

## THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: OPPORTUNITIES FOR RUSSIA

Maxim STARCHAK

*Chairman of the Youth Department Advisory Board,  
Russian Association of Political Science  
(Moscow, Russia)*

### *Introduction*

The striving of the People's Republic of China (PRC) for leadership is being increasingly manifested within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which plays an important role on the world political arena. After transformation of the Shanghai Six into a regional organization, China, with the aim of further increasing its political and economic influence in the region, was able to insist on the organization's secretariat being located in Beijing.

In order to achieve its goals, the PRC is taking the following steps within the framework of the SCO:

- strengthening trade relations with the Central Asian states granting them multi-billion loans;
- exerting active efforts to gain a stronger foothold in the oil and gas fields of Central Asia;

- skillfully using the SCO in the fight against separatism in the XUAR;
- actively preventing the spread of U.S. influence in Central Asia;
- implementing educational programs for the young people of the Central Asian countries.

By continuing to reinforce its position in the region and in the SCO, China is trying to acquire the status of the organization's informal leader.<sup>1</sup>

However, despite China's activity, Russia, which is pursuing its own national interests in the region engendered by the historical close ties that have developed with the Central Asian countries, also has every opportunity to significantly increase its influence in the SCO.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example: K. Syroezhkin, "China in Central Asia: From Trade to Strategic Partnership," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (45), 2007, p. 49.

## Security Problems— Opportunities for Russia

The SCO, which is heir to the Shanghai Five (formed in 1996 to resolve the border disputes among China, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan), was created in mid-2001. The organization declared fighting the “three evils”—terrorism, separatism, and extremism—to be its main political priority.

However, apart from drawing up various proposals and recommendations, gathering and analyzing information, and holding regular anti-terrorist exercises, the activity of the SCO and Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), which began functioning in 2004, has not yielded any specific results so far. The organization’s member states have no internal mechanisms for responding to terrorist group assaults or separatist demonstrations, there are no unified headquarters for coordinating joint action, and no spheres of responsibility have been determined.

By the end of its chairmanship in the SCO (2009), Russia had succeeded within the framework of RATS in drawing up a Convention against Terrorism, an Agreement on Training Staff for Anti-Terrorist Formations, and a Cooperation Program for 2010-2012. The organization’s participants expressed the desire to continue holding joint anti-terrorist exercises, which fully meets Russia’s interests (of all the SCO countries, it has the most experience in fighting terrorism and training staff).

So this was the first time the member states confirmed the need to take real steps to resolve the tasks set by the Charter and other fundamental documents of the SCO.

Within the framework of the SCO, Russia has not only succeeded in drawing China into resolving the security problems in Central Asia, but also in inclining it toward military-political cooperation, which is helping to make Beijing’s policy and interests regarding an increase in its influence in Central Asia more predictable.

However, Russia has not yet been able to increase its military cooperation with Beijing within the framework of the SCO. In 2007, during the SCO conference of defense ministers, Anatoli Serdiukov (Russia’s defense minister) came forward with an initiative to prepare a general document for the next conference on the main vectors of military cooperation within the organization.<sup>2</sup> And although Mr. Serdiukov’s proposal did not pass, during the sitting of the Council of SCO Heads of State held in October 2009, Russia and China signed an agreement, according to which the sides pledged to inform each other of their plans to launch ballistic missiles.

Russia should pay more attention to the conflict potential that exists in the SCO member states, as well as in the organization’s future member states. It is precisely the development of cooperation in security and conflict settlement that could give Russia the opportunity to preserve and strengthen its leadership in the SCO.

As for China, it is not participating in world politics and is not engaged in resolving global security issues or conflict settlement (apart from the Korean question). The PRC is pursuing an extremely cautious and what is believed to be balanced policy: the country is not participating either in nuclear disarmament, or in settling Middle Eastern and other conflicts (including regional), or in events relating to the crisis in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus. Moreover, China is not pursuing any security policy, and its presence in the conflict regions is related exclusively to realizing its own economic interests.

Russia, on the other hand, which is actively involved in global security, has its own view on how to resolve the existing problems and conflicts, which could strengthen its position in the SCO.

---

<sup>2</sup> See: *O vizite ministra oborony Rossii A.E. Serdiukova v Kirgiziiu*, Press Release, 27 June, 2007, Russian Embassy in the Kyrgyz Republic, available at [[http://www.kyrgyz.mid.ru/press\\_rel/07\\_03.html](http://www.kyrgyz.mid.ru/press_rel/07_03.html)].

The SCO summit in Ekaterinburg, at which a meeting was held between Dmitri Medvedev and the leaders of Pakistan and Afghanistan, played an important role in resolving the existing disputes and conflicts. Russia's mediation gave Hamid Karzai and Asif Ali Zardari (who accuse each other of aiding and abetting terrorists and being unable to control the territory of their states) the opportunity to discuss their further relations. The trilateral meeting among the presidents of Russia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan held at the SCO summit served as confirmation of Moscow's willingness to resolve the Afghan problem and develop relations with Pakistan, which is suffering from onslaughts by Taliban militants.

According to Dmitry Medvedev, "so-called Afpak is precisely what everyone participating in the talks and other measures relating to Afghanistan should be discussing today."<sup>3</sup> This statement underlined the fact that Russia, in contrast to the U.S., understands that the Afghan problem cannot be resolved without settling the situation in several provinces of Pakistan, which requires adopting immediate measures to destroy the terrorist camps existing in the territory of this country.

According to President Dmitry Medvedev, Russia is willing to help the coalition countries both at the political level and in implementing joint trilateral economic projects<sup>4</sup> (including in the form of relevant transit support measures). So Russia is potentially willing to draw the U.S. into cooperation with the SCO in the Afghan question.

Former president of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, came to Kazan in May of 2010, and it is highly unlikely that the Russian leadership missed this opportunity to meet with him. It goes without saying that Moscow had every intention of using Islamabad to increase its role in Afghanistan.

Delegations of leaders of the Pashtoon tribes began visiting Russia, and Russia's top statesmen made more frequent trips to Kabul. Moreover, in May 2009, a Russian-Afghan Forum was held in Moscow.

In 2002, the SCO deemed it expedient to create an anti-drug security system (along the perimeter of the Afghan border) designed to eliminate the threats coming from Afghanistan.

In 2004, an Agreement on Cooperation in the Fight against the Illicit Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Their Precursors was signed at the Tashkent SCO summit. A year later, a protocol was signed on creating a SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group for the purpose of drawing up proposals and recommendations for carrying out cooperation, primarily in border control, and combating drug trafficking. However, the signed agreements have not yet been executed.

In order to step up SCO activity in the anti-drug vector, in 2007 former Russian president Vladimir Putin suggested adding "financial security belts" to the existing "security belts" and involving the financial monitoring services of the SCO member states in these efforts. In 2009, at the Council of Heads of Government, he took his proposal further by stating the need to "raise the efficiency of SCO RATS and begin carrying out preventive measures aimed at fighting the laundering of revenue obtained by criminal means."<sup>5</sup>

This active political position on Russia's part was instrumental in holding an international conference on Afghanistan within the framework of the SCO on 27 March, 2009 in Moscow.

A joint action plan for the SCO member states and Afghanistan on fighting terrorism, the illicit circulation of drugs, and organized crime (in the Afghan vector) was adopted at the conference. It was decided to hold a conference of senior officials of anti-drug structures, as well as draw up corresponding documents and agreements for strengthening cooperation in this area. The plan also envisaged the

---

<sup>3</sup> See: Press conference on the Results of the Sitting of the Council of Heads of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Portal of the President of Russia, 16 June, 2009, Ekaterinburg, available at [<http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4465>].

<sup>4</sup> See: *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> See: V. Putin takes part in a sitting of the Council of Heads of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Website on the Russian Federation Government Chairman V.V. Putin, 14 October, 2009, available at [<http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/4465>].

possibility of creating anti-drug (regional) and specialized SCO centers for training specialists in drug fighting, as well as the need to cooperate with the CSTO and involve Turkmenistan and Afghanistan.

Moreover, the SCO should focus attention on fortifying the Tajik-Afghan and Uzbek-Afghan borders, as well as on drawing up an assistance program for the border and customs services of the organization's member states aimed at improving their technical equipment and material security.

In October 2009, a protocol was signed at the Council of SCO Heads of State on cooperation in training and raising the qualifications of customs agency officials. It should be noted that through the CSTO and its experience, Russia can strengthen its leadership in the anti-drug and customs sphere of cooperation by opening a special training center within the framework of the SCO.

## Enlargement of the SCO— Opportunities for Russia

The enlargement of the SCO has long been on the agenda despite the temporary moratorium introduced in 2006. At the Ekaterinburg summit, the head of the chairing state said that drawing up the document for welcoming new countries into the organization would be accelerated.

In 2004, a document entitled Provisions on the Status of Observer in the SCO was signed. The same year, Mongolia joined the SCO as an observer, and in 2006, a corresponding request from Belarus was submitted. At the SCO summit in Ekaterinburg, Belarus and Sri-Lanka were granted the status of the organization's partners. So it can be concluded that drawing up Provisions on Permanent Representatives of the SCO Participating States is far from perfunctory; if not next year, in two years the organization's ranks could well be replenished.

It is presumed that two or three countries could become SCO members. It should be kept in mind that Mongolia, Iran, India, and Pakistan are SCO observers. Mongolia acquired the status of observer in 2004 and the other three became observers in 2005. So who can become members of the SCO and what role will they play in the organization?

Mongolia, for example, is only interested in being an observer (the country became the first member of the SCO Club of Observers) and it has never had any intention of becoming a full-fledged SCO member. Mongolia is striving to develop partner relations with Russia, but it does not want to fully depend on China, which, in its opinion, is playing a dominant role in the SCO. Moreover, Ulan-Bator is establishing close ties with the U.S., Japan, and the EU, and joining the SCO might interfere with this process.<sup>6</sup>

As for India, as Russia's strategic partner in the Asian region, it could become its key ally in the SCO, as well as one of the important links in forming a unified Eurasian energy market. But whereas 3-4 years ago, India was anxious to become a full member of the organization, this is no longer such an appealing prospect since the country has not established any cooperation with the SCO member states, apart from Russia, and does not share the anti-American policy they pursue. New Delhi is much more interested in developing broad cooperation directly with Russia than in joining blocs that have aims India finds ambiguous.

It should be noted that Pakistan declared its desire to join the SCO as an observer earlier than India; and the same is happening now. Islamabad was the first to say it wanted to become a full-fledged member of the SCO, which means that India will most likely want to keep up with its neighbor. Islam-

---

<sup>6</sup> See: T. Tserendorj, "Mongolia i regionalnye sistemy bezopasnosti," in: *Kontseptsii i podkhody k regionalnoi bezopasnosti: opyt, problemy i perspektivy vzaimodeystiia v Tsentralnoi Azii*, Documents of the 4th Annual Almaty Conference (7 June, 2006), Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2006, pp. 212-228.

abad's request<sup>7</sup> should help Moscow to incline India to joining the SCO. It is very possible that this is the reason for Russia stepping up its policy toward Afghanistan, which meets New Delhi's interests. Moreover, Russia has repeatedly stated that it will only consent to Pakistan becoming a member of the SCO if India also joins the organization.

Pakistan's striving to join the SCO significantly increased after the American missile strikes in border areas with Afghanistan; Islamabad believed that joining the organization would protect Pakistan from any unwarranted attacks by the U.S.

If Russia can persuade India to join the SCO (Pakistan will most likely also immediately become a member), it will be able to initiate a discussion of non-dissemination of WMD in the region and draw China into this process at the same time, which fully meets the Kremlin's interests.

Moreover, if India and Pakistan join the SCO, the organization will have to resolve the Kashmir conflict. It should be noted that since 2007 India and Pakistan have been gradually returning to a peaceful dialog about the disputed territories in Kashmir and have also revived economic cooperation (particularly in building a gas pipeline from Iran).

Russia has experience in organizing Indo-Pakistani talks; thanks to Moscow's efforts, a meeting between the heads of India and Pakistan was held for the first time after the November terrorist acts in Mumbai (former Bombay). It was in Russia that the sides agreed on a meeting of foreign ministers, but it was far from easy to revive contacts between the two countries, since New Delhi thought that the terrorist acts were organized by members of the Pakistani terrorist organization Lashkar-e-Taiba.

So joining the SCO will make it possible for Pakistan and India to resolve the Kashmir problem, and it will also help to turn the organization into a force of world significance, in which Russia will play a much more prominent role.

Iran was the second country to apply for membership in the SCO; President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been attending all the SCO summits since 2006 and lobbying in every way for his country's membership in this organization.

Iran's membership in the SCO could create several problems, one of which is related to the country's nuclear program. Iran will only have the opportunity to join the SCO if Moscow succeeds in convincing Tehran to make "nuclear" concessions. Iran's membership in the SCO could also be hindered by its tight policy in division of the Caspian, which is explained by its striving to possess oil resources beyond the boundaries of its territory. Moreover, Iran's membership in the SCO could reduce to naught the efforts aimed at normalizing relations between Russia and the U.S. and ultimately give the organization an anti-Western proclivity.

It is possible that some problems can be resolved by including the U.S., as well as its allies and partners (Turkey, South Korea, or Japan), in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group.

If Japan joins the Contact Group, this might prevent the Central Asian states from being drawn into any alliances (for example, the Central Asia + Japan Forum) in the SCO expanse which exclude the participation of Russia and China.<sup>8</sup>

With Russia's active assistance, the SCO could well become a structure that could assume responsibility for the Iranian nuclear program and convince Tehran to cooperate with the IAEA. Moreover, the SCO expanse could be an additional lever for Russia in the Caspian talks.

Iran's membership in the SCO could in the long term become a restraining factor in China's expansion in the Eurasian expanse, as well as give Russia the opportunity to realize its idea of creating a "gas OPEC."

---

<sup>7</sup> President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf submitted an application for Pakistan's permanent membership to the SCO secretariat during his visit to China in February 2006.

<sup>8</sup> See: K.L. Syroezhkin, *Problemy sovremennogo Kitaia i bezopasnost v Tsentralnoi Azii: Monografiia*, Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2006, p. 227.

Russia is also interested in enlargement of the SCO since full-fledged membership of any of its observers will promote development of the Energy Club project. Moreover, enlargement of the SCO will help to intensify the fight against terrorism and illicit drug circulation.

## SCO-NATO Rivalry

It is popular belief that the SCO is an anti-Western and anti-American organization, which is confirmed by the following arguments:

1. The SCO is an alliance among Russia, China, and non-democratic states which regularly carry out military exercises.
2. The U.S. has supposedly been denied the status of observer.
3. Iran, which is a threat to international security, is one of the SCO observers.
4. The SCO adopted the Astana Declaration calling on the U.S. to set the deadline for withdrawing American bases from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

It cannot be denied that in 2005, the SCO countries were indeed worried about the U.S. gaining a stronger foothold in the CA region and using its military bases to try and replace the existing authoritative regimes with more democratic and liberal (and, naturally, pro-American) ones.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Russia, which is still the leading partner of the CA countries, tried to prevent any increase in their military cooperation with the U.S.

In June 2009, at the SCO summit in Ekaterinburg, Dmitry Medvedev received Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who informed him that he intended to ask Kurmanbek Bakiev (then president of Kyrgyzstan) not to insist on the decision declared in Moscow at the beginning of the year to shut down the American military base at Manas in Bishkek. At the subsequent meeting between Dmitry Medvedev and Kurmanbek Bakiev, an agreement was reached on joint anti-terrorist activity that envisaged in particular ensuring the transit of cargo for the international forces in Afghanistan. An agreement was also reached on turning the NATO military base in Kyrgyzstan into a Transit Shipment Center. So, thanks to the SCO, Russia had the opportunity to reduce the presence and role of the U.S. in the CA region.

Resolution of the above problems is extremely urgent since the NATO community believes that “establishing a formal dialog with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization might help strengthen NATO’s role in Central Asia.”<sup>10</sup>

Cooperation among NATO, the U.S., and the SCO can only be realized in fighting terrorism and drugs in Afghanistan. And this does not require granting the U.S. any kind of official status; it is entirely sufficient to create a SCO-NATO Council or include the alliance in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group.

## Economic Cooperation Opportunities in the SCO

According to SCO General Secretary Bolat Nurgaliev, “the SCO was initially conceived as a structure capable of efficiently ensuring security; now, however, the emphasis is being increasingly

---

<sup>9</sup> See: E. Viazgina, *Izmenenie otnosheniia Rossii i Kitaia k Tsentralnoi Azii i razvitie sotrudnichestva v ramkakh SHOS*, Information-Analytical Center for the Study of the Sociopolitical Processes in the Post-Soviet Expanse at Moscow State University, 7 August, 2007, available at [www.ia-centr.ru].

<sup>10</sup> R. Weitz, “Renewing Central Asian Partnerships,” *NATO Review*, Issue 3, Autumn 2006.

placed on coordinating and intensifying regional integration. It is understood that progress in resolving the socioeconomic problems existing in all the states will guarantee that the security and stability problems in the region are also resolved.”<sup>11</sup>

However, despite the development of various institutions, the signing of agreements, the holding of ministerial meetings, and the existence of 20 specialized structures, in the eight years since the organization was founded real economic cooperation continues to be of a declarative nature. Essentially only two projects for building roads to Central Asia are being implemented and these were begun without the participation of the SCO. Not one of the existing 120 economic programs that cover 11 areas of cooperation have been implemented; and China’s intention to grant a \$900 million commodity loan remains on paper since the mechanisms for its implementation and sphere of application have still not been determined.

Russia resolutely rejects the idea of government financing of the SCO’s economic programs, thus preventing the formation of a Development Fund, the need for which was emphasized in the Declaration adopted in 2005. In order to look for nongovernment investments, Russia put forward an initiative to create a SCO Business Council (BC) and an Interbank Association (IBA). Keeping in mind the growing role of these two structures, at the summit in Ekaterinburg, the heads of the SCO member states suggested using them to minimize the consequences of the crisis and develop economic cooperation.

Russia is still not ready to make government contributions to the development of SCO projects (although it is investing in bilateral projects), which prevents activation of the economic component of SCO activity. But it should be noted that the Russian side is the main regulator of nongovernment investments for SCO projects. At the meeting of the heads of the organization’s member states held in October 2009 on the initiative of the Russian side, a decision was made to create a Unified Investment Project Base. According to Chairman of the Board of Vneshekonombank Vladimir Dmitriev, the matter concerns approximately 35 projects totaling \$6 billion, and it is possible that they will be implemented in all the SCO states, whereby monetary operations among them will be done in the national currencies of the organization’s member countries, which will make it possible to put the idea of rejecting payments in dollars into practice.

In order to reinforce its position in the SCO, Russia is taking more active steps to look for (or issue) funds to implement multilateral economic projects, in which it would be expedient to involve China since this could significantly increase the organization’s potential.

At the summit in Ekaterinburg, China expressed its willingness to independently grant \$10 billion to multilateral cooperation with the SCO Central Asian countries. At present, the PRC is cooperating with Central Asia in the bilateral format.

Russia should make greater effort to advance projects in the SCO in the spheres that interest it, for example, in the ore mining industry. Russia needs hundreds of thousands tons of lead a year, but it does not have its own deposits, whereas Central Asia does. Tens of millions of dollars are needed to resolve this problem; according to geochemist S.A. Vorobiev, these are investments that Russian cannot offer by itself.<sup>12</sup> Russia can only look for them within the framework of multilateral cooperation and primarily within the SCO. The energy industry is another vitally important sphere for Russia.

In 2006, former Russian president Vladimir Putin proposed creating an Energy Club within the framework of the SCO with the participation of oil and gas exporters and importers, which was to act as a mechanism for coordinating policy in the extraction, production, transportation, and distribution

---

<sup>11</sup> See: “Organizatsionnoe stanovlenie SHOS proizoshlo,” *Azia-Strategia*, 3 April, 2007, available at [[http://www.asiastrategy.ru/?tm&mat\\_id=492&PHPSESSID=f5da72f00d421c981680781da6cacf32](http://www.asiastrategy.ru/?tm&mat_id=492&PHPSESSID=f5da72f00d421c981680781da6cacf32)].

<sup>12</sup> See: *Parliamentary Component of Multilateral Cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. From the records of 26 February, 2006*, Official website of the Federation Council of the Russian Federal Assembly, available at [<http://council.gov.ru/files/journalsf/item/20070725100417.pdf>].

of resources, as well as in the development of infrastructure in the organization's member states and observers.

The idea of creating an Energy Club was based on the development of trilateral energy diplomacy among Moscow, Astana, and Ashgabad. Despite the fact that Turkmenistan is neither a member of the SCO nor its observer, signing an agreement on building a Caspian gas pipeline cannot help but affect the organization's interests. So in order to successfully implement the above-mentioned project, Turkmenistan must join the partnership within the framework of the SCO.

## Opportunities in the Humanitarian Sphere

The SCO Charter adopted in 2001, which is the organization's fundamental document, sets forth that cooperation in the humanitarian sphere is one of its priority tasks. But the first multilateral cooperation programs in various humanitarian spheres were not adopted until 2005. As for Russia, its activity in the humanitarian sphere is limited to holding an annual Rose of the World festival within the framework of the SCO, but this is not enough to make the organization attractive to the younger generation.

In October 2009, Vladimir Putin suggested organizing an Intersession Song Contest within the framework of the SCO. Media support in holding this major event could help Russia to become a driving force behind contemporary cultural life in the SCO region.

Vladimir Putin's proposal to create a SCO university, the model for which is being built on the network principle with a single program consisting of several disciplines, could help to strengthen Russia's position in education.<sup>13</sup>

Study courses will be offered at several higher education institutions of the SCO member states and will be available to students from all the organization's states. A mandatory prerequisite will be courses in both official languages of the SCO (Russian and Chinese), whereby students will have the opportunity to participate in the study program at different universities, for example, take part of it at an educational institution in their own country, and part at another educational institution in one of the project's member states.<sup>14</sup>

In this respect, it should be noted that Central Asian students know Russian (to one extent or another) from childhood, so Russian higher educational institutions will be in higher demand.

Moreover, Russia has the opportunity to supervise the training of employees for different SCO structures. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested creating a working group within the framework of the organization for developing the main approaches and principles of staffing the SCO's permanent structures.

A SCO Youth Council was created in May 2009 in Ekaterinburg to enhance cooperation among the young people of the organization's countries in education, culture, and sports. As of the present, the organizers of the SCO Youth Council have developed projects relating to job-finding, student exchanges, and holding language teacher conferences and contemporary music festivals in the organization's countries. China has proposed a project that envisages organizing youth camps in the SCO member states.

Through its educational expanse and the Russian language, Russia has every opportunity to retain its influence on the future generation of the SCO countries; it can propose projects for professional

---

<sup>13</sup> Study courses will initially be offered in five disciplines: regional studies, information technology, ecology, nano technology, and energy.

<sup>14</sup> See: A.V. Lukin, "SHOS: itogi rossiiskogo predsdatelstva," *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 9, 2009.



schools, short-term retraining courses, and youth educational camps. The leading Russian higher educational institutions could organize various contests that require that their participants have diverse knowledge in the history, politics, and economy of the SCO member states.

The CA countries' public health sphere, which is characterized by underdeveloped hospital care, an acute shortage of qualified personnel, and the impossibility of rendering medical assistance to people living in remote districts, is in need of extensive support from the SCO. In order to resolve health care problems, Russian representatives of the Business Council put forward an initiative to form mobile groups of medical specialists from Russia. However, their activity in the CA countries is still unorganized and inconsistent. So all the SCO member states need to pool their efforts in order to resolve the problems existing in the public health system in the CA countries.

The Russian initiative to create a Shanghai Health Organization (SHO) could become an analogue of the WHO and unite the efforts of the SCO countries in implementing programs to raise the quality of medical assistance. Moreover, the SHO could become a tool for advancing Russian medical goods and services, primarily in China.

Russia can also increase its influence in the SCO by cooperating in disaster prevention; the CA region is periodically subjected to landslides, earthquakes, drought, and freezing temperatures, while local specialists from the Emergency Ministry services who do not have the proper professional training and experience cannot adequately and rapidly respond to the challenges of natural disasters.

Despite the fact that the first comprehensive exercises to eliminate the consequences of emergencies were carried out by the Ministry of Civil Administration of the PRC, Russia succeeded in lobbying a decision to open a SCO Joint Disaster Response Center in Moscow. According to Head of the Russian Emergencies Ministry's International Department Yuri Brazhnikov, "the Center will be responsible for coordinating the activity of the SCO countries in emergencies and joint efforts in humanitarian response."<sup>15</sup>

In 2009, an expert group was created on Russia's initiative within the framework of the SCO for developing conceptual approaches to resolving migration problems. As Russian Special Representative in the SCO Leonid Moiseev said, "the SCO is dealing with the migration problem in a pioneer way; we simply sensed the problem that would inevitably arise in the relations among the organization's countries on time."<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that migrants from the SCO countries mainly go to Russia. Therefore, Russia can be a driving force behind the formation of a migration regulation mechanism and the establishment of employment centers in its territory.

Unfortunately, the residents of the SCO member countries are very poorly informed about the organization's current activity (not to mention the population of the observer countries), so awareness campaigns that make extensive use of the media and Internet are needed to further strengthen the common humanitarian expanse.

The efficiency of the SCO's official website should also be raised; it should post not only official news bulletins, but also informational and analytical information in all the languages of the SCO member states and observers (along the lines of the U.N. and NATO websites).

Russia has succeeded in setting up a Russian-language Internet portal [[www.infoshos.ru](http://www.infoshos.ru)] devoted to SCO activity and the problems of its member states and observers. The portal provides free access to articles in Russian, Chinese, and English published in the InfoSCO magazine, thus performing a vital role in informing the population, expert community, and political circles of the CA region and the whole world.

---

<sup>15</sup> See: "Emergency Response Centers within the Framework of the SCO Will Open in Moscow and Astana," InfoSCO Information Agency, 18 October, 2009, available at [<http://infoshos.ru/ru/?idn=4996>].

<sup>16</sup> See: "The SCO Has Already Occupied Its Place in World Architectonics," InfoSCO Information Agency, 23 April, 2009, available at [<http://www.infoshos.ru/ru/?idn=4490>].

## Conclusion

The SCO is increasingly becoming an unofficial forum for discussing the most important problems of Eurasian security. At the security forum of the Council of Euro-Atlantic Partnership held in Astana, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said that he thinks the SCO is very interesting in terms of ensuring security throughout the region.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, thanks to Russia, the SCO has begun to discuss security issues that do not relate directly to the organization's member states: the DPRK nuclear program, the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, and normalization of relations between Islamabad and Kabul, as well as between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Intensification of the SCO's role in ensuring comprehensive security in the Eurasian expanse is extremely important since there is no other organization in this region to assume responsibility for resolving the numerous problems that exist there. Today, the U.N. is not capable of resolving the problems of all the world's regions. Nor is the U.N. playing a leading role in settlement of the Afghan question. Russia is becoming the main mediator in the conflict settlement.

In the struggle against terrorism and drug trafficking within the framework of the SCO, Russia should continue active military cooperation with China, which envisages enhancing the consultation mechanism between the two countries.

In order to prevent duplication of the activity of the CSTO, the SCO should engage in resolving the wide range of security problems existing in the states bordering on the organization's member countries. The CSTO, in turn, should engage as before in purely Central Asian security problems existing close to the region's borders.

The future development of the SCO is closely related to the organization's enlargement; new members might create new problems related primarily to security. As for Russia, enlargement of the SCO will make it possible for it to increase its role in the organization and reduce China's activity.

The U.S., which is showing an interest in the SCO's activity, regards its inclusion as an observer as an opportunity to reduce the organization's role and strengthen control over the strategic Russia-China alliance.

In this way, the SCO's cooperation with the U.S. and NATO should be built on the basis of mutual interests. Inclusion of the U.S. or NATO in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group or in a separate SCO-NATO/U.S. Council should activate cooperation, accelerate settlement of the Afghan problem, and raise Russia's role.

In order to have the opportunity to control China's economic strivings in Central Asia, Russia should more actively propose its own economic projects in the spheres it is most interested in. Investment in multilateral economic projects by means of the BC and IBA will help to reduce China's bilateral activity in the region and involve it in making use of the SCO's potential.

Russia is functioning quite successfully in the humanitarian sphere and should continue to develop new programs in education and culture, as well as in the framework of the SCO University and SCO Youth Council, in order to further increase its influence. One of the important strategic tasks in the sphere of humanitarian cooperation is the need to create a grant fund, the financial support of which could be assumed by the SCO Business Council itself.

So, in face of the changes going on in the world, various regional and interregional associations and groups are forming that are striving to minimize the negative impact of the global economy and U.S. policy.

---

<sup>17</sup> See: "Gensek NATO: SHOS interesnaia organizatsiia v plane obespecheniia bezopasnosti v regione," InfoSCO Information Agency, 26 June, 2009, available at [<http://www.infoshos.ru/ru/?idn=4449>].

In light of the regionalization processes going on in the world and distribution of spheres of responsibility, the creation and activity of the SCO is the answer to the challenges of globalization. Russia should keep on the ball, particularly since the SCO is offering it a good opportunity to control developments of events in the region, which it should in no way miss.

---