

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

by Paul Wolf, 14 June 2003

Date: Sat, 14 Jun 2003 10:32:53 -0400 (EDT)
From: Paul Wolf <paulwolf@icdc.com>
Subject: Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Introduction

1. Central Asia wary of US's widening reach (June 14, 2003)
2. Shanghai Six Talks the Nuts and Bolts (May 2003)
3. SCO Members to Hold Joint Anti-terror Exercise (May 2003)
4. China's Report on Xinjiang Region Questioned (May 2003)
5. SCO warned about unilateral action (May 2003)
6. U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan: Implications for Central Asia (Nov 2001)
7. 'Shanghai Five' expands to combat Islamic radicals (July 2001)
8. Bloc Including China, Russia Challenges U.S. in Central Asia (June 2001)
9. A Shanghai forum with India? (July 2000)

Introduction

On September 9, 2001, two days before the infamous attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Ahmad Shah Massood, the charismatic leader of Afghanistan's United Front (representing the government deposed by the Taliban), was assassinated by two Arabs posing as journalists. Both of them died, one in the attack -- he was blown up by his own bomb along with Massood -- and the other, it is said, was shot trying to escape from a room in which he was being held. A court in Belgium is investigating the murder now, but nothing about it has been reported in the news since it began two weeks ago. That's surprising, since this is one of the world's great murder mysteries.

Ahmad Shah Massood is now the national hero of Afghanistan. There are pictures of him everywhere you go in Kabul -- on streetcorners, on government buildings, and on the dashboards of cars. He has become an abstract symbol of the mujahideen resistance. Massood was at the center of the fight against the unpopular (and American and Pakistani organized) Taliban government, receiving weapons from Iran and Russia. Yet Massood was

an independent Afghan nationalist -- before he was killed he had just completed a tour of Europe, trying to gain support for his anti-Taliban campaign. Notably, the US did not support Massood's resistance, probably because of his long standing ties with Russia.

Massood did have some contacts with the US over the years. According to mujahideen fighters I have met, Massood was extremely angry after his final meeting with Robin Rafael, the American Deputy Foreign Minister for the East, who had suggested that his best option might be to surrender to the Taliban. According to the story, Massood threw his pakul (an Afghan beret) onto the table and told Ms. Rafael that as long as he controlled a territory the size of his hat, he would never surrender.

These same people suspect that the US may have had a hand in Massood's murder on September 9. After Ahmad Shah Massood was killed, the US had no trouble co-opting his organization to fight against the Taliban, renaming them the Northern Alliance. Massood was too popular to have been brushed aside.

I have always wondered why the United States attacked Afghanistan as a response to the 9/11 attacks. There was never any evidence made available to the public that would explain how the September 11 attackers were connected to Afghanistan. It was said that Mohammed Atta *et al* trained in camps in the mountains on the Pakistani border, along with Osama bin Laden, but does anyone believe this? There is just no evidence of it, and sources here say that neither Al Qaida nor the Taliban could have made a move without ISI authorization. The US had worked with the ISI since the fight against the Soviet occupation; the CIA-ISI relationship since has been the subject of speculation.

So why did the US attack Afghanistan? Perhaps the articles below can help explain the geopolitics of the region. It seems that Russia and China had already been planning their own anti-terror campaign. The "Sino-Russian" alliance, barely reported in the western press, must have been one of the most threatening developments to the United States in many years. Enough to justify the Americans taking the initiative and launching a war on terrorism ourselves? No doubt. Enough to assassinate the anti-terror Afghan leader working with this alliance? Perhaps.

The mujahideen fighters I have met insist that Ahmad Shah Massood attended the July 2000 "Shanghai Five" anti-terror meeting in Dushanbe. Whatever Commander Massood said in this meeting is not known. But regardless of Massood's arrangements with the Russians and Chinese, or speculation about an American hand in his assassination, or the controversy about the American intelligence failure in not responding to the attacks while they were in progress, the very existence of the "Shanghai Five" alliance provided a motive for the US to attack Afghanistan. Yet I am not aware of any analysts who have come to this conclusion.

Now much of the world is angry at America for attacking Iraq, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has had another meeting. Undoubtedly, this is something that deserves media attention, but you will not find any reporting about this in the western press.

Paul Wolf
Kabul, Afghanistan
June 14, 2003

SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION

Central Asia wary of US's widening reach

Grouping sees US interests as posing challenges; will boost security and economic cooperation

By David Hsieh, *The Straits Times*, June 14, 2003

BEIJING -- The United States' expanding reach into Central Asia since the 9/11 attacks presents distinct challenges for the six-member Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), but it should not overshadow the grouping's primary objective of fighting regional terrorism, experts on Central Asia say.

Moreover, buttressed by rapidly expanding trade and investment ties, the SCO should play an increasingly salient role in promoting regional economic cooperation and integration, they say.

Ending a two-day summit in Moscow last month, the third since the SCO was established in June 2001, the six members -- China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan -- pledged to fight the 'triple forces' of terrorism, separatism and extremism.

In a clear reference to the US-led war in Iraq, the leaders warned against any unilateral action in the war on terror.

Highlighting the role of the United Nations, the SCO's joint statement declared that 'war against terrorism should be pursued on the basis of international law'.

The six members agreed to set up a permanent secretariat based in Beijing and an anti-terrorist centre in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan.

They also pledged to crack down on cross-border drug trafficking.

But the grouping's two main driving forces -- China and Russia -- remain wary of the US presence in, and its designs on, Central Asia.

All four Central Asian states supported the Iraq war and three of them -- Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan -- hosted US forces during the Afghan war.

Describing the entry of the US as a 'new factor' in regional security, Professor Feng Shaolei, a Russia and Central Asia expert at Shanghai's East China Teachers University, said the SCO hopes to form a new type of regional security system that the US cannot eclipse easily.

'Today's security concept involves new elements like terrorism, cross-border crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, spread of diseases, and resource competition.

'SCO faces major challenges, but can the world's sole super-power resolve all regional problems?' he asked rhetorically.

The grouping, therefore, retains a unique role in the region.

But Professor Xing Guangcheng, executive vice-director of the SCO Research Centre at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, cautions that America's behaviour may still dictate.

If the US decides to step up its presence, it could mean trouble for the SCO.

The grouping's saving grace is that it is an open organisation, making it possible for rapprochement with the US.

'The US may be interested in becoming an observer or sending someone of repute to monitor the proceedings,' Prof Xing explained, adding that he does not see the US doing so soon.

Over the long run, however, it will be economic development that underpins security in greater Central Asia. Chinese President Hu Jintao stressed in Moscow that 'economic cooperation is the basis for and a priority of the SCO'.

Bilateral trade between China and Russia hovers around US\$12 billion (S\$21 billion) but should rise markedly following the landmark oil agreement signed during Mr Hu's official visit to Russia just before the SCO summit.

The US\$150-billion oil and pipeline deal, which spans 25 years beginning in 2005, involves supplying 20 million tonnes a year of Siberian oil to China for the first five years and 30 million tonnes a year from 2010.

China has also pledged to increase trade with neighbouring Kazakhstan, which stood at a paltry US\$1.9 billion last year.

Last week, President Hu and his Kazakh counterpart, Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev, signed agreements for an oil pipeline and Chinese investment in Kazakh oil and gas.

In Moscow, Mr Hu also suggested a multilateral transportation infrastructure pact for building a massive highway grid, with hopes that progress could be made at the second meeting of SCO prime ministers later this year.

Copyright © 2003 *The Straits Times*

Shanghai Six Talks the Nuts and Bolts

By Simon Saradzhyan, *The Moscow Times*, May 30, 2003

The presidents of Russia, China and four Central Asian states gathered in the Kremlin on Thursday to discuss the nuts and bolts of making their Shanghai Cooperation Organization a functioning body capable of promoting stability and security in the region.

The six leaders spelled out how and when to form the budget of the SCO and man its structures, with the aim of turning the SCO, which was formed as a five-member group in

1996, into a viable international body by 2004, according to their joint declaration. Few details were given.

Starting from 2004, the SCO will have a secretariat in Beijing and a so-called Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, the declaration said. The leaders also approved the organization's emblem and flag.

China's ambassador to Russia, Zhang Deguang, was appointed the executive secretary of the organization, which also includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The signing of the declaration was preceded by a formal sitting during which the six leaders took turns reading their addresses, which largely echoed one another in their determination to add meat to the SCO's bones

One sign of the SCO's transformation is a plan to hold joint anti-terrorism exercises later this year in Kazakhstan involving the armed forces of all six members.

In addition to discussing beefing up the SCO, the presidents also joined forces in calling for strengthening the role of the United Nations and a multi-polar world. The declaration they signed refers to the United Nations' "fundamental significance" and "important role," a thinly veiled criticism of the U.S.-led coalition's decision to wage war in Iraq without the explicit authorization of the UN Security Council and largely sideline the world body during the Iraqi crisis.

After reading their speeches, the six leaders then conversed behind closed doors for more than an hour before holding a press conference, during which they largely repeated what they had said earlier during the open part of their summit.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who presided over the summit, took the lead at the news conference in praising the progress of the SCO, declaring that "the first phase of formation is virtually completed."

China's Hu Jintao followed by first thanking "friends from the mass media for your great attention" to the SCO before focusing on the organization's achievements and prospects.

Unlike Hu's speeches earlier this week during the first part of his trip to Moscow, his address on Thursday did not include references to a multi-polar world and a need for the United Nations to play a central role in Iraq.

Hu left it to President Vladimir Putin to stress at the press conference that SCO members all agree there is no alternative to the United Nations as a "universal mechanism" and believe the "UN's efficiency should be increased."

As each of the six presidents addressed the international media crowd, speaking in a monotone and pausing for translation, the others looked sideways, occasionally exchanging smiles and fumbling with their pens. Uzbek President Islam Karimov -- who spoke last and whose country joined the Shanghai group's five original members in June 2001 -- was perhaps the only leader not to repeat the highlights of the summit speeches.

Instead, the stern-faced strongman of Central Asian politics chose to curtly but "fully support" what Putin had said before him about the need to promote economic, scientific and security cooperation across the SCO.

Karimov then vowed to make the next SCO summit in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent as hospitable for his colleagues as this Kremlin summit and press conference, during which the presidents took no questions.

Copyright © 2003 *The Moscow Times*

SCO Members to Hold Joint Anti-terror Exercise

The People's Daily Online, May 30, 2003

Five member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) have agreed to hold a joint anti-terror exercise later in the year.

A memorandum on the agreement was signed by Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan with his counterparts Mukhtar Altynbayev of Kazakhstan, Esen Topoyev of Kyrgyzstan, Sergei Ivanov of Russia and Sherali Khairullaev of Tajikistan on the sidelines of the SCO summit held in Moscow on Thursday.

The ministers agreed to hold an anti-terror drill this fall, the first of its kind within the framework of the SCO.

Cao, who is also vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission and a state councilor, also met respectively with his counterparts of the SCO members.

Copyright © 2003 *The People's Daily Online*,

China's Report on Xinjiang Region Questioned

By Stephanie Mann, *The Voice of America*, 29 May 2003

China, Russia, and four Central Asian nations have ended a two-day summit in Moscow, pledging to strengthen their cooperation in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. The group, called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, decided to set up a regional anti-terrorist center in the Kyrgyz capital. Some observers say that for China, the Central Asian group is a way to coordinate efforts to stop separatist activity in its western region of Xinjiang.

Just before this week's meeting of Central Asian leaders in Moscow, the Chinese government issued a report about Xinjiang, a predominantly Muslim area in western China populated by diverse ethnic groups. It provides a long description of the region's history and economic development.

The document says Xinjiang has been part of China since ancient times. It says for the past decade, ethnic Uighurs who advocate the territory's independence under the name East

Turkistan have used terrorist violence to try to achieve their goal. The Chinese report says the separatists are influenced by religious extremism and international terrorism, use the banner of human rights and religious freedom, and fabricate claims that China is oppressing ethnic minorities.

Stanley Toops, a professor of geography at Miami University of Ohio, is a specialist on the Xinjiang region. He says China wanted to establish its position on Xinjiang in advance of President Hu Jintao's trip to Russia. Professor Toops says China changed its characterization of the unrest in Xinjiang after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

"Since 9-11, I think the People's Republic of China has utilized the anti-terrorism rhetoric of other countries, Russia and the United States as well, to in some ways legitimate the activities of the state within East Turkistan, within Xinjiang," he said. "In China's case, to look at where terrorism exists, they will point out places like Tibet or Xinjiang. But I think it's difficult to call people there terrorists." The president of the Uighur American Association, Alim Seytoff, says he was surprised that China would issue a report specifically on Xinjiang. He says China apparently wants to gain international support for its claim to Xinjiang.

"We assume that China is trying to justify its illegitimate occupation of this country by citing distorted historical accounts and by saying this territory belonged to China since ancient times, without any clarification of the word 'ancient times,'" he said. "And trying to justify its occupation and trying to inform the world that the Uighur cause is illegitimate, it is not a just cause, and the Uighur demand is not in the context of international law."

Mr. Seytoff says Xinjiang, or East Turkistan, was occupied over the centuries by the same groups that at various times occupied China, such as the Mongols and the Manchus. And he says it does not make sense for today's People's Republic of China to claim the area as part of communist China.

"It is more like the Mongolian government, today's Mongolian government, claiming all the territories occupied by the Mongol empire of Genghis Kahn as historic Mongol territory since ancient times," he said. "It is like today's Greek government claiming all territories occupied by Alexander the Great is part of Greece since ancient times. Or more like the Turks claiming all the territories occupied by the Ottomans as historically part of Turkey's territories. It is the same thing that China is claiming."

A few days before the Moscow meeting, the Munich-based East Turkistan National Congress, an umbrella organization of Uighur groups in exile, sent a letter to the presidents of Russia and the four Central Asia countries. It urged them to raise the issue of human rights abuses in Uighur areas of China.

Mr. Seytoff says he never expected that to happen, because, in his words, the Shanghai group supports China in suppressing the Uighurs. "Under Chinese pressure, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan and Uzbekistan have been suppressing the Uighur dissidents in their respective countries and sending them back," he said. "They see the Uighur movement both in East Turkistan and central Asia more as a destabilizing factor than any kind of human rights issue."

Professor Toops agrees that other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization do not see it in their interest to call for an investigation of Chinese human rights practices. "I think this Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a way for those countries to maintain the ties with China, perhaps gain some economic benefit," he said. "That is really what they are hoping for, and at the same time forestall any kind of overt Chinese influence within the region."

Moreover, Professor Toops says, if there were an investigation into human rights in Xinjiang, one might then want to examine Russia's actions in Chechnya or Uzbekistan's handling of Islamic insurgents.

Professor Toops says China's crackdown on Uighur separatists has strengthened the resolve of Uighur groups in exile. But he says the East Turkistan activists do not have a figure such as the Dalai Lama, a Nobel peace prize recipient who has been able to attract worldwide interest in the Tibetan cause.

Alim Seytoff says China has lost the global public relations battle over Tibet and is determined not to lose international public opinion on Xinjiang.

"What China is trying to do is try to convince the international community that Uighurs do not have a legitimate case here unlike the Tibetans, because the Tibetans have already proven they have a legitimate case, and the international community already accepts the claims made by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile," she said. "Whereas in the Uighur case, we do not have that yet."

Two representatives of the Dalai Lama are currently visiting China, the second such trip since last September when Beijing and the Tibetan government in exile re-established contact after a nine-year gap.

Copyright © 2003 *The Voice of America*

SCO warned about unilateral action

Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News Network, 5/29/2003

Moscow, May 29 -- Leaders of China, Russia and four central Asian nations Thursday warned against unilateral action in the war on terror and pledged closer ties as Moscow seeks to counter US influence in its traditional backyard.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)- which comprises China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan -- agreed to transform their fledgling six-nation body into a proper international organisation by 2004.

The host, Russian President Vladimir Putin, said the six leaders shared the conviction that there should be a primacy of the United Nations, in a clear reference to the US-led war in Iraq.

"We have a common stance. there is no alternative to the United Nations as a universal organisation in the system of international relations," he told a press conference after the

summit.

A joint statement issued by the participants said that the "war against terrorism should be pursued on the basis of international law.

You cannot identify it with a war against any religion, country or nationality."

Putin is seeking to solidify Russia's role in the regional body as he pursues a policy of boosting cooperation with its former soviet neighbors as a priority of his country's foreign policy.

That goal has become all the more pressing since the warm relations developed by Moscow and Washington in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks cooled following Russia's outspoken opposition to the US-led war in Iraq.

New Chinese President Hu Jintao, attending the summit on his first trip abroad since taking over the Chinese leadership in March, reaffirmed Beijing's opposition to the US-led ousting of the Baghdad regime.

"The war in Iraq is over but the effects on the international situation have only just begun," he told the gathering.

Putin made a strong push into Russia's backyard at a regional summit with the leaders of five Ex-Soviet states last month, announcing that the group was setting up a Russian-led joint regional military command.

Moscow is aiming to win back its traditional sphere of influence, dotted with American bases since the US-led war on Afghanistan's hardline Taliban regime.

All four central Asian countries in the SCO supported the war in Iraq and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan hosted us troops for the Afghan war.

The SCO owes its origins to a five-nation forum that began meeting in 1996 to resolve border issues.

But the organization, which formally came into existence in June 2001 when Uzbekistan joined the grouping previously known as the Shanghai Five, has shifted its focus to questions of regional security and economic cooperation.

The leaders at their Moscow meeting set January 1, 2004, as the deadline for the SCO to function with a permanent secretariat.

The summit confirmed the Chinese ambassador to Moscow Zhang Deguang as the group's first secretary general.

The SCO decided in June 2001 to set up a Beijing-based secretariat. The leaders also agreed to establish a regional anti-terrorist centre in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek.

Hu said the threat of terrorism remained very real. "We cannot relax our guard in the face of new threats. We have to devote permanent efforts to maintaining stability in the region and to cut off financing for terrorism," he said.

The leaders endorsed arrangements establishing a budget for the SCO and councils of heads of state, heads of governments and foreign ministers.

They agreed that the six states' prime ministers will meet again later this year in China to discuss the budget.

Copyright © 2003 *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News Network*

U.S. Intervention in Afghanistan: Implications for Central Asia

By Robert M. Cutler, *Foreign Policy in Focus*, November 21, 2001

Just when it looked the Central Asian countries were facing the growing joint political hegemony of Russia and China in the region, the events of September 11 opened the door to an increased and indefinite-term U.S. military presence. This not only involves the prosecution of the war in Afghanistan but also, in particular, a new agreement recently signed with Uzbekistan to establish a U.S. military presence in this Central Asian nation. This agreement provides for American use of military bases and facilities, and it paves the way for a long-term U.S. military presence, not excluding the stationing of U.S. troops on a standing basis.

Given that Russia and China were deep in the process of establishing a strategic condominium ("joint rule") over Central Asian affairs, how did this surprising new military arrangement with the U.S. develop? To understand this new development requires recalling how Islamic militancy in Uzbekistan has manifested over the past two years and what the region's response to it has been. In 1996, a regional grouping initially called the "Shanghai Five" was established to delimit and demilitarize the border between China and several countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Annual summits of the Shanghai Five began in 1998, and the grouping shifted its focus from border relations to Islamic militancy the following year.

Uzbekistan wavered between interest and disinterest in the Shanghai grouping, principally because President Islam Karimov did not want to fall under Moscow's security umbrella. For many years he has courted and been courted by the United States. Washington designated Uzbekistan a "strategic partner" in 1995, and in 1998 the country joined the "GUAM" (Georgia-Ukraine-Azerbaijan-Moldova) grouping, turning it into GUUAM. [See "What is GUUAM Anyway?"] recently revealed U.S. security cooperation with the country stretching back at least two years, Uzbekistan found in mid-2000 that Russia was the only big power willing to provide troops to fight the insurgent Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). So Uzbekistan fell back closer to Russia.

In June of this year the Shanghai Five, now with Uzbekistan as a member making six, was institutionalized as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a self-standing international organization with an autonomous secretariat (in Shanghai). At the founding

meeting, China's deputy foreign minister responsible for SCO affairs emphasized to the gathered international press and diplomats that Beijing intended to use the organization to promote trade and investment in its search for influence over Central Asia. But those are not the only instruments that Beijing uses. There has been significant ethnic-Han Chinese immigration into Kazakhstan and Siberia. Leaked documents indicate that this illegal immigration is encouraged by official policy.

Russia's interest in SCO is to represent itself as Asia's interlocutor with the United States. Indeed, the Ljubljana meeting between Putin and Bush, their first, took place only two days after the end of the SCO founding conference. The SCO also intended to create a joint rapid-deployment force at an "anti-terrorism center" in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Such an antiterrorist center was planned to function as a joint coordinating center for the SCO and the CIS. That prospect raised the specter, in some minds, of Chinese and Russian troops eventually stationed together in Central Asia at the core of a military and political bloc. Whether exaggerated or not, that impression was certainly reinforced by the first major Sino-Russian treaty in fifty years, also signed earlier this year, formally the "Treaty on Good-Neighborly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation," which provides for increased Russian arms sales to China and the training of Chinese officers at Russian military schools.

All indicators were that Russia and China were reaching an understanding that would have set the framework for geopolitical realities in Central Asia for the next several decades. But the sudden and perhaps long-term U.S. military presence in the region, in the wake of the attack on the World Trade Center, radically changes the equation. It would be simplistic to suggest say that Central Asian energy resources explain all this new interest in this previously ignored region. The oil companies do not drive U.S. foreign policy, and U.S. foreign policy does not drive the oil companies. They interact, combine, frequently reinforce each other, and sometimes get in each other's way, but their relationship is dynamic, not mechanistic. Moreover, pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan do not make much sense in view of the logistical problems and other options available.

The geopolitical significance of the U.S. war in Afghanistan for Central Asia is the on-the-ground foothold that it gives the American military in the region. Certainly China views the U.S. presence as a hindrance to its strategic objectives of dominating the region, and probably Beijing does not believe that the U.S. has staying power there. But the U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan increases the prospect of a continuing U.S. military presence on the ground in Uzbekistan--above and beyond the presence of "merely" economic instruments of diplomacy such as the presence of the international energy companies. It has monkey-wrenched an incipient consolidation of Sino-Russian hegemony over Central Asia and motivated the beginning of a rapprochement between Moscow and Washington, the eventual success of which, however, remains in doubt.

These changes in big-power politics in Central Asia are not set in concrete. But by unfreezing the earlier-emergent Sino-Russian joint hegemony over Central Asia, the U.S. has also opened up the reconnections between Central Asia on the one hand, and, on the other, South and Southwest Asia. As a result, Uzbekistan is confirmed as the geopolitical "pivot," and Central Asia the "shatterbelt" of the broad Eurasian landmass.

Demographic and economic realities over the next two decades would have further

accentuated the present centrality of Central Asia to world politics and geo-economics, regardless of the Afghanistan war. Now, however, it is occurring earlier than one might have anticipated, and therefore under different circumstances. The implications of the war will be far-reaching for Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, as the U.S. likely increases its aid, trade, and military and diplomatic presence after the end of hostilities in Afghanistan.

This offers the countries concerned a respite from the earlier emerging Sino-Russian visegrip, and chance in the early twenty-first century finally to implement serious moves toward economic reform and democratization. Some modest steps in this direction are underway. The United States seems to back an international effort to enhance the ability of the peoples of the region to satisfy their own basic needs for adequate food, shelter, and access to medical care. However, for this to succeed, sustained attention to issues beyond military assistance and the stationing of troops must be given -- a concern that is not always the strong suit of American diplomacy, even when such leadership is needed.

Copyright © 2001 *Foreign Policy in Focus*

'Shanghai Five' expands to combat Islamic radicals

By John Daly, *Janes Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 19 July 2001

Russia's President Vladimir Putin, President Jiang Zemin of China and the leaders of four former Soviet Central Asian states signed a declaration on 15 June creating the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO).

The original 'Shanghai Five' of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has expanded to include Uzbekistan as a new member. Uzbekistan's membership changes the orientation of the organisation; while it does not have a border with China, it does have a frontier with Afghanistan, and its Islamic dissident elements are the most active in the region.

The organisation is a diplomatic innovation for China, traditionally isolationist and wary of multilateral alliances. The original 'Shanghai Five' was formed in 1996 as a forum to resolve old Soviet-Chinese border disputes. Under Putin, China and Russia have grown much closer, bound by their mutual distrust of US hegemony and their perceived need to promote a multipolar world. The republics of Central Asia have been caught between the two regional giants while facing immense internal problems of economic stagnation and growing political unrest.

The organisation has the capacity for expansion. Pakistan has already expressed an interest in observer status, and Mongolia and India are considering future membership as well. According to the Pakistani newspaper Dawn, Iran and Turkmenistan have also expressed an interest in the organisation's activities. According to Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, even "the USA would like to join the Shanghai group". Should India, Pakistan and Mongolia enlarge the organisation, more than half the population of Eurasia, from the Baltic to the Pacific, will be arrayed in a loose political, economic and military alliance.

Western powers snubbed

The losers will be the United States and Turkey, whose tepid regional policies have convinced the Central Asian leadership that their immediate security concerns are better met by Moscow and Beijing. Zemin is due to visit Moscow in July to sign a pact of friendship and co-operation, further cementing the Sino-Russian partnership. The co-operation builds on the demilitarisation of the 4,600-mile long border begun under the 1997 treaty on reducing military forces in border regions. The heads of state of the member nations will meet once a year, with government officials meeting on a regular basis to co-ordinate activities. For Kyrgyzstan, the benefits were immediate; on 18 June the Kyrgyz defence minister, Esen Topoev, announced that China was giving Kyrgyzstan 8 million yuan (US\$970,000) in military support.

United by Islamic dissident threat

What all members have in common is a growing unease with the Islamic fundamentalism seeping out of Afghanistan and inflaming their discontented populations. For the members, the common vector of fundamentalism remains Afghanistan. Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev remarked at the gathering: "The cradle of terrorism, separatism and extremism is the instability in Afghanistan."

Copyright © 2001 *Janes Terrorism and Security Monitor*

Bloc Including China, Russia Challenges U.S. in Central Asia Members Agree to Combat Militant Islamic Groups And Share Intelligence By Andrew Higgins, *The Wall Street Journal*, 06/18/2001

SHANGHAI, China -- A new episode of big-power jousting for influence in Central Asia has begun with the formation of a six-nation bloc to combat militant Islamic groups and the adoption of a pact on information-sharing and other joint action by the security agencies of China, Russia and four fragile states that rose from the ruins of the Soviet Union nearly a decade ago. The moves, announced Friday after a two-day meeting in Shanghai, mark a challenge to the U.S., which has billions of dollars invested in Central Asian oil and natural-gas fields, and also to Turkey, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with close linguistic and cultural ties to Central Asian states. They also signal the emergence of China as a big player in a region blighted by poverty and unrest but rich in natural resources.

A joint statement by the leaders of China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan said the new grouping -- the Shanghai Cooperation Organization -- is "not a union directed against other states or regions." Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said the U.S. had expressed interest in joining as an observer. But the group's official emblem symbolically snubs Washington: Its stylized map excludes the U.S. The organization replaces the so-called Shanghai Five, a loose regional forum founded five years ago to soothe border quarrels left from the Soviet era. The group added Uzbekistan, Central Asia's most populous and militarily powerful state, as a sixth member Friday and relaunched itself as a permanent regional security and economic agency.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who attended the Shanghai meeting ahead of his first summit Saturday with President Bush, said Moscow wants "predictable and constructive" relations with both Beijing and Washington. During a private meeting, Chinese President Jiang Zemin, a Russian speaker from a stint at Moscow's Stalin Auto Works in the 1950s, serenaded Mr. Putin with song and played the piano, the Russian president said. Russia, China and the four Central Asian nations took a swipe at plans by President Bush to build a national missile-defense system. They described a 1972 U.S.-Soviet antiballistic missile treaty as the "cornerstone" of global stability and warned of "huge damage" if the accord is violated. Washington wants to scrap or revise the treaty, which bans missile shields of the type envisaged by Mr. Bush. Despite the strong words, however, the stand against missile defense was less robust than that taken at a meeting last year of the Shanghai Five. Messrs. Jiang and Putin and other presidents this year omitted the issue from their final statement and left it to a separate communique made by their defense ministers.

The presidents focused instead on what China calls the "three hostile forces -- terrorism, separatism and extremism." They endorsed the "Shanghai Convention," a document that commits their security bodies to cooperate to "prevent, expose and halt" threats to each other's security and territorial integrity. The pact underscores China's alarm at small but sometimes violent separatist groups in Xinjiang, a western desert region inhabited by Uighurs, a Turkic people of Islamic faith.

Once a big majority in Xinjiang, which contains China's biggest untapped reserves of natural gas and oil, Uighurs now account for just over half the population and have increasingly turned to Islam to defend their identity against an influx of ethnic Han Chinese. Neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have Uighur populations, too, and China worries they could fan unrest in Xinjiang.

A buffer between British and Russian empires in the 19th century, Central Asia has long been a field of big-power rivalries. Embracing vast tracts of desert and mountain territory that straddle the border between the former Soviet Union and Xinjiang, the region has attracted renewed attention both as a source of energy and as a potential recruiting ground for radical Islamic groups inspired by the fundamentalist Taliban government in Afghanistan. Washington, too, fears the Islamic fervor generated by Afghanistan, which has given refuge to Osama bin Laden, a Saudi-born militant who the U.S. says was behind the 1998 bombings of its embassies in Africa and other terrorists attacks. But Washington worries that heavy-handed repression of even moderate Islamic groups will fuel extremism and provide a pretext for greater military intervention in the region by Russia. Moscow already has troops on the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and is mired in a war in Chechnya against guerrillas fired by a potent mix of nationalist and Islamic zeal.

Copyright © 2001 *The Wall Street Journal*

A Shanghai forum with India?

M.K. Dhar, *The Pioneer*, July 19, 2000

A momentous decision has been taken by Russia, China and the Central Asian Republics to pool in their resources to counter the fundamentalist -terrorist threat emanating from a Talibanised Afghanistan. The Dushanbe declaration, issued at the end of the Shanghai Five summit held earlier this month in the Tajik capital, has singled out Afghanistan as the chief source of instability in the region and called for coordinated efforts to combat international terrorism.

Originally set up to resolve border disputes between China and the constituent republics of former Soviet Union, the Shanghai Five comprising Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have now expanded their agenda to include the growing threat to the security and stability of the member-states arising from terrorists and separatists trained and armed by the Taliban.

A major victim of Taliban-Pakistan sponsored cross-border terrorism, India too is keen on joining the grouping. Its case is supported by Russia, which also favours Iran and Uzbekistan for membership, but the Dushanbe summit did not formally address the subject. Even though Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov had previously refused to be party to a joint CIS defence treaty with Russia, he has now been forced to seek military assistance from Moscow to defend his country.

While the Commonwealth of Independent States has established an anti-terrorism centre in Moscow to coordinate intelligence concerning terrorist activities, the Dushanbe Summit cleared a proposal to set up a joint anti-terrorism centre in Kyrgyzstan, which was invaded last year by fundamentalists armed by the Taliban. To forge coordination at the international level among states troubled by terrorism, Mr Karimov placed before the summit a proposal that, as permanent members of the Security Council, China and Russia should propose establishment of an international anti-terrorism centre at the Millennium Summit of the UN General Assembly in September. At the initiative of Mr Vladimir Putin, Russia has already set up a military base in Tajikistan with its 201st Army Division deployed in the Republic as its core. He has also made a firm commitment to send troops to Uzbekistan to defend it against possible incursion from Afghanistan on a massive scale.

In the five years of its existence, the Shanghai Five have held several summits. Though China has reached border agreements with all the member-states, the security situation in the region has grown worse. The countries of the region face strong separatist-Islamist movements spearheaded by armed men trained in Afghanistan. Hence the need of creating a mechanism that will work for all members of the grouping.

Considering the international repercussions of Islamist terrorism sponsored by the Taliban and Pakistan, Mr Putin has expressed the view that the grouping could be converted into a Shanghai Forum in which India, Iran and Uzbekistan too could participate to create a comprehensive mechanism that will work for all its members. In response to Mr Karimov's distress signals, the CIS is likely to deploy a multi-national military force in Uzbekistan to repulse intrusions from Afghanistan. A rapid reaction force is proposed to be stationed in Uzbekistan.

The Taliban, in collaboration with Pakistan's ISI, has set up scores of madarasas for training terrorists. A camp south of the Oxus river has been set up by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) to train militants from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and the Western Chinese province of Xinjiang. There is also Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaida organisation, which provides sanctuary to Arab dissidents from Egypt, Somalia, Algeria, etc.

In the short term, these camps are providing manpower for the separatist movement in Kashmir and the fight against the Northern Alliance. In the long-term, these camps intend to export the Taliban-model of Islamic statehood as far afield as Central Asia, the Middle East, North and West Africa and the Philippines, besides the Balkans and Caucasus. The IMU, which poses a serious threat to stability in the region, has been involved in terrorist bombings and clashes with security forces inside Uzbekistan and even made an attempt on Mr Karimov's life.

China is generally reluctant to admit publicly the existence of a strong separatist movement in Xinjiang, but President Jiang Zemin has had to admit that the trouble-makers were getting training and sustenance abroad. The Uighur separatists have in the past indulged in widespread rioting in Baren, near Kshgar, and Yining. The Uighur Chairman of the Autonomous Region has revealed that the Party of Allah, a fundamentalist outfit fighting for independence, is behind the trouble.

Beijing insists that these separatists are being trained mainly in Afghanistan and using heroin to fund their activities. The Taliban, as usual, denies any hand in all this. China is now trying to increase its presence in Afghanistan through offers of collaboration in economic and infrastructure projects to win over the Taliban. Several top ranking Chinese leaders have visited the Central Asian states in recent months. Beijing is now willing to join efforts to forge regional security and combat the terrorist menace.

Copyright © 2000 *The Pioneer*

Copyright © 2003 Paul Wolf

Copyright © 2003 *The Straits Times*

Copyright © 2003 *The Moscow Times*

Copyright © 2003 *The People's Daily Online*

Copyright © 2003 *The Voice of America*

Copyright © 2003 *Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting News Network*

Copyright © 2001 *Foreign Policy in Focus*

Copyright © 2001 *Janes Terrorism and Security Monitor*

Copyright © 2001 *The Wall Street Journal*

Copyright © 2000 *The Pioneer*

Reprinted for Fair Use Only.