



Afghanistan's Cooperation with the SCO

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Afghanistan has expressed its interest in joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) several times since its first request in 2015. It is unknown if or when this will take place, but statements made by Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah at the recent SCO meeting in Russia provide some insight into the why Afghanistan would like to join the organization. The accompanying article, from the English version of the independent news website *Tolo News* discusses the Afghanistan-SCO relationship in light of Abdullah's recent comments.

Abdullah's main message was to "call upon SCO member states to use their leverage and contacts with armed Afghan militant groups to urge they enter into intra-Afghan talks." While he does not mention any specific SCO members, the Afghan government has made similar statements to Pakistan, which joined the SCO in June 2017. This is in addition to the hostility between Afghanistan and Pakistan related to a number of issues, particularly dealing with terrorism. It is worth noting that issues between Pakistan and India (which also joined in June 2017) did not prevent either from gaining membership in the SCO.

Abdullah also requested that the SCO "grant Afghanistan permanent co-chairmanship for the future Contact Group" [cooperation] and that Afghanistan maintains "interest in acquiring full SCO membership" as well as developing "enhanced cooperation on anti-terrorism between SCO member states and Afghanistan." He also mentioned that they would like to work with "the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt and other similar integration platforms."

SCO members established the Afghanistan Contact Group in 2005 as a mechanism for increased cooperation between the organization and Afghanistan, but it only resumed work in October 2017 after several years of no activity and it has not been clear what the group will do now. The SCO gave Afghanistan observer status in 2012, after which the Afghan government made its first request to join the organization in 2015. However, outside of annual summits or conferences, not much has progressed in this area. As such, despite the Afghan government's desire for closer cooperation with the SCO, past cooperation suggests it may take time for this to develop. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

"Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah called on the member states of the organization to use their leverage in bringing militant groups in Afghanistan to the Afghan negotiations table."



Dr. Abdullah Abdullah at Embassy of Afghanistan, in New Delhi.

Source: Hariva, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ADr_Abdullah_Abdullah_at_Embassy_of_Afghanistan%2C_in_New_Delhi_2016-02-01_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3ADr_Abdullah_Abdullah_at_Embassy_of_Afghanistan%2C_in_New_Delhi_2016-02-01_(2).jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0.

Source: "Abdullah Calls On SCO Members To Support Afghan Peace Talks," *Tolo News*, 1 December 2017. <http://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/abdullah-calls-sco-members-bring-militants-peace-table>

Addressing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meeting in Russia on Friday, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah called on the member states of the organization to use their leverage in bringing militant groups in Afghanistan to the Afghan negotiations table.

"We Call upon SCO member states to use their leverage and contacts with armed Afghan militant groups to urge they enter into intra-Afghan talks," Abdullah said...

"In order to further enhance cooperation and achieve progress between the SCO and Afghanistan, we propose the following: SCO grant Afghanistan permanent co-chairmanship for the future Contact Group to help address the challenges that confront Afghanistan and the region; we renew our interest in acquiring full SCO membership...we are seeking enhanced cooperation on anti-terrorism between SCO member states and Afghanistan," he added.

"We also look forward to working with member states on SCO's development strategy and important initiatives such as the China-led Silk Road Economic Belt and other similar integration platforms," he stated. "I would like to mention Heart of Asia Istanbul Process, RECCA, and projects such as CASA 1000, TAPI and Chahbahar among important initiatives..."

When a River Runs Through It: Riverine Operations in Contemporary Conflict

By LTC (R) Lester Grau, LTC (R) Leroy Denniston

Waterways and population centers will be factors in future war. Frequently they will be collocated and will become operational key terrain. Riverine operations will be a part of future military actions and will be an Army problem. The best way to prepare for a future problem is through study, training, and equipment design and development.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/195094>