

SCO will be ‘fortress of security and stability’

By [Global Research](#)

Region: [Asia](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Global Research, June 08, 2012

[China Daily and Stop NATO](#) 8 June 2012

The participation of Afghanistan and Turkey enlarges the region that the SCO covers geographically and increases, according to Beijing the bloc's global influence...

Leaders and officials from the four SCO observer countries, Mongolia, Iran, Pakistan and India, as well as Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov and Afghan President Hamid Karzai, also delivered speeches at the meeting.

The following question must be addressed: Can a coherent military alliance directed against Global NATO be built with the participation of Turkey, a NATO heavyweight and Afghanistan, a proxy US-NATO state.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization granted Afghanistan observer status on Thursday as President Hu Jintao said the bloc aimed to become a “fortress of regional security and stability and a driving force of regional economic development” .

The current summit of the organization in Beijing, which witnessed the signing of agreements covering security, politics and the economies of the members, will be a landmark in the bloc's history as it set out a clear vision of its direction, analysts said.

By granting observer status to Afghanistan, the SCO, which groups China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, consolidated ties with the war-torn country ahead of the pullout of most foreign troops by the end of 2014.

The organization also announced that Turkey, a NATO member, will join Sri Lanka and Belarus as a dialogue partner.

Observer status will strengthen “political, economic and civilian cooperation between the SCO states and Afghanistan, ” Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Cheng Guoping said after the summit.

Central Asia's stability is a pressing issue for the regional bloc, analysts said, especially considering the turmoil in the Middle East and the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan.

Chen Yurong, a researcher of regional affairs with the Institute of International Studies, said as the security situation in Central Asia has changed, the SCO must revise security policies.

The participation of Afghanistan and Turkey enlarges the region that the SCO covers geographically and increases the bloc's global influence, Chen said. But some analysts

suggested that the SCO should be cautious about more participants, as it could undermine the bloc's capability given the sharp economic and historical differences between some countries.

The SCO on Thursday also recommitted itself to closer security ties by adopting a 2013-15 anti-terrorism plan and establishing a swift response mechanism.

The mechanism allows SCO members to request the help of other members to handle domestic emergencies.

It "will considerably boost the SCO's ability to prevent and tackle emergencies" , a diplomatic source said.

Hu told the summit that "we should establish and improve a system of security cooperation"

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He also said that the members must tackle terrorism, separatism and extremism, as well as drug traffickers and other organized cross-border criminal activity.

Development blueprint

Analysts said that the Beijing summit will be a milestone as it gives impetus to the development of the bloc, founded in 2001.

The member countries issued a joint declaration to adopt the Strategic Plan for the Medium-Term Development of the SCO and vowed to build the region into an area of secure and lasting peace and shared prosperity.

"It is no exaggeration to say the adoption of the strategic plan will have a far-reaching influence on the SCO's development," Vice-Foreign Minister Cheng said.

Xing Guangcheng, executive director of the SCO Research Center, said the declaration and strategic plan not only show the openness of the SCO, but also highlight the sustainability and stamina of the organization's future development.

Hu said the summit is pivotal for the future development of the SCO, especially as the international and regional situation has been more complex and volatile.

Only after SCO members enhance cooperation and act in unison can they effectively cope with emerging challenges, safeguard regional peace and achieve development, he said.

Hu also said China will offer a loan of \$10 billion to support economic cooperation within the bloc, and the loan will also be used to aid the development of SCO member states.

He also said China will help train 1,500 experts from other member countries over the next three years. It is also going to provide 30,000 government scholarships and invite 10,000 Confucius Institute teachers and students to come to China for research and study over the next decade.

The president also called for the establishment of a development bank, a food security mechanism, and for the promotion of trade and investment.

The 2013 SCO summit will be held in Kyrgyzstan.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Uzbek President Islam Karimov also addressed the summit on Thursday.

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