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TIANJIN SUMMIT OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

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The Shanghai Cooperation Organisations (SCO) 25th Council of Heads of State was held in the city of Tianjin in China between the dates of 31 August-1 September. From its establishment with the priority of border security and economic aim of five members in 1996 to today, SCO has made significant steps as a result of the enlargement of the cooperation branches, the number of members, and membership type. With the participation of a large number of heads of states and representatives of international institutions, the Tianjin Summit has been recorded as the most well-attended SCO summit. Türkiye attended the summit at the level of presidency with the participation of President Erdoğan; and through this, he conducted bilateral meetings with leaders of China, Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Pakistan, Iran, and the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party.[1] In his meeting with Chinese leader Xi during his to China after six years, President Erdoğan expressed support of the One China policy, emphasized that the trade between Türkiye and China should be balanced and that the Belt and Road Initiative should be harmonized with the Middle Corridor. Chinese leader Xi, for his part, emphasized the necessity improving bilateral relations.[2] It has indeed been observed that the diplomatic interaction between Türkiye and China have increased lately. It is possible to interpret this situation with Türkiyes understanding of the policy of strategic balance.

At the SCO Tianjin Summit, considering the participation of the Russian Head of State Putin, the Prime Minister of India Modi, and the President of North Korea Kim, the President of Iran Pezeshkian and that the meetings that were held during the summit, has been interesting in terms of SCOs non-Western positioning. The leader of India, who has had problems recently with the US administration due to the commercial relations and tariffs, visited China for the first time after the war that was fought with China in 2020. The Tianjin Declaration, which was accepted at the end of the summit, condemned the attacks that were carried out in Indias Pahalgam region in April. The declaration similarly condemned the terror attacks in Pakistan. This situation has been interpreted as SCO

positioning itself equally in relation to all the parties against terror.[3] The attacks against Iran were also condemned by openly referring to the US and Israel.[4] This situation carries a significant difference in terms of the utterance of the names of the aggressor parties, especially in comparison to the last BRICS summit. With the participation of the President of North Korea Kim, North Korea participated in a large scale international organization for the first time. These developments emphasize SCOs non-Western approach.

A memorandum for the Power of Siberia-2 pipeline project and a total of twenty-two contracts on various subjects were signed during the President of Russia Putins meeting with the President of China Xi.[5] The Power of Siberia-2 project strengthens the ties between Russia, Mongolia, and China and diversifies the pipeline routes in Central Asia.

Subjects like the much greater representation of the non-Western world and enhancing global governance came up at the Tianjin Summit. The summit also served as an occasion for the decision to establish the SCO Development Bank, which will result in the diversification of alternative finance institutions. These topics had also come up at the BRICS Summit, the summit of the organization that includes China, Russia, Iran, and India as members. However, it has been observed that the influence of China was comparatively more pronounced at the SCO Summit.[6] At the Tianjin Declaration, published at the end of the summit, it was stated that Central Asia constitutes the core of SCO, and that the collaboration within SCO will form an indivisible security architecture in Eurasia. The issues of Afghanistan and Palestine were also discussed, and the necessity of transporting humanitarian aid to Gaza was highlighted. In addition, Laos was accepted as a dialogue partner to SCO.[7] On the other hand, it was asserted that the recent enlargement of the member numbers and the collaboration branches of the SCO has decreased the impact of goals like combatting the three evils (terrorism, separatism, extremism) and furthering regional security, which were the original goals during the emergence of the organization.[8] Finally, it was decided to organize the 2026 SCO Council of Heads of State in the Kyrgyz Republic.

After the end of the Tianjin Summit, a Victory Day military parade was organized in the Tiananmen Square of the Chinese capital Beijing on 2 September to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the the Chinese Peoples War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War. Numerous country leaders participated in the military parade, while Türkiye attended the said parade at the level of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. China, thanks to the parade, found the opportunity to strengthen its victory narrative after the Second World War. At the same time, the country demonstrated its defense capability, reinforced by new technologies and strategies. During the parade, China demonstrated both its conventional and nuclear military equipment that includes modern weapons with both defensive and offensive capabilities, anti-ship missiles, and electronic warfare instruments.[9] Another situation that was featured prominently in the parade were the themes of harmony and conformity that are sometimes emphasized by several Asian countries, most notably China.

In conclusion, the SCO Tianjin Summit, while serving as a venue for the enchantment of Türkiye-China relations through the summit diplomacy, also provided the opportunity for

Türkiye to reinforce its versatile foreign policy. On the other hand, SCO, which expanded its collaboration and sphere of influence with Laos being accepted as a dialogue partner, also indicated that Central Asia is still a priority for the organization. This current period in which the US is heading towards protectionist policies and reviewing its global leadership role creates a significant sphere of influence for China, and the decisions and the discourses of leaders at the final declaration of the SCO reveal that Chinese presence is strengthening within the organization. On the other hand, the protectionist and anti-Iran, Russia, North Korea policies of the US highlight SCO as an alternative formation for the mentioned countries. Lastly, the Victory Day Parade that was organized by China right after the Tianjin Summit demonstrated Chinas new technology and new military strategies and the strengthening of Peoples Liberation Army of China. On the one hand, the parade displayed both a show of strength and challenge by China, and on the other hand, it reflected the desire to showcase a China in harmony.

Image: Anadolu Agency

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