

## **The First Results of The Anniversary SCO Summit In Tashkent**

*Vladimir Yevseyev<sup>1</sup>*

23-24 June 2016 Tashkent hosted a jubilee summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In fact, it was a double anniversary: the 15th anniversary of the SCO and the 20th anniversary of its predecessor - the “Shanghai Five”, initially created for the settlement of territorial disputes between China on the one hand, and Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan - on the other.

The last summit of the SCO had the highest level of representation not only from the member states, but also most of its observer countries. Among the latter, it should be noted Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko, Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj and President of Pakistan Hussein Mamnuna. At the summit Iran was represented by Foreign Minister Mohammad Zarif.

In addition, as a guest at the SCO summit was attended by President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, UN Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, Executive Committee Chairman - CIS Executive Secretary Sergei Lebedev, Treaty Organization Secretary General of the Collective Security Organization (CSTO) Nikolai Bordyuzha, the Association Secretary General of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Le Luong Minh and CEO of the Conference on interaction and confidence Building measures in Asia (CICA) Gong Jianwei. The meeting was also attended by the SCO Secretary General Rashid Alimov and Director of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Head of the Division of Eurasian Integration and Shanghai Cooperation Organization Extension, Institute of Commonwealth Countries

Executive Committee of the Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS) of the SCO Eugene Sysoev. The President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov chaired the meetings

Currently, the SCO members are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The status of observer states are Afghanistan, Belarus, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan, the dialogue partners - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka.

At the SCO summit in Tashkent trilateral meeting of leaders of Russia, China and Mongolia, Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj took place. Previously, these negotiations were conducted during the SCO summit in Dushanbe (2014) and Ufa (2015). As a result of this meeting, the program of creation of economic corridor Russia-China-Mongolia was accepted, which is aimed at strengthening cross-border ties by launching 32 tripartite investment projects.

The Russian President Vladimir Putin said that “a roadmap for the development of trilateral contacts in politics, economy, international affairs, cultural and humanitarian area, earned political consultation mechanism was launched, and it is a good opportunity to coordinate positions on topical issues of regional agenda”. For his part, the President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj proposed to focus on priority projects and to implement them in 2016 to create a Centre of investment and planning to start regular consultations between transport ministers of the three countries.

Of course, Moscow and Beijing’s relations with Ulan Bator should not be idealized. Long enough Mongolia tried to play on the Russian-Chinese conflict and to seek support in the face of the United States. Now priority to relations with Russia and China became clear, but only in the economic sphere. At the same time Ulan Bator is trying to preserve its own neutrality, not join as a full member of the SCO and to strengthen relations with the EU. Obviously, all this will limite the triangular cooperation.

The relatively low level of representation of Iran in the SCO summit in Tashkent. Should be noted. And it was not accidental, since, according to the Special Representative of RF President in the SCO Bakhtiyor Khakimov, “the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) have

not yet agreed on the terms of accession to the union of Iran, however, there are no principal obstacles”. Practically, this means the following: the removal process international sanctions by the UN Security Council from Tehran is running, but not all of the SCO member states support the idea of further expansion of the Organization at the expense of Iran (according to some sources Tajikistan and Uzbekistan oppose to it). If this issue can not be resolved at the next SCO summit in Astana (2017), then it will have to be postponed for a period of not less than five years because of the moratorium on the expected expansion of the Organization.

As the apparent success of this summit, the SCO should be considered that on the June 24, 2016 in Tashkent in the presence of Heads of State a memorandum on the obligations of India and Pakistan to obtain the status of the SCO member states was signed. According to the Ambassador Bakhtiyor Khakimov, “in accordance with these memorandum terms by the of participation of India and Pakistan in the formation of the general budget of the Organization are determined, their quota of permanent bodies and the dates on which States undertake to accede to the applicants in the current SCO treaties and agreements. These terms depend on what terms, respectively, will take India and Pakistan. While the Indians have said that they will be sufficient to two months, Pakistanis announced that they need seven months to join”.

“If the above is done, a year later, India and Pakistan will become full members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. “ Therefore, as noted by Vladimir Putin, now one needs to get started on the incorporation of India and Pakistan in the working mechanisms of cooperation within the SCO framework, such as the Council of Heads of Government and the regular meetings of foreign ministers.

In his speech at the SCO summit, President Vladimir Putin noted that Russia considers cooperation within the SCO as one of the priorities of its foreign policy, therefore, actively contributes to capacity of the Organization and to strengthen its role in international and regional affairs. The key to the successful development of the SCO is that its work is based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and consideration of each other’s interests. In general, the SCO activity 18 countries are involved, which together account for over 16% of global GDP and 45% of the population.

He noted that the main directions of joint work of the Organization in the long term are defined in the SCO development strategy developed on the initiative of Russia last year in Ufa (a plan for its implementation for the period up to 2020 was adopted at this summit).

Vladimir Putin believes that the main direction of the overall activity is the provision of security in the SCO space. It is therefore necessary to further strengthen the potential of the SCO RATS, improve the coordination of law enforcement agencies within the UN and other international organizations to accelerate the drafting of the SCO Convention on Combating Extremism, update the anti-drug strategy and the program for its implementation, as well as to strengthen the legal basis of cooperation in the field of information security .

The situation in Afghanistan requires special attention. It is therefore important, together with Afghan partners to strengthen opposition emanating from the territory of the country to threats of terrorism and transnational organized crime, working to combat drug production and trafficking, to help Afghanistan towards national reconciliation and economic recovery.

In his view, an important component of the SCO is to develop closer economic cooperation by removing barriers in trade, movement of capital and labor, the deepening of industrial and technological cooperation, building production chains and the overall transport infrastructure. In this regard, good prospects are opening up to the beginning of negotiations on the conjugation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Chinese project “Economic belt “Silk Road”. Connecting to the integration process of the SCO and the CIS countries will be a prelude to the formation of a large Eurasian Partnership (“Big Eurasia”). A successful implementation of multilateral economic projects in the SCO already has been contributed by development of the financial institutions (Eurasian Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, New BRICS Bank).

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said at a meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO member states, said: “The deepening of trade and economic, financial and investment cooperation will provide the necessary conditions for the creation of a free trade area in the long term in the framework of the SCO”. According to him, the entry of India and

Pakistan to the SCO marks a qualitatively new stage of development of the Organization, reflecting the growth of its authority and role in the international arena.

Nursultan Nazarbayev reminded that he initiated the establishment of the Joint Eurasian economic space. Its key element is the association of infrastructure hubs of Eurasia by the revival of the historic routes of “Silk Road”. He proposed the formation of the Eurasian transit and transport hub that will bring together member states and observer states of the SCO. For its part, Kazakhstan has already started the implementation of the infrastructure development program “Nurly Zhol”, which is a distinct addition to “The economic belt of the “Silk Road”. In the same direction the potential created in Kazakhstan International “Astana” financial center may be involved.

President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed to develop and adopt a declaration of the SCO to jointly combat international terrorism and the SCO Convention on Combating Extremism. He also recalled that in May 2016 Kazakhstan initiated a high-level dialogue “Religions for Peace” under the auspices of the UN in New York and an international conference “Religion against terrorism” was held in Astana. From his point of view, it is important that “religious extremism is not identified with the peace-loving Islam and other religions.”

President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov, for his part, said: “In terms of unfolding current situation instead of strengthening mutual trust and cooperation confrontation and rivalry is increasing. One can not see, can not ignore this process. In the prevailing difficult conditions it is extremely important to preserve the principles of openness and non-aligned status of the SCO ... growing confrontation, conflict, uncertainty, unpredictability in the global markets, all this causes particular concern”.

President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan drew attention of the participants of the summit on renewable energy, in particular hydropower, and transit in the SCO space in the framework of “Economic Belt of the “Silk Road”. He also recalled the importance of implementation of the agreement between the governments of SCO member states on creation of favorable conditions for international road transport, which was signed in 2014 in

Dushanbe. Moreover, the current transport corridor “Tajikistan-China,” he called the “contribution to the development potential of the SCO”.

In his speech at the SCO summit President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev said: “The Kyrgyz side considers that, given the growth factors of instability and increasing terrorist and extremist groups in the region to strengthen cooperation relevance, confidence in the border regions and the conversion of the common borders to the border of peace and friendship even today has further increased”.

In his view, the situation in the SCO region and the world in general remains difficult due to activities in the region of terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State. In this regard, “we are concerned about the fact that our citizens are engaged in terrorist organizations, a recruitment and delivery of our citizens in the conflict zone is going on. I believe that this is not just a matter of preparation of combat units of terrorists, but also the problem of eliminating the ideology of extremism, which requires systemic counteraction. “

Kyrgyzstan is interested in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. A political settlement there must be conducted by all parties with the coordinating role of the UN. And SCO should also take an active part in the development of measures to resolve the situation in Afghanistan.

President Almazbek Atambayev urged to accelerate the establishment of the Development Fund and SCO Development Bank, head office may be located in Bishkek. It is equally important for Kyrgyzstan and the Chinese project implementation “Economic zone of the “Silk Road” (EPSHP). He therefore considers it necessary to “accelerate the design and construction of the railway China - Kyrgyzstan - Uzbekistan”.

He was supported by the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, who for the first time took part in the SCO summit. He said that “building of Chinese-Belarusian Industrial Park “Great Stone”, we actually demonstrate a willingness to become one of the key link of this grand plan (EPSHP).” He also believes “main direction of our cooperation should be economic cooperation. Within the framework of the SCO enormous economic potential has been accumulated. Moreover, with the entry into the organization of such countries as India and Pakistan, its scope will increase even more”.

At the same time, Belarus is ready to become the “western gate” of the Organization.

According to him, the objectives of economic development should be the implementation of joint large-scale projects. In particular, “to give a serious impetus to the establishment of the SCO can be a financial institution. In the medium term on the basis of a banking institution to a mechanism of mutual settlements in national currencies could be established. This greatly helped to solve the problem, depending on the state of the US dollar”. He believes that one of the important landmarks of the SCO formation of economic policy should enter interaction with the EAEU.

In addition, Alexander Lukashenko said: “You are well aware of the peacefulness and multi-vector foreign policy of Belarus, which is aimed at maintaining stability and peace in our region. We fully share the SCO approaches to international security. Today, when the world’s growing instability and multiplying the number of regional conflicts, particularly the cohesion countries are important and the desire to act as a united front in dealing with global problems”.

He is convinced that the SCO is a popular meeting place for the collective elaboration of mechanisms to counter modern challenges and threats. Thus, the “the first importance to unite the efforts for the elimination of various forms and manifestations of terrorism, extremism, organized crime and drug trafficking, anticipation of emergencies and conflicts ... As a country-observer in the SCO, we’re not going to put the sports terminology, follow the game from a “bench”. Belarus is ready to become an active “field player” in the space of the Organization and to make a significant contribution to its work for the benefit of our peoples”.

Alexander Lukashenko stressed that Belarus attaches great political and economic importance to the development of cooperation with the Asian region,: “We fully support the forming of a new architecture of relations in Eurasia, taking into account the interests of all countries of the continent”.

At the end of the summit, the participants adopted the Tashkent Fifteenth Anniversary Declaration of the SCO, where it was noted that “the rapidly changing situation in the world is characterized by increased geopolitical tensions, the growing scale of terrorism, separatism and extremism, negative impact on the entire system of international relations.”

In this regard, the president of Russia Vladimir Putin said: “Of course, the main direction of the overall activity is to provide common security in the SCO space. It is necessary to continue to build the capacity of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, improve the coordination of law enforcement agencies within the UN and other international organizations to accelerate the drafting of the SCO Convention against extremism”. According to him, within the framework of the SCO it is necessary to counteract the terrorist threat emanating from Afghanistan, as well as to update the anti-drug strategy of the SCO and its implementation program.

The Tashkent Fifteenth SCO Declaration focuses on the situation in Syria. Thus, the summit participants were in favor of preserving the territorial integrity, unity, sovereignty and stability in that country. It was stressed that a political settlement of the situation in Syria has no alternative. And that it will allow the Syrian people to determine their own future.

An important factor in strengthening regional security in the Declaration early achievement of peace and stability in Afghanistan was called. Therefore, the SCO member states support the settlement of the “Afghan conflict through the promotion of an inclusive process of national reconciliation and proceed from the fact that these efforts should be undertaken under the leadership of the Afghans and by the Afghans themselves”. This is certainly true, but, according to some Russian experts, the confrontation in Afghanistan, foreign forces prevails over domestic issues.

Summit participants confirmed the importance of a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine on the basis of successful performance of the Minsk agreements (“Minsk-2”). Developing this idea, the president of Russia Vladimir Putin said: “We are working patiently until now and also patiently willing to work with Ukrainian partners and with our partners in the European Union. There is no other way but to fulfill Minsk agreements in full, for the settlement of the situation in the Donbass.

The summit participants also protested against the unilateral strengthening of missile defense systems, such as the efforts to ensure “their own security at the expense of others” which threaten regional and international stability”.

The Tashkent Declaration also noted that “the world economy is still suffering from the effects of the global financial and economic crisis, which has led to a reduction in aggregate demand, a sharp world price fluctuations on the basic commodity and raw material markets, a slowdown in economic growth and other negative consequences ... To counter continuing threats and challenges, all countries should strive for a profound transformation of the economy through ambitious structural reforms, diversification and increase of competitiveness of economy and innovative development in the long term”.

Thus, the first results of the Anniversary of the SCO summit in Tashkent confirmed the growth of the international authority of the Organization, its openness and ability to develop. In fact, the process of India and Pakistan joining the SCO has become irreversible, that it will inevitably lead to a qualitative change. But it will take time to reconfigure the Organization, which had previously paid more attention to Central Asia. Now we are talking about combining a large part of the former Soviet Union, China and South Asia, which immediately raises the question of further expansion of the SCO at the expense of Iran and, to a certain perspective, Afghanistan. And to close, “the SCO space” vital accession of Turkmenistan as, for example, a dialogue partner is necessary.

Of course, the process of enlargement of the SCO will be quite difficult, as evidenced by the process of conjugation of the Eurasian Economic Union and “Economic belt of the “Silk Road” zone, the presence of significant social and economic problems on the territory of SCO and the number of unresolved armed conflicts. However, there are no insurmountable problems on the way, which will let the SCO become a leading organization