

The Limits of the SCO: Rethinking the Enlargement Dilemma and Implications for Turkish Foreign Policy

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The question of whether the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which has been seen by some scholars as the Russo-Chinese “strategic partnership”, can manage both deepening and widening of the organization simultaneously has been a central concern of many public and academic debates in recent years. Since its debut, SCO proved to be a potential platform where upon Beijing – Moscow cooperation on a wider Central Asia was enhanced further. Although the differences in the areas of security, foreign policy and trade orientations of the member states impede furthering the coordinated efforts towards enlargement, the SCO members and observers alike, share lots of ideals and are longing for a similar future for this extremely vast region. Nevertheless, it still remains to be seen whether the expansion of the organization would facilitate or make it more difficult in achieving and sustaining coherent policies among the member countries. In a time of global economic crisis and drastic changes in its immediate neighbors linked to the Arab Spring, the question of enlargement renders a bunch of challenges and intricate choices, among one of which is the recent overtures made by Turkey for joining the SCO as an alternative to the European Union (EU). This paper discusses the development of the SCO as an organization by analyzing first its founding principles and objectives. Secondly, the work sheds light on the converging and divergent aspects of the country specific approaches to the enlargement issue and thirdly, addresses the prospects of Turkish bid for full member status at SCO.

Keywords: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Russia, China, Turkish Foreign Policy, Arab Spring, Eurasian Security.