

# The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): The New Framework for Resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

By [Andrew Korybko](#)

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*Azerbaijan and Armenia are slated to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as observer members during the group's meeting this July, [according](#) to SCO General Secretary Dmitry Mezentsev. This gives Baku a fortuitous chance to finally move past the [failed OSCE Minsk Group format](#) and into a new framework that would inject fresh life into the stalled peace process. By removing the useless (France) and ulterior-minded (USA) actors and replacing them with the pinnacle of pragmatism (China), it is expected that a resolution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict could realistically be expedited in the near future, dependent of course on the failure of the US and its European allies in sabotaging this breakthrough development.*

## Three reasons why the SCO is the best solution

While there are many strong points that can be made in favor of the SCO's diplomatic involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process, here are three of the most salient:

### Patterned approach:

The SCO plans to initiate a massive expansion of its reach during the upcoming July meeting in Ufa, which will welcome the inclusion of three pairs of rival states to the organization; India and Pakistan (as official members); Syria and Turkey (as an observer member and existing dialogue partner, respectively); and Azerbaijan and Armenia (as observer members). This isn't just mere coincidence, however, since it reveals a thought-out patterned approach by the SCO's two leading countries, Russia and China, to prevent outbreaks of formal war in three of Eurasia's most dramatic conflicts.

The larger idea here is that the SCO, led by intense and dedicated diplomatic efforts from Moscow and Beijing, will try to constructively involve itself in all three of these prolonged conflicts in order to bring about their peaceful resolution, with Nagorno-Karabakh only being a piece of the larger puzzle. Be that as it may, it's expected that Baku will reap the resultant political dividends from Russia and China's joint diplomatic intervention in this process, largely owing to the efficient nature of the Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership.

### The Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership:



Moscow and Beijing have been engaged in complementary diplomacy since the formalization of their strategic partnership in 1996, with the past decade bearing witness to the far-reaching effect of these efforts. Both countries aspire to soothe over all destabilization in Eurasia and pave the way for pan-continental economic integration that benefits all players, which directly conflicts with the goal of influential US foreign policy lobbyists like Zbigniew Brzezinski who advocate for the weaponization of 'controlled chaos' in keeping these two giants apart.

The underlying theme of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is thus the confrontation between Russia and China on one hand, and the US and some of its European and non-Western allies on the other, with the former supporting stability and integration in Eurasia, and the latter pursuing its strategic fragmentation for its self-interested benefit. Looked at through this geopolitical lens, it becomes clear that Russia and China have an inherent and sincere interest in preventing all three aforementioned conflicts from (re)erupting into full-fledged wars, since this would indirectly destabilize them and ruin their pan-continental integrationist plans. On the contrary, the US and its associated allies are interested in exacerbating these conflicts and provoking a manipulated war, and their deepening involvement in the Caucasus is designed to do just that as relates to Nagorno-Karabakh.

### **Everyone wins:**

Should the SCO take the lead in restarting the Nagorno-Karabakh peace talks and comes to replace the failed OSCE Minsk Group, then all the four major players involved would stand to gain immensely:

#### *Azerbaijan*

With peace in the Caucasus, some of the billions of dollars that are spent every year on the military could be redirected to social, economic, and infrastructure developments that could more directly benefit the Azeri people. Not only that, but the money could also be invested in rebuilding Nagorno-Karabakh and assisting with the resettlement of the internally displaced population that fled in the early 1990s.

#### *Armenia*

The two-decade-long economic blockade that Turkey has been imposing on Armenia has crippled the latter's economy and stymied its development. While it's unlikely that ethnic Turks would buy Armenian goods once the blockade is lifted, it's more probable that the millions of Kurds in Southeast Turkey that border the country will, either out of pure economic need or as a means of sending a defiant signal to Ankara. Either way, this would rejuvenate the poorest economy in the region and provide it with a much-needed lifeline of support that would stave off its collapse.

## Russia

A peaceful settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh would stabilize the South Caucasus and remove the last lever of influence that the US could manipulate in throwing the region into strategically engineered chaos. Should a war resume, then Russia would not be able to effectively manage concurrent crises on its western (Ukraine), Caucasian (Nagorno-Karabakh), and southern (Central Asia/Afghanistan) foci of security, which would consequently allow the US to asymmetrical break through Moscow's defenses and directly destabilize the Federation itself. For this reason, mediating peace between Azerbaijan and Armenia is among Russia's highest long-term security concerns.

## China

Other than the previously mentioned interest in pan-Eurasian stability, China also wants to prevent the US military and NATO from inching closer to the Caspian Sea basin. This is because a sizeable amount of China's gas is currently imported from Turkmenistan, and a renewal of warfare in Nagorno-Karabakh could create a scenario where out-of-region military intervention (US/NATO) becomes a reality. While the continued US presence in Afghanistan is certainly a threat in this regard, a simultaneous flanking influence on the western reaches of the Caspian Sea could create an overwhelming atmosphere of pressure on Turkmenistan that could be used to threaten China's energy imports from the country in the future.

[The final article in this series](#) will address the ways in which the US plans to sabotage the SCO peace process in Nagorno-Karabakh and how Azerbaijan can prevent this from happening.

**Andrew Korybko** is the political analyst and journalist for [Sputnik](#) who currently lives and studies in Moscow. This and forthcoming articles on Nagorno-Karabakh settlement were prepared for Azerbaijani portal [Moscow-Baku](#) and published in English exclusively at *ORIENTAL REVIEW*.

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## About the author:

Andrew Korybko is an American Moscow-based political analyst specializing in the relationship between the US strategy in Afro-Eurasia, China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity, and Hybrid Warfare. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

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