO before India, it could change a force balance in American-Indian-Pakistani relations.

Interests of Pakistan to join SCO would be understood politically. Pakistan strives to increase its authority in Central Asia after Soviet collapse in 1991. Islamabad is interested in economic and strong political partnerships in Central Asian region to restrain its rival India (Turner, 2005).

Pakistan has no joint borders with Central Asian states that can be negatively considered for possible participation of Pakistan in the SCO. Afghanistan divides Central Asian countries from Pakistan that obstructs to use Pakistan in oil and gas export from Central Asian region to external markets.

It is also important to note that Russia does not perceive Pakistan as friendly state that can be explained by Soviet-Afghan conflict when Islamabad supported mujahidin. This fact can probably have some negative effect for Pakistan which plans to enter the SCO. However, relations between Russia and Pakistan are aligned formally in the present time (Zeb, 2006).

Pakistani-Chinese relationships are mutually strategic that can be helpful to accept Pakistan in the SCO but it is not implemented mostly due to complex geopolitical contradictions in China-Pakistan-India triangle.

India interested to cooperate with SCO from its emergence primarily to have joint regional energy projects as well as India was highly interested in regional partnership to prevent transnational terrorism, religious extremism, and drug traffic. There is also economic interest in India to be a part of the organization. Growing Indian economy is the sixth largest consumer of energy in the world. To compare with China, it should be told that India is more dependent on oil import than China. India imported around 70% of oil whereas China needs only half of Indian demands. To diverse its energy sources India attempts to improve its auspicious relations with Central Asia which is friendlier to India too than to Afghanistan or Pakistan. India has durable outgoing relationships with Central Asian countries and Russia from Soviet period. Russia supports India implicitly to compose some counterpart balance for China in the SCO.

If Pakistan is affiliated with China, India is mostly understood as the close ally of Russia. Such a subjective perception it creates barriers for India and Pakistan to enter the SCO separately. There are two equal options to keep force balance inside the SCO to state status-quo when both Russian and China have no definite influences in the SCO or to accept India and Pakistan to the SCO contemporaneously. According to experts, the best solution is to take both India and Pakistan simultaneously as the SCO members to keep force balance in the region but it is impossible for these rival states to have any joint participation at the early stages of their perspective SCO activity.

In spite of significant progress in Chinese-Indian relationships for recent years, these states still have unresolved contradictions, particularly, on state border debates. Ariel Sznajder claims that to compare with India in other regional organizations, China can effect on most part of South-Eastern Asia but it cannot compete with India in political influence in Vietnam, Indonesia, and on African coast (Sznajder, 2006). Simultaneously, Zhao HuaShen asserts that historically India does not strive to any alliances and it is less interested with the SCO than Pakistan (HuaShen, 2003). It could be told that India is a geopolitical contestant of China in Near Eastern Asia that effects on Chinese decision making on perspectives of India in the SCO.

However problem of strict compliance of Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that highly encouraged by SCO is inevitable if India and Pakistan potentially join the SCO. Additionally, the Regulation on Observer Status at the SCO signed by Council of States' Heads in June 11 of 2010 opposed to entering of India and Pakistan to the SCO due to the Regulation's statement that country-observer cannot have military conflict with other country or countries.

India and Pakistan, two nuclear states of South Asia, outstand with forceful notes to each other from time to time. Situations when "cold war" between Delhi and Islamabad became "hot" often take place between these states. So there is a reasonable question about most possible inextricable discussions in the SCO if India and Pakistan join the SCO.

Some experts maintain that process of acceptance of SCO new members should be terminated and to develop organization with functions' extension of country-observers. In case of India and Pakistan it would be better to veto on their acceptance to SCO so as their conflicts can effect on interior SCO relations. As a result of such situation Moratorium on SCO extension should be continued.

It is argued that the following problems can be raised if India and Pakistan enter the SCO:

- If the SCO accepts only India, it could have negative effect on sustainability of South Asia. If only Pakistan becomes a member of the SCO, it will complicate interior links between SCO country-members. If both countries get SCO membership and do not improve their mutual relationships, there is a high feasibility for the SCO to suffer from Indian-Pakistani contradictions and conflicts.
- Both Southern Asia and Central Asia are part of large region with strong contradiction and complex problems. Acceptance of India and Pakistan to the SCO can result that center of SCO geopolitical influence can change and enlarge too much as well as organizational material resources can use ineffectively.
- India and Pakistan are the big countries with sophisticated relations of SCO members, so their potential entering the SCO could infringe functional structures of the organization.
- Because India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons, it can be contradict with SCO efforts to control nuclear armaments.

Summing up these factors, it could be told that change of India and Pakistan status in the SCO is unlikely in medium-term perspective.

It seems that Mongolia is the most feasible candidate to receive membership in the SCO due to its geographical location between Russia and China. Mongolia as SCO country-observer takes active part in meetings of States' Heads Council and Governments' Heads Council. Mongolia is mostly interested in effective multilateral cooperation in transport, railage and energy sectors with SCO members.

Mongolia has unique geopolitical meaning for the SCO. Mongolia has northern borders with Russia and southern borders with China as well as Western Mongolia are close to Central Asian countries. If Mongolia joins the SCO, it would be helpful for whole region and could develop successful premises for SCO members to cooperate in Northern-Eastern Asia.

It is obviously that primarily China is interested in Mongolia's acceptance into SCO. Zhao ChuanJun claims that reversible relationships of China and Mongolia based on good-neighborhood principles (ChuanJun, 2006). China considers Mongolia as a state which policy is focused on international processes in the region and Mongolia's geographical location is unique.

China is one of the main trade partners of Mongolia that is confirmed by large commodity circulation between the two countries. China is highly interested to enhance mutual trade and to improve its role in Mongolian foreign affairs that can be demonstrated by signed agreements on increasing of bilateral trade and on cooperation in development of railway communications.

On the whole, it can be told that China regards Mongolia as the most appropriate state for SCO membership. From the other hand, it is important for China that Mongolia has no terrorist and extremist threats and it cannot effect on counterterrorist SCO's policy.

Contrarily, Mongolia follows non-aligned strategy using flexible policy to balance between three forces such as Russia, China and the West. Mongolia represents post-Communist democracy in Asia and inclines to external economic policy of the USA. Moreover, the status of the SCO observer is convenient for Mongolia due to less responsibility than of the SCO members.

According to Tserendorj, Mongolia did not intend to enter the SCO. He states that in spite of Mongolia was the first

country-observer in the SCO it is interested only in this status. Ulan Bator plans to develop partnership with Russia but it does not want to depend on China because Mongolia considers the SCO, first of all, as the Chinese project. Mongolia attempts to develop its cooperation with the USA, Japan, and European Union. SCO membership for Mongolia can assume complication in partnerships with these countries (Tserendorj, 2006).

Summing up these factors, it can be told that in middle-term and even in long-term perspectives Mongolia's joining the SCO is unsubstantial.

4. Conclusion

Analyzing the present issues of the SCO extension it could be stated that enlargement of the SCO with Iran, India, Pakistan, and Mongolia is precarious in perspective. Every SCO member and observer has coincidental as well as divergent interests. Reciprocal interests are mostly related to economy and security issues while discrepant ones concern political segment. Separate purposes of the SCO members and observers can benumb its activity whereas joint interests conduce to strengthen the organization.

To consider SCO perspectives it is important to note that cooperation of members and observers requires mutual goals. Interplay of Russia with Central Asia and China can result that bilateral actions damage third parts and rivalry between SCO participants cause hostile relations. It is necessary to regulate two-side projects of SCO countries and diverse them to prevent potential emulation and confrontation. Shanghai Cooperation Organization provides such opportunities to its members.

Henotic factors for the SCO members and observers are economic development, security and regional stability, and humanitarian cooperation. All of them can be effective in SCO multilateral partnership.

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