

Iran pins Hope on Military Alliance with Russia and SCO

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MOSCOW, February 16 (RIA Novosti) – Iran expects to receive the backing of Russia, which holds the presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in its bid for full membership of the organization, Iran’s foreign minister said on Monday.

The SCO comprises Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Russia took over the presidency of the organization last August. Iran and Pakistan have observer status within the organization.

“Iran has officially addressed SCO members and expects its observer status to be finally upgraded to full membership during Russia’s chairmanship period,” Manouchehr Mottaki said in an interview with RIA Novosti.

Widely seen as a counterweight to NATO’s influence in Eurasia, the group primarily addresses security issues, but has recently moved to embrace economic and energy projects.

Iran and Pakistan, observers since 2005, have said they want to become permanent members of the organization, but their requests have yet to be officially considered.

Russia and China have expressed caution over admitting Iran, which is embroiled in a long-running dispute with the West and Israel over its nuclear program and alleged support for radical groups in Lebanon and other countries.

Both China and Russia have major commercial interests in Iran. China wants Iranian oil and gas, and to sell weapons and other goods to the country, while Moscow hopes to sell more weapons and nuclear energy technology to Tehran.

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