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THE RISING DRAGON:
SCO Peace Mission 2007

Roger N. McDermott



Occasional Paper

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1111 16th St. NW, Suite 320
Washington, DC 20036
tel: (202) 483-8888 • fax: (202) 483-8337
• www.jamestown.org •

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) held historic counterterrorist exercises in China and Russia that lasted from August 9-17, 2007. The exercises involved military forces primarily from China and Russia, though other SCO member states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) also sent smaller units to serve as participants and observers. Peace Mission 2007 attracted tremendous interest within Central Asia and beyond, arousing premature speculation that the SCO intends to use such exercises as a basis for a military bloc to compete with NATO or to minimize Western security influence in Central Asia. Political leaders in the SCO member states reinforced the message that the SCO poses no threat to a third party and is only interested in combating the threats posed by terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- Peace Mission 2007 must be understood in the context of the SCO's evolving military and security dimension, which its official statements claim to be calibrated towards combating terrorism. There is little evidence that the SCO is moving closer to becoming a military bloc, but its antiterrorist exercises are sending signals to the West: It can legitimately and effectively deal with the new threats facing Central Asia. Such a message is intended to convince the governments in Central Asia to rely less on security assistance and influence from the U.S. and its allies in NATO in the future.
- Russia, increasingly militarily assertive—as reflected in its official statements and the anti-Western rhetoric from the Kremlin—seeks to use its influence within the SCO to undermine Western security projects, which Moscow believes bypass Russia's traditional security interests in the region. Russia spent approximately \$5 million on Peace Mission 2005 and increased this dramatically to around \$78 million in funding Peace Mission 2007.
- Senior military planners in Moscow, including Colonel-General Yuriy Baluyevskiy, Chief of the General Staff, interpreted Peace Mission 2007 as providing practice for future SCO counterterrorist operations. He even claimed that Western-inspired initiatives to promote democracy in Central Asia, pose a potential security threat in the region.
- The scenario for Peace Mission 2007 was based on the events in Andijan, Uzbekistan in May 2005, suggesting that future SCO operations may in fact be used for quashing rebellion, or dealing with political instability. In any case, this factor in the planning of the exercises further underscores the need to reassess the events in Andijan and understand why SCO military planning staffs regard those events so seriously.
- China is keen to play a greater role in the security of Central Asia through the SCO. As the SCO develops its security credentials, other regional multilateral bodies such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) will become more interested in entering into a cooperative dialogue with the SCO. Beijing is concerned about terrorism within its Xinjiang Province, and wants closer cooperation to minimize any possible growth in this threat. Among the various cooperative initiatives that Beijing has been pushing for, joint military exercises are a priority for China's military planners.

- Peace Mission 2007 was particularly notable for the PLA because it was the first time that entire PLA organizational units had taken part in a joint counterterrorism military exercise outside of China. The logistical capabilities of the PLA were also tested since supplies and support for its combat forces had to be provided over long distances.
- Central Asian militaries are keen to learn from their stronger counterparts in Russia and China. As well as benefiting from such exercises and sharing expertise and experience, Central Asian military participation was primarily supportive. Personnel from Russia and China carried out the main combat tasks during Peace Mission 2007, suggesting that in future SCO counterterrorist operations, the real work would be carried out using forces from the two senior partners in the SCO.
- Even as Chinese arms permeate the armed forces of the Central Asian states, and the frequency of their interaction with China increases, the Chinese language remains a significant challenge for further cooperation among the SCO member states. There remains a shortage of Chinese translators and teachers in several of these states, where the de facto language continues to be Russian.
- Terrorism will remain the principal threat facing the SCO members for the foreseeable future, and as such, will demand closer intelligence cooperation among its members. This is happening already through the SCO Regional Antiterrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent, as well as through bilateral intelligence sharing among SCO members. This area may prove more fruitful in the long run, as part of the SCO's security cooperation against terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

China's economic influence within Central Asia is undoubtedly growing rapidly, even as energy concerns and economic issues dominate the calculus behind Sino-Russian security cooperation and their engagement with Central Asia. In October 2005, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of the Heads of State held in Moscow, Beijing revealed the extent of its geopolitical ambition in Central Asia by offering \$900 million in export credits for SCO members with a 2 percent interest and repayment over 20 years. This was seen by observers as an attempt by Beijing to fund the economies of the SCO members and to create a China-led free trade zone (Xinhua, October 26, 2005).

Since the formation of the SCO's predecessor, the Shanghai Five, in 1996, China's interests in Central Asia, particularly in regards to security, have expanded exponentially [1]. China, in the post-9/11 security environment, has steadily advanced its international antiterrorist credentials by highlighting its own security fears in the Xinjiang province. China signed the UN protocols against terrorism, promising to assist in the global effort to confront the phenomena of terrorism. It formed bilateral intelligence cooperation agreements in order to increase counterterrorism efforts, first with Moscow, then later Astana and Bishkek. A Sino-Russian working group on counterterrorism was held in November 2001 in Beijing, with the locations alternating annually between the Chinese and Russian capitals. Beijing has also increased the emphasis on the SCO as an organization capable of coping adequately with terrorist threats. Despite the apparently common interests in Beijing and Moscow to combat international terrorism, combined with the formation of a Sino-Russia strategic partnership, some analysts have drawn attention to the fact that the Sino-Russia strategic partnership is marred by contradictions in their approaches towards Central Asia [2].

THE THREE EVILS: TERRORISM, SEPARATISM AND EXTREMISM

The SCO member states regard terrorism as their shared security concern and over the years, these concerns—manifested in instances such as the attempted terrorist attack in Shymkent in April 2007—have driven them to develop more practical security cooperation in the area of counterterrorism. Other examples of the growing threats in SCO countries include the Chinese People's Armed Police raid in January 2007 on an alleged terrorist training camp in Xinjiang Province. During the raid, 18 suspected terrorists were killed along with one police officer. Seventeen more suspects were captured and weapons and explosives were seized. Chinese security authorities soon pointed to the links between the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) and international terrorists. These efforts are likely to be connected to Beijing's counterterrorism strategy ahead of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. In May 2002, two ETIM members were seized in Kyrgyzstan after allegedly plotting an attack on the U.S. embassy in Bishkek. The Kyrgyz government subsequently deported the suspects to China. Such incidents have served to raise the profile of the group in Central Asia, which has been useful for Beijing [3].

FLEXING SCO MILITARY MUSCLE: COOPERATION 2003

SCO member states began conducting bilateral and multilateral exercises in October 2002, when China and Kyrgyzstan held a joint antiterrorist exercise, within the framework of the SCO, in the Chinese-Kyrgyz border area (*PLA Daily*, November 5, 2002). However, the first multilateral SCO anti-terrorist exercise was held in August 2003. China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan participated in the “Cooperation 2003” exercise, which started in the Kazakh border city of Ucharal before it was moved to China. One thousand soldiers from all five countries took part (*Xinhua*, August 6, 2003) [4].

Central Asian militaries have also taken note of the People’s Liberation Army’s (PLA) military modernization program during the past decade, which has increased its power projection capabilities, through synergizing modern warfare capabilities and techniques into many of their higher-readiness formations. Indeed, the PLA has developed Rapid Reaction Forces (RRF), tasked with conducting operations in a wide variety of environments, ranging from mountainous to desert terrain. The RRF will respond quickly and decisively to any internal unrest in either Tibet or Xinjiang, or respond to external threats in the Taiwan Strait or South China Sea [5]. Ministry of Defense planning staffs within Central Asia are interested in tapping into the expertise of such units, capable of rapid deployment, in order to strengthen their antiterrorist capabilities.

PEACE MISSION 2005

A much larger scale SCO Sino-Russian military exercise was held in August 2005. Security officials in both countries hailed “Peace Mission 2005,” as a success. China effectively dominated the planning of the exercise and contributed approximately 10,000 troops. Russia, on the other hand, contributed some 1,800 soldiers (*Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No. 39, 2006, p. 1). Moscow had its own reservations about the exercises, including displeasure when China restricted the movements of some of its subunits. However, following the conclusion of the exercise, the commander of the Russian group, Colonel-General Vladimir Moltenskiy, recommended further SCO joint exercises. Reports within the Russian media suggested that the exercise had cost around \$5 million, though the true figure was rumored to be greater (*Interfax*, August 29, 2005).

Peace Mission 2005, the first-ever military exercise between Russia and China, was held from August 19-25, 2005. The exercise rehearsed an SCO operation to intervene in a state that was either besieged by terrorists or in political turmoil, using combined land, sea and air elements. Given that Russia deployed Tu-22 M and Tu-95 strategic bombers, missile destroyers, submarines, strategic bombers and AWACS during the exercise, many observers questioned the alleged “antiterrorist” or “peace support mission element.” Peacekeeping operations involve active counterinsurgent and policing operations, interception of communications, and crisis management, including the preparations to receive and relocate refugees. Planning such operations also includes the consideration of the number of non-combatants and their possible endangerment by the militants. These factors were notably missing from the planning and execution of Peace Mission 2005 (*Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, August 29, 2006; *People’s*

Daily, August 19, 2005; ITAR-TASS, August 26, 2005; RFE/RL, August 18 and 26, 2005) [6]. In reality, Peace Mission 2005 actually represented a conventional all-out assault using the Russian and Chinese tactics developed in the 1970s and 80s.

DEFENSE DIPLOMACY: PREPARING FOR PEACE MISSION 2007

President Hu Jintao's intense diplomatic contact with regional leaders and his itinerary around the period of the counterterrorist exercises reflected the emphasis that Beijing placed on "Peace Mission 2007." From August 14-18, Hu visited Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia to observe the final stages of the exercise and attended the SCO summit in Bishkek on August 16. His aim in visiting Kazakhstan was to cement the China-Kazakhstan strategic partnership, while his visit to the Kyrgyz Republic for bilateral talks with President Bakiyev, his first to the country, was aimed at deepening bilateral security cooperation (Xinhua, August 9, 14, 16, and 17, 2007). The preparations for Peace Mission 2007 were detailed and painstaking, reflecting the high level of political importance that Beijing and Moscow had attached to the exercises. Originally scheduled for July 18-25, in the Chelyabinsk region, the dates were altered to better suit the requirements of China and Russia. Colonel-General Moltenskoy, Deputy Commander of the Russian Ground Forces, flew to China in January 2007 for a second round of consultations with his Chinese counterparts, in order to prepare the exercise. Colonel-General Yuriy Baluyevskiy, the Russian Chief of the General Staff, also conducted consultations in Beijing ahead of the arrival of the new Russian Defense Minister, Anatoly Serdyukov in April. Peace Mission 2007 was originally intended to involve only battalion-sized units (around 400 soldiers) from Russia and China, as well as companies (around 100 soldiers) from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and a Kyrgyz platoon. However, Beijing requested that the number of personnel be increased to 2,000, which was agreed to by Moscow (Xinhua, April 27, 2006; *Krasnaya Zvezda*, January 11, 2007; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, March 1, 2007). The nature of Uzbekistan's contribution was later restricted to sending staff officers.

CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC PREPARATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Beijing's diplomatic activity in Central Asia was increased as a prelude to the exercises. China's Defense Minister, General Cao Gangchuan, visited Bishkek on June 27 for a SCO defense ministers' meeting, during which he offered to deepen defense and security exchanges and cooperation with Uzbekistan. Cao made the offer during talks with Uzbekistan's Deputy Defense Minister, Rustam Niyazov. He noted that Beijing and Tashkent had developed close bilateral ties and had conducted frequent high-level exchanges since establishing diplomatic relations 15 years ago. Cao referred specifically to a meeting between Chinese President Hu Jintao and Uzbek President Islam Karimov in June 2006, when they reached a consensus on China-Uzbek ties. Both countries pushed for greater cooperation in the areas of trade, energy, telecommunications, and humanities. Cao stated that China and Uzbekistan have cooperated bilaterally and within the framework of international multilateral cooperation organizations, such as the United Nations and the SCO.

A common theme throughout Cao's diplomatic tour of Central Asia was to express Beijing's appreciation of support from local governments on the issue of Taiwan and the crackdown on the "East Turkistan Terrorist Organization." In return, Beijing offered steadfast support for Uzbekistan's efforts in safeguarding national independence, sovereignty and security. Cao wanted to promote a long-standing and stable China-Uzbekistan cooperative partnership, suggesting this had added legitimacy because it not only reflected official policy but also the wishes of the people in both countries (Interfax, Moscow, June 28, 2007).

Niyazov agreed with Beijing's assessment of Central Asia's stability, but argued that "inherent problems have not been eliminated" (Interfax, Moscow, June 28, 2007). Terrorism and drug trafficking were singled out as the primary issues that could serve as potential sources for instability in the region. Uzbekistan was keen to further develop its defense and security cooperation with Russia and China, both bilaterally and through multilateral channels such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the SCO.

On June 26, Cao met with the defense ministers of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan and exchanged views on the respective bilateral relations and the development of the SCO. In his conversation with Kyrgyz Defense Minister Ismail Isakov, Cao cited the resolution of China and Kyrgyzstan's outstanding border issues and the signing of the good-neighborly treaty of friendship and cooperation. He praised the joint work of the defense ministries of both countries, noting that bilateral military cooperation had made significant progress. Trade between China and Kyrgyzstan has grown markedly in recent years, with the trade volume in 2006 reaching \$2.26 billion (an increase of 128.6 percent from 2005) and in the first half of 2007, 1.14 billion (an increase of 73.5 percent from the same period in 2006) making Kyrgyzstan China's second largest trading partner in Central Asia (Xinhua, August 9, 17, 2007).

During Cao's meeting with Tajik Defense Minister Sherali Khairulloyev, he also praised the two leaders of China and Tajikistan for signing the "China-Tajikistan Good-Neighborly Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" in January 2007, laying the legal foundation for long-term mutually beneficial cooperation. Signed by President Hu and Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon in Beijing on January 15, 2007, the treaty gives a clear indication of the political support obtained by Beijing for its own security concerns. The two sides will enhance the fight against terrorism, separatism, extremism, organized crime, illegal migration, weapons and drug trafficking, according to its own terms. Tajikistan promised in the treaty to avoid any official ties with Taiwan or to set up representative bodies in either country. "Tajikistan, a neighboring country of China and an SCO member, values its relationship with China and has persistently supported China on issues concerning Taiwan, Tibet and the fight against East Turkistan Terrorist Organization," Wu Dawei China's Vice- Foreign Minister noted during at the meeting (Xinhua, June 24, 2007).

KAZAKHSTAN: BEIJING'S MAIN PARTNER IN CENTRAL ASIA

During his meeting with Kazak Defense Minister Daniyal Akhmetov, General Cao was candid about the importance with which Beijing viewed Sino-Kazakh relations, no doubt aware of NATO's increased level of interest in deepening its relationship with Kazakhstan.

During their meeting, Cao highlighted the fact that China and Kazakhstan established a strategic partnership in July 2005, indicating that bilateral cooperation would continue to expand (*PLA Daily*, June 28, 2007) [7]. In December 2006, Hu and Nazarbayev signed a “Strategy of Cooperation between China and Kazakhstan in the 21st Century” as well as other additional documents, laying the legal foundations for the long-term development of the Sino-Kazakh relationship. Already, Kazakhstan is China’s largest trading partner in the region, and the bilateral trade relationship between the two countries has been increasing steadily. The Chinese Foreign Ministry places the level of trade between China and Kazakhstan at \$8.36 billion in 2006 (an increase of 22.8 percent from 2005) and \$5.97 billion in the first half of 2007 (an increase of 60.4 percent from the same period in 2006) [8].

Akhmetov appreciated what he referred to as a “continued expansion” of military cooperation with China [9]. This has been marked in practical terms by the frequent exchanges of military delegations and the training of Kazakh military personnel, which has become more “efficient and pragmatic” [10]. What is notable, however, is that despite the delivery of Chinese military equipment to Kazakhstan and the Kazakh military’s level of interest in the PLA’s military training facilities, there has been no expansion in the teaching of Chinese to military personnel at Kazakhstan’s Military Language Institute in Almaty. In fact, the opposite is true, with only one part-time lecturer teaching Chinese. As a result, the Kazakh military is struggling to maintain the existing linguistic expertise that would maximize opportunities for its military personnel to receive training in China [11].

President Hu Jintao’s visit to Kazakhstan from August 17-18 was widely publicized in both China and Kazakhstan, as the Chinese leader praised the level of bilateral cooperation, shared his views on security issues with President Nazarbayev, and examined ways to build upon the strategic partnership that exists between Beijing and Astana. China and Kazakhstan, according to China’s Foreign Ministry, are making progress on “cracking down” on “terrorism, separatism and extremism” (*Xinhua*, August 9, 20, 2007).

BEIJING-MOSCOW AXIS: STIMULATING PRACTICAL SECURITY COOPERATION

General Cao met with Russian Defense Minister Serdyukov on June 27 during the SCO Defense Ministers meeting in Bishkek. Both praised the growing level of bilateral security cooperation, which reflected the strength of Sino-Russian relations. Serdyukov attributed this unprecedented level of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing to the policies promoted by Putin and Hu. Cao and Serdyukov recognized that the level of understanding in the Moscow-Beijing dimension to the work of the SCO remains a critical factor, in not only the development of the organization, but in its smooth and growing cooperation in the future. Cao believes that the existing friendship and understanding can only continue to develop, especially since China’s military modernization campaign has not changed its position as the leading importer of Russian defense technology (*PLA Daily*, June 28, 2007).

Russia’s estimation of the potential security dividend from Peace Mission 2007 was remarkably positive, in spite of the fact that joint military exercises are nothing new for its military. Lieutenant-General Vladimir Moltenskoy, deputy commander of Russia’s Ground

Forces, viewed the exercises as representing a “prototype of anti-terrorist operations” (www.chinamil.com, July 30, 2007). Moltensky boasted that the exercises could be used as training and educational material for the SCO militaries. In his opinion, it was “in essence, a prototype for anti-terrorist operations, the primary task of which is to neutralize resistance and destroy terrorists” (www.chinamil.com, July 30, 2007). He suggested that a documentary film of the exercises would be produced and used as a training aid for the militaries of the SCO member states. It would serve to “teach leaders of the armed forces how to act in the complex conditions where there is neither a front nor a rear line,” he said (www.chinamil.com, July 30, 2007).



Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_air_force_2007.jpg

MILITARY PREPARATIONS

Senior Russian officers pointed out that the exercises would not involve the use of any heavy military equipment, unlike Peace Mission 2005. Its contribution would be restricted to smaller formations, such as border guards, elements of the Russian Interior Ministry’s Security Forces and special police units. Mechanized-infantry combat vehicles and armored personnel carriers, rather than tanks, were also included. The vast majority of troops that participated in the exercise were from Russia and China; Kazakhstan and Tajikistan each contributed one airborne company. Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan sent an airborne platoon and staff officers, respectively (ITAR-TASS, July 27, 2007; Interfax, July 30, 2007).



Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_ground_forces_2007.jpg

The Russian Air Force contributed six Ilyushin Il-76 Candid transport planes (from the fleet of the 61st Air Army of the Supreme High Command, nine Sukhoi Su-25 Frogfoot ground-attack jets (from the fleet of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army based in Rostov-on-Don), 14 Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships and 18 Mi-8 Hip helicopters (from the fleet of the 5th Air Force and Air Defense Army in Yekaterinburg). China provided six Il-76 aircraft, eight JH-7-A fighter-bombers, 16 JG-9-W and 16 Mi-17 Hip helicopters (Interfax, August 8, 2007; *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 9, 2007; *PLA Daily*, August 10, 2007). These were based at Shagol airfield in the Chelyabinsk Region. Other elements of Russian aviation, including helicopters and planes of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Security Service (FSB) and other force agencies, were based at Uprun airfield. Russia and China also contributed 18 122-mm and 100-mm artillery systems, for the live-firing portion of the exercise.

Despite the painstaking and detailed preparations that preceded the exercises, the Chinese and Russian generals were faced with a considerable logistical challenge during the deployment of Chinese troops and equipment to Russia: Kazakhstan did not permit the transit of Chinese military forces through its territory. Although Kazakhstan is a member of the SCO and took part in the exercise, it failed to pass legislation allowing foreign troops to cross into its territory. Clearly, the shortest over-land route from Xinjiang to Chelyabinsk in central Russia would be through Kazakhstan (RIA Novosti, Moscow, July 24, 2007).

Since 2002, the PLA has participated in 17 joint exercises with foreign troops, each calibrated to demonstrate China's interest in increasing military-to-military relations, and sharing experience and training in order to enhance its capabilities to deal with non-traditional threats, such as terrorism.

Tian Yixiang, an officer with the PLA's Department of General Staff, linked the growth of the Chinese military's interest in conducting joint military exercises with its own perception of non-traditional threats (*China Daily*, July 3, 2007). The traditional SCO cooperation over security has now transcended beyond the original issues of regional disarmament and border security and delimitation to include practical cooperation on dealing with non-traditional threats. Yet, in China's security calculations, these still relate to the SCO's "three evils" of terrorism, separatism and extremism. From the perspective of many senior PLA officers, Peace Mission 2007 represented a "practical way to improve the Chinese army's capability to tackle terrorist threats" (*China Daily*, July 3, 2007). China's Ministry of Public Security's figures claim that the country has suffered from more than 260 terrorist incidents in which over 160 people were killed and more than 440 injured (*China Daily*, July 3, 2007).

Other officers believed that joint military exercises could also serve to stimulate the reform and modernization of the PLA. Zhang Zhi'an of the General Logistics Department supported this idea, suggesting that the exercises could speed up the pace of modernization (*China Daily*, July 3, 2007). In this context, cooperation with the Russian armed forces is particularly vital, since China is the largest importer of Russian manufactured military equipment. Although China is modernizing its military and producing more domestically manufactured military equipment, its hardware is often technologically inferior to Western or Russian equipment and weapons. Shijiazhuang Army Command Academy's Cui Yafeng likewise supported the

idea of utilizing joint military exercises to bolster the capabilities of the PLA and called for the military to create special training courses in order to improve their capabilities for joint military exercises (*China Daily*, July 3, 2007).

Legal preparations for the exercises were equally exacting. Chinese military personnel reportedly arrived in Russia with books such as *A Guide for Troops to Join in Exercise in Russia* and *A Brief Introduction about Russia* (*PLA Daily*, July 28, 2007). One soldier from the PLA explained, “It is not that simple for us to carry out an exercise in a foreign country. We have to learn other things besides military skills.” The 1,600 personnel from the PLA were given lectures about understanding relevant laws and Russian culture and were taught to regard these factors as being equally as important as their military skills. Major General Zhu Jianye, a legal advisor in the PLA, pointed out that for many of the PLA personnel, the exercises were their first insight into the problems and challenges of being deployed overseas. “During such an overseas military maneuver, Chinese armed forces will cross the border to enter a foreign territory, for the time being, and that is very different than having civilians cross the border,” he said (*PLA Daily*, July 28, 2007).

PEACE MISSION 2007

Peace Mission 2007 was planned as an SCO joint anti-terrorism exercise to be held in China’s Xinjiang province and Russia’s Chelyabinsk region. It was unique since it was the first military exercise that involved all of the SCO member states. It was also the first time that the PLA had ever sent complete organizational units to take part in a joint anti-terrorism military exercise outside of China. The exercises were relatively large-scale, involving land and air units and required that the PLA provide logistical support over long-distances. Technical cooperation for the exercises involved the use of unified communication frequencies and common signals for coordinated action. Involving more than 6,500 soldiers and 2,000 pieces of military hardware, supplied predominantly by Russia and China, it was evident that the whole exercise was dominated by the two countries. The training camp itself was decorated with posters showing a handshake between Russian and Chinese flags and all signs were in Russian and Chinese (*Kommersant*, August 9, 2007; *Interfax*, August 10, 2007; *Xinhua*, August 13, 2007).

During the train journey into Russia, Chinese soldiers were required to prepare themselves daily, following a strict physical exercise regime that included 100 sit-ups and 100 push-ups daily. Before embarking on their journey, the soldiers had undergone an intensive 60-day pre-deployment training program in the Gobi desert, coping with strong winds and temperatures in excess of 40°C. During their journey, the Chinese soldier not only practiced simple Russian phrases, but also found time to read travel guides about the Central Asian countries that were also participating in the exercises. For many of these soldiers, it was their first contact with these neighboring countries, particularly with their military counterparts (www.chinamil.com, July 28 2007).

On July 30, the first helicopters from the Chinese army aviation unit participating in Peace Mission 2007 arrived at Barnaul, the first redeployment airport in Russia, after taking off from the Altay airport in Xinjiang and flying across the Sino-Russian border. General Xu Qiliang, China's deputy chief of the General Staff and its top officer in charge of the joint military exercises, arrived in Altay to oversee and ensure that Chinese forces closely coordinated their activities with the Russian side (Xinhua, July 30, 2007).

The deployment of the helicopters was viewed as a test for Chinese aviation. Major-General Ma Xiangsheng stated that it represented a test for army aviation since they had to cover a long distance, flying over the Altay Mountains at an altitude of 4,000 meters. Moreover, the departure date had been delayed by 24 hours due to poor weather condition. Given that Chinese troops lacked experience in conducting joint military exercises, they were also presented with the problems of overcoming technical issues relating to interoperability and having to cope with the language barrier.

On July 27, the first group of China's main military force for the exercises arrived at Manzhouli, a border city in China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, before transferring to a Russian military train; this marked the first time the PLA has entered Russia for a military exercise. However, the majority of China's 1,600 troops set off by train on July 19 from Xinjiang, covering 10,300 kilometers over the course of a week. "This is the first time the PLA has sent so many soldiers and armaments so far," said Qiu Yanhan, deputy commander of the Chinese contingent. Fuel, water, food, and security were provided by the Russian military (www.chinamil.com, July 30, 2007).

China sent Il-76 transport aircraft and eight JH-7 Flying Leopard fighter-bombers. Some of these were involved in joint aerial assaults during the exercise. China's new Jian-10 fighter was not deployed during the exercises, perhaps partly owing to the extent of foreign media interest in the drills. The "Flying Leopard" is a multi-purpose, all-weather, supersonic fighter-bomber designed, developed, and produced by China, and reportedly has a variety of "special weapons" [12]. It can carry out aerial operations and perform ground-attack missions or surface attack missions at sea. China reportedly deployed 1,600 soldiers, including one army combat group, one air force combat group, and one integrated support group. In the operational formations alone, there were multiple service branches, including fighter-bomber units, paratrooper units, transport units, special forces, armored units, and ground-force aviation units.

TOO MUCH FIREPOWER

Russian Colonel Igor Konashenkov, deputy commander of the Peace Mission 2007 exercise, reported that a total of 240 servicemen and 24 pieces of hardware from Russia and China's airborne forces were airdropped during the exercise. "The Russian and Chinese Il-76MD aircraft will drop paratroopers and hardware. Each side will use six aircraft—four Il-76MDs will drop hardware and the two will drop the personnel. Each side will drop 12 airborne combat vehicles and 120 servicemen from air assault companies," Konashenkov confirmed (ITAR-TASS, Moscow, August 4, 2007). Russian and Chinese air groupings, including 24 helicopters (transport and attack helicopters) and eight attack helicopters, held

joint training exercises at Chebarkul, before the exercises on August 6 as part of the planned preparations for the maneuvers.

The Russian armed forces were tasked with airlifting Kazakh troops from Kazakhstan to the area of the exercise. This involved using two An-26 planes, each transporting 45 Kazakh servicemen, including 20 officers, from Kazakhstan to the Shagol airfield. A total of 98 Kazakh soldiers and officers arrived at the scene; the entire unit from Kazakhstan was 143 men strong. Russia also provided military transport for Tajik and Kyrgyz servicemen on August 5. A Russian Air Force transport plane airlifted around 100 Tajik servicemen from Dushanbe to Shagol via Kant, picking up 20 Kyrgyz personnel on route. Russian, Chinese and Kazakh personnel trained jointly on August 6 while Kyrgyz and Tajik servicemen observed (ITAR-TASS, Moscow, August 4, 2007).

NO SOLDIERS FROM UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan chose not to send any soldiers to participate in Peace Mission 2007. Instead, Tashkent sent its officers to work in the SCO headquarters, concentrating on the planning and coordination stage of the exercise. Major-General Nosirbek Usmanbekov, the co-commander of the exercises from Uzbekistan, suggested that their priority during the exercise was to work with the command staff of the other SCO member states and confirmed that Tashkent may send soldiers to represent Uzbekistan in future SCO exercises (Interfax, August 10, 2007; ITAR-TASS, August 13, 2007).

Although soldiers from the Central Asian SCO member states (except for Uzbekistan) were sent to the exercises, the bulk of the activity and planning was carried out by Russia and China. However, Chinese officers praised the performance of Tajikistan's airborne forces taking part in the exercises. Major Li Dejiang commented on their professionalism and highlighted their bravery, stating, "They are as brave as tigers" (Xinhua, August 13, 2007).

JOINT STAFF COMMAND

On August 9, military forces participating in the exercises at Chebarkul were briefed and given an operational directive signed by the Chiefs of the General Staff of the SCO member states in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang. Its first joint training session involved units from China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and involved around 4,000 servicemen and over 500 combat and special-purpose vehicles. "Aviation and ground components of the United Troops Group will be engaged in full," observed an aide to Russian Colonel Igor Konashenkov, as the United Troops Group rehearsed dropping personnel and equipment into the exercise area (Interfax, Moscow, August 9, 2007).

Chiefs of the General Staff of the SCO countries held military-political consultations in Urumqi. General Liang Guanglie, the Chief of the PLA General Staff, remarked on the level of understanding among the senior military planners: "We exchanged views on problems of international and regional security, issues of military cooperation and the Peace Mission 2007 exercise. The parties reached broad mutual understanding on all the matters discussed"

(ITAR-TASS, August 11, 2007). On the other hand, Russian Colonel-General Baluyevskiy portrayed the antiterrorist exercise as a specific step forward in training the armed forces of the SCO member states to respond jointly to security threats in the region (ITAR-TASS, August 11, 2007).

COSTS

On the other hand, Colonel-General Vladimir Moltenskoy, Deputy Commander of the Russian ground troops, stressed the benign nature of the exercise: “Our exercise is not aimed against other countries and their interests. Its nature is exclusively that of the tasks assigned to the armed forces of all the states in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization” (*Rossiya*, Moscow, August 7, 2007). Russian estimates of the costs involved in carrying out the SCO exercises were considerable. According to Army General Vladimir Boldyrev, commander of the Volga-Urals Military District, the funding allocated for the exercise was about R2 billion (\$77 million) (*Kommersant*, August 9, 2007).

SCENARIO: THE LEGACY OF ANDIJAN

The SCO’s security planning has been largely influenced by fears of an incursion by terrorists, such as the ones in Batken, Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000, as well as a potential violent large-scale uprising or civil war led by Islamic militants connected, at least tentatively, to radicals in Afghanistan. In essence, this preparation for a “worst-case scenario” in Central Asia has been fuelled by the uprising in Andijan, Uzbekistan in May 2005 as well as the phenomena of “color revolutions,” such as those in Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, the second stage of the exercise conducted in Urumqi, Xinjiang, demonstrated the importance of China within the SCO’s leadership and sent a strong signal to the Uyghur separatists in Xinjiang. “In such a situation, the militaries of the smaller SCO members will control the external borders of the conflict zone, while Russian and Chinese troops will try to solve the problem. Such an operation is likely to involve thousands of personnel, warplanes, helicopters, etc.,” according to Vassily Kashin, research fellow at the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Far Eastern Studies (ITAR-TASS, Moscow, August 6, 2007; *defensenews.com*, August 7, 2007). By implication, any role assigned to the military forces of the SCO’s Central Asian members in an antiterrorist operation would be of a supporting nature, while China and Russia would be engaged in direct combat and the use of firepower.

Russia reportedly played a critical role in planning the scenario for the exercises, based in large measure on the Andijan crisis in Uzbekistan in May 2005. In April 2006, Deputy Prime Minister and then-Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov suggested the idea during a meeting of the SCO defense ministers. Russian military planners modeled the exercise around the events that took place in Andijan, which had resulted in the violent suppression of the “uprising” by the Uzbek government [13]. Indeed, the scenario for the exercises included a group of terrorists capturing a town and SCO forces, acting with close air support and artillery, eliminating the “insurgents” and freeing the town. Russian forces were then tasked with arresting the surviving terrorists (*Kommersant*, August 9, 2007).

The directive ordered that the militant groups be contained, their area of operations isolated, and their bases and ammunition depots destroyed in order to either force them to surrender or eliminate them. Russia used its Pchela Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which it has deployed effectively in the North Caucasus [14]. Launched from a nearby forest area, the Pchela unmanned spy plane is armed with a high-definition digital video camera that can be used to locate the enemy, transmit its signal with images of the enemy's facilities in real-time mode and record their coordinates to the control center. In fact, the Pchela is a very flexible reconnaissance tool and can be deployed quickly, as it does not need runways or require large maintenance crew. The complex was unfolded and prepared for combat in a matter of minutes.

The practice of using unmanned aerial vehicles during antiterrorist operations in the North Caucasus has shown that the aircraft is practically invulnerable. Journalists were shown the image transmitted to the monitor of the UAV control center as the Pchela flew over a village, which in the scenario had been seized by terrorists. It showed their bases, arms and ammunition dumps, and provided this information immediately to the control center (Zvezda TV, Moscow, August 11, 2007).

PEACE MISSION 2007 IN ACTION

Initial action saw Russian and Chinese specialist units, supported by airborne troops, ground troops, units of the Interior Ministry's Internal Troops, specialist forces from the Federal Security Service (FSB) and the Main Directorate of the Federal Penal Service (GUFSSIN) "liberate a town" as the exercise began at the Chebarkal training range. Chinese personnel were tasked with blocking the exits from the town, while Russian forces stormed buildings, carried out searches, and conducted urban warfare. The other SCO forces played the role of observers. As the military leadership from Russia and China expressed their satisfaction with the performance of their forces, General Xu Qiliang, deputy chief of General Staff of the PLA, praised the performance of the Chinese pilots and the way they jointly worked with their Russian colleagues.

An assault on the building where the terrorist leader was located served as the climax of the operation. An airborne assault concluded the exercise; hundreds of paratroopers from the SCO countries engaged with the remaining terrorists after they landed. Kazakh paratroopers acknowledged that they felt "at home among Russian servicemen" (Russian Channel One TV, Moscow, August 13, 2007).

Timur Kemberbayev, a member of the Kazakh airborne unit participating in the exercises, further explained this kinship: "Most of our officers were trained in the Soviet armed forces. We met our brothers-in-arms and friends here" (Russian Channel One TV, Moscow, August 13, 2007). Six years after deploying military forces to Central Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and spending millions of dollars on security assistance programs, there is no escaping the long-term friendship and influence that the Russian military maintains within Central Asia, a reality that the Kremlin can use to minimize the impact of U.S. assistance in the region.

RUSSIA'S ASSESSMENT

Senior Russian defense officials advanced the view that the region's defense ministries must play a more significant role in furthering military cooperation within the SCO. During the military-political consultations of the SCO, Russian Colonel-General Yuriy Baluyevskiy, Chief of the General Staff, said that success in the defense sector "will be impossible unless security in the region is strengthened [by] involving military departments from the SCO member states. We are not talking about setting up a military-political bloc or a union as this would run counter to the SCO principles." Baluyevskiy noted that, "as a priority step, some conceptual foundations should be drawn up for military cooperation in the framework of the SCO." Baluyevskiy noted that Russian experts had drawn up such a document and had passed it to the defense ministries of all of the SCO countries in April 2007, without receiving any response (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Moscow, August 10, 2007).

Baluyevskiy also tried to refute the claims that the SCO was being transformed into a military alliance: "We are not acting as a counterweight to anyone and believe that in the modern world, there is no place for military confrontation between coalitions of states, or for military-political blocs. The SCO member states condemn any attempts to rely exclusively on military force in international relations, not to mention by bypassing the UN Charter" (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Moscow, August 10 and 20, 2007). After the conclusion of the exercises, President Putin repeated this perspective, saying that the military component of the SCO only relates to its antiterrorist agenda, and therefore is not comparable with NATO.

From Baluyevskiy's perspective, Peace Mission 2007 served to prepare SCO members to counter terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the problem of "information security." Baluyevskiy expanded upon the latter point by pointing to the "conditions of growing pressure from the media in some Western countries." "On the part of these countries, attempts continue to be made to convince our states that they need to form so-called "really democratic" Western style institutions of state and public management, which is destabilizing the situation in the states of the region," he stated. In addition, Baluyevskiy said that more exercises within the SCO framework are required in the future. "We need such exercises because they help us to share experience and improve cooperation among our troops in the fight against new threats and challenges. At present, no state in the world can single-handedly cope with these challenges, as the terrorist attacks in the USA in September 2001 showed" (ITAR-TASS, Moscow, August 9, 2007).

Baluyevskiy's views were unreservedly anti-Western, if not exclusively aimed against the United States. Promotion of Western style democracy within Central Asia, he argued, serves to destabilize the region. Baluyevskiy also considered "Peace Mission 2007" to address broader security issues that transcended concerns of terrorism, including those contained within the SCO's charter and its communiqués as well as the issue of *information security*. He interpreted the exercises as marking the arrival of the SCO in the military sphere, even though Moscow is officially opposed to the formation of military blocs. "The SCO is a young organization, not even 10 years old, but it has already announced itself loudly throughout the world both economically and politically, and today, on the day of the beginning of joint training exercise,

in the military respect as well,” said Baluyevskiy (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 10, 2007).

CHINA’S ASSESSMENT

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Liberation Army, Beijing actively promoted a more transparent image of its modern military. Before Peace Mission 2007, the Foreign Affairs Office of the Ministry of National Defense invited 100 reporters from 48 foreign news media (organizations) in Beijing to visit Brigade 196 in the Beijing Military Region. The message was that the Chinese military was now ready to face the outside world. Indeed, the Chinese conducted an intense media campaign intended to portray the SCO exercises as the “most open exercise ever” and to establish the international image of a modernized Chinese military. The depiction of the Chinese military, presented in a carefully orchestrated media campaign, was characterized as “peaceful,” “cooperative,” “powerful,” and “transparent,” and marked an important breakthrough for China’s military diplomacy (*People’s Daily*, July 31, 2007).

Military experts in China recognized prior to the exercises that the challenges in encouraging interoperability between the various military forces were immense. Command and control challenges emerged from the obvious language obstacles in communication, the varied telecommunication systems in use by each military and the coordination of a joint battle group, which were all new problems for the PLA. Xue Xiang, a research fellow at the PLA’s Military Academy, noted the scale and complexity involved in these matters, especially when endeavoring to achieve this in the short timeframe of a few days (Xinhua, August 12, 2007). There was much publicity given to the PLA’s willingness to learn from foreign military forces in its approach to “Peace Mission 2007” with concrete examples emerging from the work of the joint staff headquarters in Urumqi. Chinese staff officers put aside their objections to being overruled by Russian officers who demonstrated to their counterparts how to produce an overarching and condensed plan that used the details but referenced them in order to cut through the quantity of work and time involved in achieving consensus. Colonel Sun Xiuhe was enthusiastic about Russian command procedures, stating, “The Russian officers are precise when making and implementing plans and they will not change layouts in an easy manner” (Xinhua, August 13, 2007).

The initial challenges centered on creating a small and highly efficient joint command system. Both Russian and Chinese military planners understood its importance and took steps to formulate a workable command system. Yet, in order to continue to develop the joint operational capability, future exercises and follow-up work will be needed to smooth out issues such as determining what command structure should be used depending on the operational requirements relating to the deployment of forces, nature of the battlefield, objectives, formation and strength of the joint forces. It will be necessary to integrate policymaking decisions in a concentrated manner and work on utilizing the various commanders from the SCO countries to improve command efficiency.

LESSONS?

The SCO militaries reportedly faced difficulties in achieving unimpeded and linked telecommunications, which resulted in the commanders losing remote sight of the battlefield. Greater understanding of the telecommunications equipment and the communications structures of the SCO militaries is needed to properly construct unified methods for telecommunication that would ensure the sharing of information resources, uninterrupted relay of orders, and the coordination of forces.

Peace Mission 2007 revealed understandable language difficulties. Xue Xiang, the PLA Military Academy researcher, said, “Overcoming the language obstacles to the various parties taking part in the exercise is also rather difficult.” The number of interpreters for the troops taking part in the exercise was too low. However, it is not so simple: the number of interpreters needed, combined with the intensity of their work, also requires modern technology, such as computer translation systems, in order to improve efficiency (Xinhua, August 12, 2007, PLA Daily, August 20, 2007; Interfax/ITAR-TASS, August 21, 2007).

BISHKEK SCO SUMMIT 2007

The SCO Summit in Bishkek on August 16 resulted in what the SCO portrayed as an important step forward, namely the signing of a treaty on “Good Neighborly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation” also known as the Bishkek declaration. In addition to the signing the Bishkek Declaration, the SCO also approved of an action plan that would ensure international information security. In terms of security, the SCO agreed to deepen current levels of cooperation, with a particular emphasis on the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), described as strengthening the SCO’s authority in the interaction of regional and international terrorism (ITAR-TASS, August 13, 2007).

Moreover, the SCO agreed to intensify its work in Afghanistan, through the mechanism of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. While the statements on this mechanism were rather vague, it was placed in the section of the communiqué immediately following the affirmation of solidarity on combating drug trafficking. Security assistance, most likely to be in the form of intelligence sharing, was offered by the SCO members to help ensure the security of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Multilateral cooperation would also continue with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), based on the present memoranda of understanding. However, the CSTO is also likely to form cooperative initiatives with the SCO: “The heads of state support the development of ties between the SCO and the CSTO with the aim of coordinating the efforts on strengthening the regional and international security, counteracting new challenges and threats” [15]. Scheduling the SCO Summit in Bishkek to coincide with the military exercises elevated the significance of Peace Mission 2007 with the last day of the exercises marked by the presence of the SCO heads of state.

Energy and security cooperation were the primary issues of the summit. While Putin had utilized anti-American rhetoric in his recent speeches, he did not directly mention the United

States at the summit. However, he affirmed, “Any attempts to solve global and regional problems unilaterally are hopeless” (AKIpress, Bishkek, August 17, 2007). By calling for the “strengthening of a multipolar international system that would ensure equal security and opportunities for all countries,” Putin signaled that Moscow may be looking toward the SCO to oppose Washington’s foreign policy efforts, especially on issues that are considered to be in Russia’s interest. This will also result in the use of the SCO as a lever against the U.S. military presence in Central Asia. Putin simply fails to recognize any plausible security role that could be played by the United States in Central Asia. “The SCO nations have a clear understanding of the threats faced by the region and thus, must ensure their security themselves,” he said (AKIpress, Bishkek, August 17, 2007). Hu concurred, stressing that “security for Central Asia was best left to the nations themselves.” It is worth noting that many observers were unaware of the content of the speech given at the summit by President Hu, since the Kyrgyz failed to provide an interpreter, underscoring the fact that Russian continues to be the de facto language in Central Asia; Chinese does not enjoy the same status. However, there was no repetition of the SCO’s 2005 demand that Western forces set a timetable for leaving Central Asia (AKIpress, Bishkek, August 17, 2007).

Kazakhstan’s President Nazarbayev was most enthusiastic on the issue of the SCO “energy club.” He advanced his views on energy cooperation, as a format within which the SCO observers could become more deeply involved in the SCO: “The energy sector is an important and promising area. The existing network of pipelines within the SCO area, which links Russia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and China, lays the foundations for setting up a single SCO energy market” (AKIpress, Bishkek, August 17, 2007).

Such proposals will interest Tehran, already supplying 13 percent of China’s energy needs. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, an observer at the summit, was more outspoken in rejecting U.S. missile defense plans as a threat to the entire region. “These intentions go beyond just one country. They are of concern for much of the continent, Asia and the SCO members,” he said (Interfax, August 17, 2007). His comments are likely to have been received well by the Kremlin.

THE RISING DRAGON: CHALLENGING THE WEST OR OPENING A DIALOGUE?

At the celebrations of the 80th anniversary of the PLA, Hu praised the armed forces for their work and promised to devote even more resources: “We will gradually increase spending on national defense as the economy grows. We will ensure that our armed forces are capable of winning a war in the information age” (Xinhua, August 3, 2007). Hu promised on August 2 to create a military for the information age. The following day, he offered a more substantive statement, saying that China will invest more in specialist military personnel and high-technology weaponry, even as such initiatives make China’s neighbors nervous about Beijing’s military ambitions. Engineers and scientists were considered a key element in this program, described as “a precious strategic resource for using science and technology for a strong military. They play an important role in military development and preparations for military struggle” (*The Boston Globe*, August 3, 2007).

Peace Mission 2007 demonstrated a degree of political willingness among the SCO members to improve their counterterrorism cooperation. China also appears to have taken a strategic decision, guided by its need to strengthen the security in its western provinces, particularly Xinjiang, to pacify and increase the stability of Central Asia. This suggests that China has “arrived” and in term of its commitment to security, has decided to stay its course in Central Asia. Equally, there are likely to be more exercises of this type, reinforcing the SCO’s drive toward achieving greater practical security cooperation. Given the costs of Peace Mission 2005 (in excess of the reported \$5 million), Beijing has already embarked on investing more money in these highly visible counterterrorist exercises.

Bearing in mind China’s need to maintain and build stability in Central Asia, it is likely that intelligence cooperation will also be increased discretely and behind the scenes. This in fact, may be the real yet unspoken message of Peace Mission 2007. If Beijing and its partners within the SCO are serious about combating terrorism, they will have to pursue an intelligence-led approach; it is not something any of the SCO members wish to broadcast publicly. Central Asia has now emerged as a priority region in Chinese security planning, and the SCO makes for the most natural multilateral mechanism through which to pursue this strategy. For western planners, the future challenge will lie in finding multilateral mechanisms, such as NATO, through which it may cooperate with the SCO.

A clear goal on the part of Beijing was to showcase its military forces during the exercises. Its military analysts were particularly focused on assessing the following: strategic insertion capabilities, cooperative operational capabilities, ability to carry out precision operations and long-range integrated support capabilities

Moscow’s agenda differs from Beijing in less than subtle ways. Vitaliy Shlykov, a member of the Foreign and Defense Policy Council in Moscow, advanced the view that Peace Mission 2007 must be understood in the wider strategic context of the difficulties that emerged in Russia’s relationship with the West. President Putin had promised unspecified countermeasures should Washington proceed with plans to base components of its missile defense shield in Poland and the Czech Republic. Shlykov suggested: “The claims of the United States and NATO to primacy in the world should have some counterweights. There is no doubt that today Russia needs allies, especially in a region as complex as Asia. In this sense, the statement by the chief of the General Staff can be viewed as a perfectly normal reaction by the Russian authorities to the mounting tension in the world. Not a single state can get along today without allies. We are responding to America’s aspirations to world hegemony by various means, of which the infusion of the SCO military-political vector is just one” (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 10, 2007).

Moscow also considers the SCO’s success as a potential “arc of stability” in northern Eurasia, as opposed to the “arc of instability” on its southern rim, reflecting, in Moscow’s view, Washington’s failed policies in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is difficult, given the intensity of the media campaign and the expression of interest from Moscow, to avoid considering the exercises in the context of Russia’s fierce opposition to U.S. unilateralism. Pavel Zolotarev, deputy director of the U.S. and Canada Institute in Moscow, explained, “It must be understood absolutely unambiguously that the world has to maintain a definite balance of forces. The North

Atlantic alliance is very active in Asia, and it is perfectly understandable that it is essential for the SCO countries' security to develop military-political approaches that can ensure the defense of their national interests. Russia is trying to activate the Shanghai organization. Unfortunately, today not a single structure of this kind can act effectively without taking into consideration military mechanisms to ensure regional security. The countries that belong to the SCO possess powerful potential, both economic and military. They are developing intensively. And they too want to have a voice in solving all problems of a global nature. Therefore, Russia's desire to organize the security components of the SCO somehow looks perfectly justified and logical" (*Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 10, 2007).

From a broader perspective, Peace Mission 2007 must be understood as part of an evolving effort to strengthen the security dynamics within the SCO, not marking a drive toward forming a military bloc. However, the exercises raise significant issues surrounding the circumstances in which the SCO would carry out a counterterrorist operation. Within Central Asia itself, were a situation to develop that required a military response, the CSTO may be given preference, not least because it has Collective Rapid Deployment Forces. Justification for an SCO operation would depend upon Beijing's appetite for involvement, and whether the specific situation seemed more suited to the deployment of Chinese military units. Such a scenario makes sense if the operation in the minds of the planning staff actually involved quelling a rebellion; a joint military response might legitimize an operation that could illicit greater international outcry if undertaken by a single state. The official line, in any case, was that Peace Mission 2007 was an antiterrorist exercise, despite the use of formations and military assets not necessarily associated with antiterrorist operations.

NOTES

1. Pan Guang and Hu Jian, "The First Regional Cooperation Organization of a New Type in the 21st Century: Comprehensive Analysis of the SCO," Beijing, 2006, p. 21-24.
2. Bobo Lo, "The Fine Balance-The Strange Case of Sino-Russian Relations," *Russie Nei Visions*, No. 1, April 2005.
3. "Chinese Counter-Terrorist Strike in Xinjiang," Central Asia Caucasus Analyst, SAIS Washington DC, March 7, 2007.
4. Roger N. McDermott & William D. O'Malley, "Countering Terrorism in Central Asia," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 2003.
5. *Ibid.*
6. China and Kazakhstan organized on a lesser scale the antiterrorist exercise "Tien-Shan-2006" held in August 2006, mainly involving border guards from each country. Such exercises have fostered closer links between the security structures in China and their counterparts elsewhere in Central Asia, but Beijing has placed more value on the multilateral approach.
7. Author Interviews with Senior Officers in Kazakhstan's Armed Forces, December 2006.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.* Author Interviews with Senior Officers in Kazakhstan's Armed Forces, December 2006.

12. The low-altitude flight performance is considered to be good, possessing a rather large bomb load. Its maximum external mounting weight is upwards of some 10 tons, and it has a few places for external attachments. There are 10-11 external mounting points to attach weapons, electronic pods, and auxiliary fuel tanks, etc; *People's Daily*, August 5, 2007.
13. See: AbduMannob Polat, "Reassessing Andijan: The Road to Restoring U.S.-Uzbek Relations," Occasional Paper, The Jamestown Foundation, Washington DC, June 2007.
14. The aircraft itself weighs 240 kilograms, its length is 2.7 meters, wingspan, 3.4 meters. Its flight speed is up to 180 kilometers per hour; Zvezda TV, Moscow, August 11, 2007.
15. Joint Communiqué of the Meeting of the Council of Heads of the SCO Member States, Bishkek, August 16, 2007, available online at: http://www.sectSCO.org/news_detail.asp?id=1659&LanguageID=2.

About the Author

Dr. Roger N. McDermott is a Senior Fellow in Eurasian Military Studies at The Jamestown Foundation in Washington, DC and an Honorary Senior Fellow in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent at Canterbury (UK). He specializes in the study of military and security issues in Central Asia. He is also a member of the editorial boards of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Sweden and The Caucasus and Globalization, Baku. He is the editor of Responding to Terrorism and Other New Threats and Challenges in Central Asia and Afghanistan, Royal Institute for International Affairs, London, June 2006 and co-edited (with Anne C. Aldis) Russian Military Reform 1992-2002, Routledge, London, 2003.