

SCO Summit Revives Model of 'Eurasian Land-Bridge'

by William Jones

On the occasion of its fifth anniversary, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held its annual summit meeting in the city of its founding, Shanghai, China. Lasting three days, June 14-16, the meeting brought together not only the heads of state of the member nations of the SCO, but also the four observer nations, including India, Pakistan, Iran, and Mongolia, representing the overwhelming majority of the world's population. Also present were representatives of the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. A special invitation had been extended to Afghanistan's president, Hamid Karzai, who was also in attendance.

The spirit of cooperation exuded at the summit stands in stark contrast to the war-mongering policies of the Cheney-Rumsfeld Administration, which has already perpetrated a destabilization of Iraq, and is now on the warpath against Iran. The Cheneyacs have not at all been happy about the SCO summit, which was attended by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whom they have placed next in line on their "regime change" target list. Rumsfeld growled publicly about the attendance of the Iranian President at the Summit, because one of the organization's goals is to fight terrorism, and Rumsfeld considered the Iranian President a supporter of terrorism.

The Eurasian Land-Bridge Revisited

The SCO had been founded as the Shanghai Five, which comprised Russia, China, and three Central Asian nations, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (later expanding membership to Uzbekistan), and its prime purpose was to fight terrorism and assist in preserving peace and stability in the volatile Central Asian region. This remains a major task, and the summit signed ten documents, at least four directly related to such efforts. But the organization has broadened its area of activity considerably, and is beginning to form itself

into a forum for economic development in Eurasia as a whole, converging more and more on the development perspectives laid out by Lyndon LaRouche and Helga Zepp-LaRouche in the 1997 *EIR* publication, "The Eurasian Land-Bridge: The New Silk Road, a Locomotive for Development."

The *EIR* report, which circulated widely in the countries of today's SCO, outlined the need for development of rapid rail transportation systems, serving as 'corridors of development,' around which could be constructed industrial complexes, needed to lift the peoples of the region out of their poverty and devastation. In a comment for a Moscow radio station, which aired on June 15, statesman and economist Lyndon LaRouche reiterated that vision, "The new world economy which must arise, quickly, from the ashes of the present monetary-financial system, must be organized around the conception of Eurasia's leading role in global perspective based on the same kinds of goals for the world at large." (For his full statement, see this issue's editorial.)

The first day of the conference was largely devoted to private meetings and to discussions of the economic issues. The SCO had also brought together the representatives of more than 500 enterprises. On the sidelines of the conference's first day, more than \$2 billion in contracts were inked, including a highway project connecting Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, two high-voltage electricity lines in Tajikistan, a cement plant in Kyrgyzstan, and a hydropower station in Kazakhstan.

In addition, China and the other SCO members are working on 127 joint projects covering the areas of trade, investment, customs, finance, taxation, transportation, energy, agriculture, technology, telecommunications, environment, health, and education. The regional bloc has set up seven specialist panels to study and coordinate action in such fields as customs, transportation, energy, and telecommunications.



Russian Presidential Press and Information Office

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is causing conniptions among Cheney's perpetual war faction, by dramatically expanding its drive for economic cooperation and development. Here, heads of state of the SCO nations, meeting on June 14 in Shanghai, China. From left: Uzbekistan's Islom Karimov, Kyrgyzstan's Kurmanbek Bakiyev, Russia's Vladimir Putin, Tajikistan's Emomali Rakhmonov, China's Hu Jintao, and Kazakstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev.

At the conference, China also committed to providing up to \$900 million in loan guarantees for projects in the SCO region.

The economic dynamic of the SCO cooperation was most clearly outlined by Kazak President Nursultan Nazarbayev in his comments at the open forum of the leaders. Calling for a revival of the "Ancient Silk Road," Nazarbayev underlined the absolute importance of the transportation links for uniting the region and providing economic development. In the words of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the goal is to "transform Central Asia into a dynamic part of the world economy."

More important, although the summit did not broach the question of the imminent blowout of the international financial system, the members did take concrete measures for providing the financing mechanisms for the numerous infrastructural projects they have undertaken. In their comments at the open forum, both Presidents Putin and Nazarbayev noted that the SCO would set up an SCO banking consortium to coordinate financial arrangements among the regional nations. Similarly, they have set up an SCO Business Council to facilitate economic agreements among firms involved in the SCO region.

A New 'Good Neighbor Policy'

The consolidation of the SCO as a regional cooperation organization has also thrown a monkey-wrench into the Cheney-Rumsfeld drive for world empire. Under the mantle of the "Global War on Terror," Rumsfeld had begun setting up military "lily-pads," in the region of Central Asia, ostensi-

bly to deal with the terrorist threat, but in reality as outposts for destabilizing China and Russia. When the Cheney-Rumsfeld crowd started with another of its "color revolutions" in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, as had been done earlier in Ukraine and Georgia, the governments of these Central Asian nations realized that the real goal of the U.S. policy was "regime change" rather than "fighting terrorism." The Uzbeks then asked the United States to close its operations at its airbase in Uzbekistan, while Kyrgyzstan expressed a clear wish for the U.S. Administration to set a date for the withdrawal of the troops stationed on its soil.

While the Cheney-Rumsfeld crowd has been "baring its teeth" to the world, the SCO has established the "Shanghai Spirit," a spirit of openness in which the countries of the region can come to a resolution of any differences they may have, in a spirit of comity and tolerance for their different cultural heritages.

That spirit was in clear evidence

throughout the SCO summit, with numerous cultural events from all the nations interspersed among the business meetings. This contrasted sharply to the straitjacket uniformity which the Bush Administration has been attempting to impose on the world community as a whole. No doubt the jackals of the "clash of civilizations" have reason to howl at the successful summit, which has proven itself a welcome counterpole to the war-mongers of the Rumsfeld-Cheney crowd. The interest of the other nations in the region in the SCO forum, nations which presently are actively involved only as "observers," bears witness to that fact.

At an open session with the other heads of state, Ahmadi-najad said he was "happy to be the first President of Iran to attend an SCO summit." "Our people have lived together for 1,000 years in this region with shared hopes," he said. "The cultural and economic exchanges have continued for centuries and the contacts have deeply penetrated our culture, influencing the art and the architecture of the nations." Cooperation can "prevent interference from other countries in the internal affairs of our nations," he noted. He then proposed that the countries gathered at the SCO meeting agree to hold a conference on energy and energy delivery systems in the region. He offered to host such a conference in Tehran, a proposal which has received a positive response from the other countries.

Although the issue of the Iranian nuclear program was not a topic of discussion for the meeting, the occasion did provide an opportunity for private discussions with both the Chinese and the Russian leaders on that issue. At a press conference

Eurasia: Main Routes and Selected Secondary Routes of the Eurasian Land-Bridge



after a bilateral meeting with the Iranian President, Putin said that Iran's reaction to the six-party proposal offered on the nuclear issue had been positive, and that Iran was willing to begin talks around that proposal.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has definitely established itself as a major institution of stability and development in the area, and it is determined to establish a "new norm of international relations." That norm would be based on the "Shanghai Spirit," featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for multi-civilizations, and pursuit of common development.

"The norm is of critical importance to the international community's pursuit of a new and non-confrontational model of international relations, a model that calls for discarding the Cold War mentality and transcending ideological differences," said an SCO declaration signed at the annual summit meeting.

President Putin noted that the SCO countries had agreed to develop a strategic partnership based on "common views." At the same time, he said that the SCO remains open to the outside world, and is not a "private club." He encouraged the SCO to extend its relations to the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as it continues to do with other international organizations. Putin also emphasized the impor-

tance for understanding the cultural diversity of this populous region, and he called for greater efforts in the area of culture and education, including the establishment of an SCO youth association.

In his comments at the forum, President Hu Jintao proposed the formation of a convention featuring lasting "good neighborhood" relations and cooperation within the SCO framework. "We should respect and support the interests of all SCO member countries," Hu said. The members should "enhance coordination and cooperation on international and regional issues," and enter into "timely consultations on measures to cope with major international and regional issues." Hu added, "We hope the international community could respect the social system and road of development independently chosen by SCO member countries and observer countries, respect their internal and external policies of peace, friendship, and cooperation based on their own domestic situation, and create a harmonious and easy environment for their development."

Although this may be the case for the world at large, to which this development should give great hope, there are no doubts now that a number of people are chewing that well-gnawed rug in the office of the U.S. Vice President, and plotting new schemes to destabilize the countries of the region.