

SCO Reaffirms Role In Eurasian Stability

by William Jones

Contrary to the line put out by much of the international press, the Aug. 28 heads-of-state meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan of the Eurasian economic-strategic partnership known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), not only refused to attack Russia for its defense of South Ossetia following Georgia's surprise attack, but reflected a strengthening of the member-states' commitment to ensuring stability against Anglo-imperial provocations. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili is a toady of George Soros. While the SCO's final communiqué, the Dushanbe Declaration, did not recognize, as had Russia, the independence declarations of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the member states—Russia, China, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan—did expressly support “the active role of Russia in promoting peace and cooperation in the region,” while condemning any attempt to resolve such ethnic conflicts by military means.

The Declaration also explicitly rejects any move to “isolate” any nation, calling for diplomacy in resolving conflicts in the region, a direct slap at the efforts of Cheney & company to put a hold on Russia's membership in international organizations like the G-8. In addition, in a bilateral meeting between Russian President Dmitri Medvedev and Chinese President Hu Jintao, Hu assured the Russian President that China was supporting Russia's holding of the Olympic games in 2014, a decision which the U.S. was threatening to have abrogated because of the Georgia conflict.

Medvedev appeared generally satisfied with the results of the SCO meeting: “I told them what happened, and I told them what motivated and guided us in deciding on the operation to oblige Georgia to restore peace and in making our subsequent decisions,” he told reporters. “Our colleagues in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization gratefully received this information, and, during a series of conversations, we concluded that such events certainly do not strengthen the world order, and that the party that unleashed the aggression should

be responsible for its consequences. And, of course, attention was drawn to the fact that now, in this new phase of conflict resolution, we must fully abide by those principles included in the agreement that was prepared by France and Russia and signed by the parties to the conflict. That was what we talked about. I am very pleased to have been able to discuss this with our colleagues and to have received from them this kind of support for our efforts,” Medvedev said.

Wary of Changing Borders

It would not have surprised the Russian President that the SCO members, particularly China, would be extremely wary of recognizing any changing of international borders. Most of the SCO countries have numerous ethnic groupings within their borders, which Anglo-imperial interests, spearheaded by British agent Soros's Open Society Institute, are using in attempts to destabilize, or even break up, these nations. The sharp opposition of all the SCO countries to Kosovo's declaration of independence had underlined their general position on the issue. While there may have been a sigh of relief among most of the leaders over the blow dealt to the destabilization operations of the Soros networks in Georgia, by the rapid Russian reaction to Saakashvili's foolhardy moves, the general wish was to craft a diplomatic resolution as soon as possible.

No doubt the SCO nations, both individually and as a group, will play a key role in making this a matter for international and regional mediation, rather than allowing the diminished, but still lethal, policy of the Cheney-British crowd, to propel the conflict into a new world war. The fact that Russia will assume the chairmanship of the SCO, preparing the next heads-of-state meeting to be held in Yekaterinberg in June 2009, will probably facilitate that development.

In a bilateral meeting between Medvedev and Kazak President Nursultan Nazarbayev on the sidelines of the SCO meetings, Medvedev received further support for Russia's actions. “I am amazed that the West simply ignored the fact that Georgian armed forces attacked the peaceful city of Tskhinvali” (the South Ossetia capital), Nazarbayev said. “Therefore my assessment is as follows: I think that it originally started with this. And Russia's response could either be to keep silent, or to protect their people and so on. I believe that all subsequent steps taken by Russia have been designed to stop the bloodshed of ordinary residents of this long-suffering country.”

Central Asian Oil Pipelines (Current and Proposed)



Source: IEA.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) heads-of-state meeting in Dushanbe Aug. 28, not only refused to condemn Russia for defending South Ossetia, but pushed forward on a number of infrastructure development programs, such as the oil pipelines and rail projects pictured here (as of February 2008).

These sentiments were further underlined one week later, at a summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the defense organization that comprises all of the SCO countries except China. The CSTO statement warned about the destabilizing factor represented by NATO's westward expansion and by the stationing of a NATO anti-missile system in Poland, bordering the CSTO region.

Confronting Afghan Drug Production

The Dushanbe discussion also dealt at some length with the devastating proliferation of drugs which British-American strategy has created in Afghanistan. "The heads of state consider it important that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operating in Afghanistan on the mandate of the UN Security Council pay greater attention to the task of battling the production and trafficking of the Afghan narcotics in interaction with the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, neighboring and other interested countries," the Declaration says. "The member states of the

SCO will continue to make joint efforts to set up close interaction with other interested states, international and regional organizations with the aim of creating a wide partnership network on counteracting the threats of terrorism and narcotics."

The danger represented by the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan was underlined at the summit by Uzbek President Islam Karimov, and the strong statement calling for further action by the SCO reflected the concerns expressed by Karimov, but felt by all the countries.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai himself was present at the heads-of-state meeting as the representative of one of several nations with observer status, a group that also includes Iran, Pakistan, India, and Mongolia, some of which have expressed an interest in joining the organization. At this time, however, the SCO has decided not to expand, although it has set up an experts' group to study the matter. They have, however, established an SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. The Dushanbe meeting took the decision to enhance the work

of this Contact Group, and to prepare an SCO conference specifically to deal with the issues of terrorism and narcotics in that beleaguered nation.

Bilateral Agreements Cement Ties

The Dushanbe meeting also provided the opportunity for a good number of bilateral meetings and the consolidation of economic agreements. While the SCO was initially established to deal with terrorism in Central Asia, which continues to be of grave concern to the members, issues of economic development have come more and more to the forefront of the regional body.

Both Presidents Medvedev and Hu held meetings with the host of this year's meeting, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon. Russia plans to build three new hydroelectric power plants in Tajikistan. That mountainous nation provides most of the water for neighboring Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as electricity for them and for Afghanistan. The less-than-average snowfall this year, one of the coldest on record, has created some serious bottlenecks in supplying Russia's neighbors, causing considerable irritation among them. Russia will also start developing Tajik gas fields, while Rosatom, the Russian state nuclear energy company, will investigate the possibility of uranium mining there.

Shortly after his return from the Dushanbe meeting, Uzbek President Karimov met in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, with visiting Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, where they agreed to the building of a new pipeline for pumping natural gas from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Russia, which would boost Russian imports by 50%. The Soviet-era pipeline now in operation is not capable of handling the increased demand for gas export in the region. The expansion of the Russian-Uzbek pipeline also undercuts the economic viability of the Anglo-inspired Nabucco pipeline, which was created to undercut Russia's role as an energy provider to Western Europe. In return, Russia has agreed to pay close to Western prices for Uzbek gas.

The two countries also signed an important agreement on space cooperation, with Russia committing to upgrading and maintaining the Suffa Radio Observatory and Maidanak Observatory, which had been created by joint efforts of both countries. The agreement also envisions the creation and employment on the territory of Uzbekistan, of infrastructure to receive, process, and use space navigation systems, space monitoring, cartography, and communication. "This program

is expected to become the foundation for the organization of joint activities in the space industry with the other CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] countries, including work to solve the strategic problem of forming a single navigation and media space in the CIS," said Sergei Ivanov, the deputy prime minister and co-chairman of the bilateral commission on economic cooperation with Uzbekistan.

Following the SCO summit, President Hu traveled to Ashgabat where he met with Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The two inked a deal whereby Turkmenistan agreed to provide China with 40 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas annually, a 33% increase over the 30 bcm previously agreed upon. In addition, China has agreed to establish a railway repair and maintenance facility in Turkmenistan, as well as fertilizer producing facilities. China National Petroleum Company is in the process of building a 10,000-km pipeline that will bring Turkmen gas to China. While Turkmenistan has chosen to remain outside the SCO, it is a major supplier of natural gas within Central Asia, and its close relations with both Russia and China make it a key contributor to the development of the region.

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