

Interactions between Civilizations and their Mutual Assistance

Heartland Expanding, or The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

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The Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which convened in Bishkek in August, 2007, stimulated studies dedicated to the organization's development potential. I think that it is time to back the SCO activities by an adequate modern theory.

Initially, the SCO was established to resolve border disputes between China and four former Soviet Republics. It transpired subsequently that the organization had a much more ranging potential. The idea of creating a substantially stronger formation on the basis of the «Shanghai five» emerged in the Russian Foreign and Defense Ministries in 1998. At that time, I was the head of the Defense Ministry International Military Cooperation Department which worked on the issue jointly with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister G. Karasin. Our endeavors were supported by E. Primakov. Unfortunately, later the project was frozen.

The key ideas underlying the SCO ideology are:

- The unipolar world order is unstable, perilous for mankind, and prone to dictatorship based on military power;
- The global dominance of the liberal market model can result in a global economic imbalance, an intensification of the struggle over natural resources, and the mass extinction due to famine, deceases, and armed conflicts;
- The philosophy of the prosperity limited to the «golden billion» is unacceptable to mankind as it destroys harmony between humans and nature and causes civilizational clashes.

Correspondingly, our proposals were:

- To establish a second pole of global power with the life philosophy and attitude to environment different from those in the West, a pole assigning greater priority to spiritual and moral values, to collectivist tendencies;
- To harmonize the relations between countries and civilizations;
- To create a security system based on a balance of powers and potentials.

The military ministries initiated forming the alliance of the «six» and, subsequently, the SCO when they proposed to consider security issues in a broader context at a meeting in Astana,

Kazakhstan, in 2000. NATO's aggressive politics, the tendency of the US to seek military-technological superiority over other countries, attempts to undermine the missile Defense Treaty and SALT, etc. were identified as the commonly faced threats in a joint statement of the defense ministers of the «five». The economic, informational, and ideological security issues were also examined.

Contrary to S. Huntington's concept of the allegedly inevitable clash of civilizations, the conclusion drawn in the SCO framework was that harmonized interactions between civilizations and their mutual assistance were possible. Already during the consultations, the Russian side proposed to invite India and Iran to the new formation. The Chinese side suggested getting Pakistan involved. Later all the partners agreed to Mongolia's membership in the SCO.

Already at this phase, the contours of an alliance of five non-Western civilizations – Russian, Chinese, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist – began to materialize. Their common features are asserting the priority of collectivism over individualism as well as rejecting the unipolar world structure and the dominance of the monetarist ideology.

Designing the security configuration for the would-be SCO, we proceeded from the concept of the balance of powers both within the organization itself and in East Asia on the whole. This aspect is of key importance to Russia, the Central Asian countries, and the relations in the China-India-Pakistan triangle.

The SCO responsibility and interests zone was demarcated for the first time at the anniversary summit of the organization in 2006. It was stated that the SCO had the potential to play an independent role in Eurasia. I think that it was the SCO potential in the security sphere that made it possible to forge strong links between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the EU, the OSCE, the League of the Arab States, and the ASEAN, as well as to complement its own potential by interacting with the CIS, the CIS Collective Security Treaty (CST) organization, and the Eurasian Economic Community. Within years from now, the SCO has a chance to evolve into a basis of the collective security system in Eurasia and to influence the global security climate.

Even at present, the SCO with its «6+4» format (6 member-countries and 4 countries with the observer status) has enormous economic and human resources. The territories of the SCO countries comprise 3/5 of Eurasia, their populations make 1/4 of the global population or the majority of it if the populations of the observer countries are taken into account. The SCO responsibility zone is extremely rich in natural resources, and its countries have the world's fastest growing economies.

At the same time, the SCO countries face such problems as the recurrent poverty as well as ethnic and religious tensions. In many cases, the philosophy of the SCO elites is focused on achieving high rates of the economic growth rather than those of the economic development. Such orientation emphasizing higher GDP and per capita incomes does not necessarily lead to the development of the countries and peoples, and oftentimes cannot improve the populations' living standards in what concerns culture, science, education, environment, etc.

The SCO was founded as «an organization of a new type» (E. Primakov), its informal prime objectives being to transform the modern world, to make it better and fairer, to arrest the

perilous tendencies in the global development.

The SCO can and must have a security system of its own, distinct from NATO or any other military bloc. The same is true of the need to espouse a distinct model of the economic development and to maintain a particular SCO informational space.

A lot is already being done in this respect. The SCO institutional development is in full swing, public organizations in its framework are emerging, and the decision-making process at all levels is growing more specific. Meetings of the leaders, security council secretaries, defense, foreign affairs, and energy ministers of the SCO member-countries are institutionalized and take place on a regular basis. The SCO Business Council has a meaningful agenda. Public healthcare, social support, telecommunications, and transportation projects are implemented. A public coordination council in support of the SCO is established, and the corresponding Russian language internet resources are available.

In the future, the architecture of the SCO international activities will comprise the following interactions

- with regional and global formations;
- bilateral interactions between the SCO and non-SCO countries, between the SCO as a whole and non-SCO countries.
- interactions driven by specific interests.

The SCO has a number of features untypical for other regional integration formations. Its model differs from those of the EU and the ASEAN in both the territorial scale and the spectrum of the tasks it addresses. The SCO is supposed to be a special world without a clearly defined boundary, a world spanning the entire global space. The quadrangle of the new global entity – Brazil, Russia, China, and India – is already taking shape. A triangle capable to consolidate the branches of Islam – Iran, the Saudi Arabia, and Turkey – is also becoming a reality. The above and certain other formations are related to the SCO.

It is a shortcoming of the SCO that it has no ideological foundation such as an inter-civilizational integration theory including the concept and the algorithms of structuring the organization's enormous space. So far, most of the progress within the SCO is made in the economic and security spheres. Unfortunately, there are still no integration theorists in the SCO countries such as Jacques Maunet and Barry Buzan in the EU.

A special remark must be made on Russia's place and role in the SCO. Russia is both a multi-ethnic country and the kernel of the Orthodox Christian civilization. Under its former name – as the USSR – it has already been one of the two global poles. Russia has a rich experience of socialist development and is gaining the experience of the capitalist one.

In 1938, German philosopher W. Schubart wrote in his *Europe and the Soul of the East* that it is not Europeans but Russians who have the mindset by which humans can justify their eternal predestination. Russians are guided by the absolute, by the universal feeling, the Messianic soul... When it comes to the main issues of life, Europeans should regard Russians as an example, not vice versa. If Europeans seek to return to the eternal goals of mankind, they should adopt the Russian-Eastern perception of the world.

This is how the heartland expands to the south-east.

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