

Putin in Beijing: Russia, China Ally To Thwart Obama's War Policy

by William Jones

June 9—The state visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Beijing June 4-7, which concluded with a summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on June 7, was a most significant development in preventing the outbreak of general war as a result of the policies of the Obama Administration.

The imminent danger is from the drumbeat for military intervention against Syria, led by Obama hatchet-person Susan Rice, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. It is solely the obstacles placed by Russia and China in the way of such military action that have prevented that war from occurring. But also in the Asia-Pacific region, Obama's "Asia pivot" has helped to fuel tensions between China and some of its neighbors, especially the Philippines, where wildman President Benigno Aquino is eager to give China its "comeuppance," with the backing of the United States.

Panetta's Shangri-La Monologue

The U.S. "Asian pivot," now euphemistically renamed "rebalancing toward Asia" so as to appear less threatening, was carried a step further with the visit of Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to Asia. Speaking on July 2 to the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Panetta announced that the U.S. plans to deploy 60% of its fleet to the Asia-Pacific region, instead of the usual 50-50 division between the Atlantic and the Pacific fleets—a significant upgrading of the U.S. military presence in the region.

The Shangri-La Dialogue, which brings together defense officials from the nations of East and Southeast Asia as well as from the United States, was attended by China's defense minister last year. This year, evidently fearing that the disputes in the South China Sea would be made into the primary focus of attention, in which China would be lambasted from all sides, Beijing downgraded the level of its delegation. As the Chinese

suspected, the South China Sea dispute did play an inordinate role in this year's "dialogue."

Panetta further announced that the U.S. was strengthening its traditional alliances in the region, with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, and reaching out to others. After Singapore, he visited Vietnam, India, and Afghanistan, with Vietnam and India on his target list of new possible "strategic partners." While both of these have land or maritime border disputes with China and are eager to have a good relationship with the United States, both would be loath to become too close to Washington militarily. Vietnam still gets flak for being a "communist" country, and is often the target of the U.S.-based human rights lobby. India has a stubbornly independent streak and has always been intent on maintaining good working relations with its great neighbor to the north. But the direction in which U.S. policy is tending is clear: creating a ring around China.

Russia-China Partnership

President Putin's choice of Beijing for his first state visit after his election was a clear signal of the importance of the relationship. Coinciding with the beginning of the SCO summit, it provided an opportunity for the heads of state of the two countries to enhance the role of the SCO in the region. Putin underlined its importance in an article for China's *People's Daily* published on June 5. The closer collaboration between the two countries can help propel the SCO toward a more influential global role.

Speaking at the press conference at the conclusion of his meeting with President Hu Jintao on June 4, Putin said: "China is the strategic partner of the Russian Federation. In all spheres, our relationship is based on mutual benefit and with the highest level of trust and openness. In the political sphere, we operate on the highest level of mutual trust, showing each other firm



Russian Presidential Press Service

President Vladimir Putin and President Hu Jintao at a concert during the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in Beijing on June 5.

support on key issues affecting the vital interests of the two countries and the two peoples.”

That “firm support” was clearly evident in their efforts to prevent military intervention in Syria.

Both leaders stressed that they were taking their relationship to a higher level, and that they would be working within the international organizations to support each other’s interests and to maintain world peace and stability. “Taking into account the complex and rapidly changing international and regional situation,” President Hu told reporters, “our two countries will pay special attention to cooperation within the UN, SCO, BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa], and G20, and will uphold the objectives and principles stated in the UN Charter, and basic norms governing international relations, to promote solidarity and cooperation between countries with emerging economies and developing countries in order to promote a more equitable and rational development of the international political and economic order.”

The two leaders also committed to enhancing military cooperation. This Spring saw the first joint China-

Russia maneuvers to be conducted outside the auspices of the SCO, in the region of the Yellow Sea. While Obama’s “ring around Asia” is aimed at recruiting China’s neighbors, the close Russian-China military cooperation assures China that it is not alone in the region.

The Joint Statement signed by the two leaders on June 5 delineates the new thrust of the relationship. There is an extensive expansion of trade and investment, with the intention of bringing bilateral trade up to \$100 billion in 2015, and \$200 billion in 2020, from the present \$80 billion. Seventeen agreements were signed in key areas such as energy, industry, banking, aviation, and innovation technology. The two great powers are intent on increasing the export of high-technology products from Russia, whereas the present exports are largely confined to energy. Russia will increase its involvement in the development of the Chinese nuclear industry, and the two sides will continue their close cooperation in space.

President Putin also welcomed Chinese investment in the development program of Russia’s Far East, indicating that it would be more closely intertwined with China’s development of its northeastern region, bordering on Russia. This will include a significant upgrading of railroad links on both sides of the border. Russia’s Minister of Railroads, Vladimir Yakunin, was a member of Putin’s delegation.

The Joint Statement also underlined the need for enhancing the SCO as a force for peace and stability in the region. The two leaders called for regular consultations of SCO members on important regional issues, in particular, Afghanistan after the draw-down of U.S. troops there. They urged a diplomatic solution to the dispute with Iran, and reiterated their opposition to military intervention in Syria, and they called for a revival of the six-party talks over the North Korean nuclear program.

The statement called for creating a new “architecture of defense and stable development” in the region, and urged the SCO to begin a dialogue with other regional organizations, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The SCO Summit

All the leaders of the SCO member states attended the summit: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, plus high-level representatives from the observer nations: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, and Indian Minister of External Affairs S.M. Krishna. Afghan President Hamid Karzai was there as a special guest.

The situation in Afghanistan received a lot of attention, with the SCO vowing to play a major role in the reconstruction of that country. There is also a great deal of concern about Afghanistan falling into anarchy with the draw-down of U.S. troops. While the SCO has not been prepared so far to play any role in maintaining security in Afghanistan, it does have a certain capability that might be brought to bear if need be.

There was a great focus at the summit on the global economic situation, and a commitment to increase the economic role of the SCO. For that purpose, the establishment of an SCO development bank was again proposed and is expected to move forward. President Hu

promised a loan of \$10 billion for the purpose of enhancing SCO cooperation.

In a “Declaration on Building a Region with Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity,” the leaders stated their opposition to all acts of violence inside Syria, and called for a “broad-based dialogue that respects Syria’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity.” It rejected any use of force against SCO observer nation Iran, and underscored the willingness of the SCO countries to aid Afghanistan in its reconstruction efforts, pledging to consider giving Afghanistan observer status in the organization. The statement also opposed “unilateral” missile-defense projects.

Although the Western media is focusing solely on the military aspects of the SCO, in an attempt to beat the drums about creation of an “Asian NATO,” the SCO is becoming a major force in foiling the war plans of President Obama and his British controllers. But as the U.S. prepares this month to conduct major military maneuvers in the Pacific, involving, for the first time, almost every maritime Asian-Pacific country except China, it is clear that more provocations are on the way.

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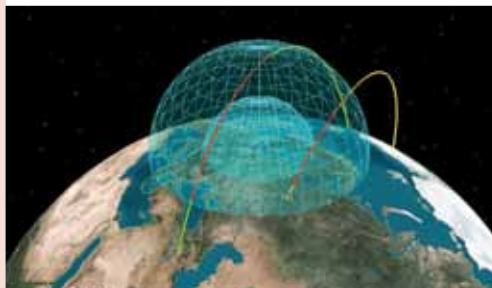
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