

GUAM AND THE SCO: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Numerous organizations have been born and died on the post-Soviet expanse; the larger part of them left no trace and therefore can be safely forgotten. Two organizations, however, deserve our special attention. I have in mind the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development—GUAM and the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization, not so much because they are rivals of sorts, but because the way they were formed and developed, their response to events, and many other things are similar. Any attempt to compare two international organizations is a thankless task, however, I shall undertake it here.

The Outside Players

The SCO and GUAM are not mere rivals—each of them is supported by outside players with great geopolitical ambitions. GUAM is backed by the United States joined recently by the European Union; the SCO has China behind it, which has great designs for the post-Soviet expanse. This accounts for their specifics and their attitudes toward Russia, which claims the role of key player on the post-Soviet expanse.

Proof of the above is easily found in the two structures' history, which reveals not merely the reasons for their emergence, but also the interests of the outside players involved.

The SCO's status is clear enough: China is obviously interested in it and is working hard to channel it in the desirable direction. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it fails, because so far it is treading cautiously so as not to irritate Russia. In short, it has to bear in mind Russia's interests and ambitions. The expert community, however, agrees that the SCO was set up on China's initiative, which needed a lever of influence in Central Asia.¹

The Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Sphere in Border Areas signed in April 1996 in Shanghai and its component, the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Armed Forces in the Border Area signed in Moscow in April 1997, laid the foundation of the Shanghai Five; in the late 1990s it was transformed into the "Shanghai Forum," which in June 2001 became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

¹ For more detail, see: *Kitai v XXI veke: Globalizatsia interesov bezipasnosti*, ed. by G.I. Chufrin, IMEMO RAN, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 2007, pp. 257-287.

From the very beginning, that is, from the mid-1990s, China regarded the new structure as a vehicle of its interests in Central Asia. It was thanks to the Shanghai Five, within which the format of talks was changed in April 1997 from bilateral (China plus four post-Soviet states) to a format that involved five states (each of the states being an independent entity at the talks), that China successfully coped with the most intricate border issue,² while leaving all the other border problems open.

It was thanks to this structure that China resolved many important geopolitical problems. It was in Shanghai that China formed a strategic alliance with Russia, which was “able to balance off Western domination,” as RF President Yeltsin mentioned during his visit to Shanghai. He clearly stated that none of the countries should be allowed to impose its will on the world.

During his official visit to Kazakhstan on 4-6 July, 1996, Jiang Zemin pointed out in his address to the parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan that “the unfair and irrational international economic order” should be changed through closer South-South cooperation in particular. He went into details: “South-South cooperation should be realized in many spheres, at various levels and in different forms, in the economic as well as political, cultural, and social spheres. The South-North dialog and South-South cooperation are two linchpins of the current world-wide developments and international cooperation.” China, which claimed authorship of the idea and which expected much of its future geopolitical situation, offered its services as a coordinator of such cooperation.³

The Russian-Chinese Joint Declaration in the Multipolar World and the Establishment of the New International Order signed in April 1997 shocked the world, particularly its Western part. In fact, Jiang Zemin’s Moscow visit showed the world that China and Russia were resolved to actively oppose American domination at the global level. The document’s obvious anti-Americanism confirmed that Russia and China intended to play a greater role in world politics. This triggered talks about a “new bloc confrontation.”

GUAM history is more complicated. The GUAM Consultative Forum was officially set up on 10 October, 1997 within the framework of the Council of Europe summit in Strasbourg. Ukraine suggested the idea of pooling the forces of the four states (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova) to create Eurasian and trans-Caucasian transportation corridors and enhance friendly and good-neighborly relations and cooperation among them to fully tap the already existing economic potential.⁴

It stands to reason that GUAM is a logical response to the Kremlin’s foreign and domestic policies of the early 1990s. First, by concentrating on drawing closer to the United States and the West, Russia had no strength left to preserve its influence in the post-Soviet expanse. It failed to set up effective instruments of economic, political, and military integration. Second, engrossed in political squabbles over former public property, which created oligarchs and financial-industrial groups, it looked scary to its potential CIS partners, which feared its revived imperial ambitions and continued re-division of property. This was especially true of the states with real or potential territorial disagreements with Russia or “frozen conflicts” on their territories. All the GUAM members belonged to this category.

² The basic border agreement with Russia was signed in November 1997, the additional agreement, in October 2004. The basic border agreement with Kazakhstan was signed in April 1995 and the additional, in September 1997. The basic border agreement with Kyrgyzstan was signed in July 1996 and the additional, in August 1999. The basic agreement with Tajikistan was signed in February 1999 and the additional, in May 2002.

³ See: *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 6 July, 1996.

⁴ See: Joint Communiqué Meeting of the Presidents of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Strasbourg, 10 October, 1997, available at [<http://www.guam.org.ua/226.469.0.0.1.0.phtml>]. The official site says: “The new organization intends to develop new effective mechanisms of cooperation, restore the considerably weakened economic contacts, and improve the climate of friendly relations for the sake of more harmonized economic development across the post-Soviet territory” (see: [<http://www.guam.org.ua/history.phtml>]).

Russia demonstrated neither enthusiasm⁵ nor hostility, probably due to its foreign policy inertia. In any case, until 2001 Russia not only dispatched its observers to the GUAM summits, but also expressed the desire to join it.

The GUAM members are responsible for Russia's changed attitudes: its request was declined, while GUAM stepped up its contacts with the United States, its main financial sponsor; it was obviously looking at the EU and NATO and stated in so many words that economic cooperation should go hand in hand with military cooperation. In April 1999, Uzbekistan joined GUAM, thus indirectly spreading American influence to Central Asia as well. Russia began to suspect that there were hidden currents under the smooth surface.

Western political analysts confirmed Russia's doubts; shortly before GUAM moved onto the scene, Brzezinski published a book on America's strategy in the world and the post-Soviet expanse, which said in particular: "In the short run, it is in America's interest to consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia. That puts a premium on maneuver and manipulation *in order to prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy*... By the middle term, the foregoing should gradually yield to a greater emphasis on the emergence of increasingly important but strategically compatible partners who, *prompted by American leadership, might help to shape a more co-operative trans-Eurasian security system*. Eventually, in the much longer run still, the foregoing *could phase into a global core of genuinely shared political responsibility*" (italics mine.—K.S.).⁶

It seems that Washington became convinced that despite the far from simple relations inside GUAM it could serve not only as a "regional counterbalance to Russia,"⁷ but also as a vehicle of American strategy in Eurasia. The following provides the best illustration of the fact that by the early 2000s GUAM developed from a predominantly economic into a geopolitical bloc through which the U.S. intended to realize its Eurasia strategy: Uzbekistan joined the structure (under Washington's pressure according to certain sources); America worked hard to push Kazakhstan toward it⁸; the U.S. Administration dispatched its representatives to all the summits; it pays for some of the projects, and finally, in 1999, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan left the Collective Security Treaty (obviously after consultations with their American sponsors).

Evolution

For obvious reasons Russia could not accept this balance of forces in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia; it moved ahead, first, to confirm its position in these regions and, second, to downplay America's influence, thereby undermining GUAM, among other things. The situation in the post-Soviet expanse and in Central Asia⁹ was conducive to this.

⁵ Russia might have been justifiably concerned about the fact that a new alliance, which could control the Black and Caspian seas, had appeared next to its European part and the troublesome Northern Caucasus.

⁶ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 198.

⁷ See: R. Allison, "Regionalism, Regional Structures and Security Management in Central Asia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 3, May 2004, pp. 435-457.

⁸ In November 1997, the U.S. and Kazakhstan signed the production sharing agreement for the Kazakhstani part of the Caspian shelf and an agreement on economic and strategic partnership. U.S. President Clinton said that Washington regarded Kazakhstan as the key Central Asian state. In October 1999, Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian states were included in the responsibility zone of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM).

⁹ For more detail, see: K. Syroezhkin, "Central Asia between the Gravitational Poles of Russia and China," in *Central Asia: The Gathering Storm*, ed. by B. Rumer, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York, London, 2002, pp. 109-207.

Moscow advanced in two directions. First, it transformed the Customs Union into a structure that would bring economic integration of the former Soviet republics closer. On 10 October, 2000, five states (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan; Armenia formally belonged to the new structure from the very beginning, while Uzbekistan joined later, in January 2006) signed an agreement on the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) in Astana. On 23 February, 2003, the presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Ukraine announced that the “new stage of economic integration” allowed them to form a Single Economic Expanse, thus delivering another blow to GUUAM. So far the two newly formed structures and their economic effectiveness leave much to be desired, but they played their role by diminishing GUUAM’s economic effectiveness and bringing discord into its ranks.

Second, the Shanghai Five was transformed into a fully-fledged regional security structure. All the summits of the Five in 1999 and 2000 concentrated on security issues for the simple reason that the virtual regional threats had developed into real ones and become a destabilizing factor that could send waves across Central Asia and the adjacent regions.

The number of members increased: Uzbekistan, the first to realize that it was running the risk of becoming another Tajikistan, joined the Shanghai Five. It became absolutely clear that the regional powers could and should deal with regional problems without waiting for possible assistance from across the ocean. America’s growing might and influence in the region notwithstanding, it was absolutely clear that its role in Central Asia did not go beyond its mere presence and could vanish without trace in the event of a serious conflict.

At the summit of the Five in Dushanbe on 5 July, 2000,¹⁰ President of Uzbekistan Karimov deliberately flattered China by saying that “under Central Asian conditions the presence of two great powers—Russia and China—with vast potentials not only guarantees peace, but also the region’s sustainable development.” The Uzbek president went on to say: “I believe that understanding between Russia and China in this region is the main factor of further cooperation among the member states of the Shanghai Forum.”¹¹

The jubilee summit convened on 14-15 June, 2001 put all the dots on the i’s: Uzbekistan joined the Five, while the Declaration on the Creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization laid the foundation of a new international structure.

The Declaration described the SCO aims: “promoting and developing good-neighborly relations, mutual confidence, and friendship among the member states; encouraging effective cooperation between them in the political, trade and economic, scientific and technical, cultural, educational, energy, transportation, environmental, and other spheres; exerting joint efforts to maintain peace, security, and stability in the region and to build a new democratic, just, and rational political and economic international order.” The member states concentrated on the economic side; at the concluding press conference, Zhang Deguang, who represented the Foreign Ministry of China, deemed it necessary to point out: “Both the Shanghai Five and the SCO have nothing to do with the principle of an alliance and will never develop either into a military bloc or into a collective security system.”¹²

No objections followed; the prospect of another regional economic structure was hailed: this tactic allowed the founders not only to take into account the interests of all of them,¹³ but also not irritate the other regional players too much, particularly the United States.

¹⁰ According to the official version, President Karimov arrived at the summit on an invitation from President of Tajikistan E. Rakhmon; there is no doubt, however, that he was invited by Russia or possibly China.

¹¹ ITAR-TASS, 5 July, 2000.

¹² *Panorama*, 16 June, 2003.

¹³ About China’s interests, see: K. Syroezhkin, “China in Central Asia: From Trade to Strategic Partnership,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (45), 2007, pp. 44-46.

Russia supported the idea, since the economic bias allowed it to deal with the key point on its Central Asian agenda: enticing Uzbekistan to its side and fitting it into the Russian-controlled structures. China's greater economic involvement looked like a problem of secondary importance. It seems that the Russian leaders remained convinced that, first, much time would elapse before the SCO economic projects were put into practice and, second, in the economic sphere China would run across not so much the foreign companies present in the post-Soviet expanse as the CIS integration structures (CAEC and EurAsEC).

Central Asian and worldwide reality upturned these plans and pushed the economic issues to the back burner. The decision passed by the summit to set up an Antiterrorist Center to oppose terrorism, separatism, and extremism moved to the top of the SCO development agenda.

The St. Petersburg summit convened in June 2002 strengthened the SCO mechanisms. The SCO Charter formalized its members' rights and duties, an inevitable and very important move in the emerging geopolitical situation in Central Asia.

It is no accident that Art 2 of the document says: "prevention of any illegitimate acts directed against SCO interests;" Art 13 talks about adequate measures applied to any of the members "violating the provisions of this Charter and/or systematically failing to perform its obligations under international treaties and instruments concluded within the framework of SCO." These provisions were suggested by the vague positions of some of the SCO members. Officially, none of the member states contradicted the negotiated agreements, but there was discernible coolness among the members.¹⁴

This is explained not so much by America's presence in the region (not only military, but also economic, political, and cultural), but mainly by the objective contradictions among the SCO members.

The central contradiction was caused by the organization's fairly vast mandate, which made its mission vague and open to biased interpretations. Russia saw it as a chance to restore the "global actor" image it lost in the early 1990s and to keep the Central Asian states within its field of attraction. At the same time, it hoped to use the SCO to expand its military-political¹⁵ and the still fairly modest economic presence. China looked forward to stronger economic and political influence and the chance to localize the region's threats (ethnic separatism, political and religious extremism, Islamism, political and ethno-national uncertainty). China hoped to use the SCO to prevent destructive processes and to limit America's presence in the region, using Russia for this purpose.

¹⁴ Uzbekistan has its own opinions on most of the issues. Its president called on his colleagues not to press on setting up an antiterrorist structure with headquarters in Bishkek and a secretariat in Beijing. At the St. Petersburg summit, President Karimov addressed the heads of state, primarily Jiang Zemin: "The SCO could develop into a serious factor of world politics if the organization takes the trouble to soberly assess the post-9/11 situation in the world... The world is changing together with the balance of power. The pragmatism demonstrated by the leaders of Russia and the United States, as well as those leaders who signed the Russia-NATO documents stems from a sober assessment and profound understanding of the new situation. We should take this into account." This meant that the Uzbek president warned the summit against any steps uncoordinated with the United States. His behavior and his statements caused bewilderment, even among the journalists. The *Vremia novostey* newspaper asked on 10 June, 2002: "Had the presidents realized that the United States was virtually present at the summit?" President Karimov's position can easily be explained. In March 2002, during his Washington visit, the sides signed a bilateral declaration in which Uzbekistan was called America's key strategic partner in Central Asia. Upon his return to Tashkent, the inspired and encouraged Uzbek president issued the following statement: "The main role in defusing tension on Uzbekistan's southern borders belongs to the United States, its termination, and its perfectly trained armed forces, not to the members of the Collective Security Treaty" (*Kommer-sant*, 16 June, 2002).

¹⁵ See, for example: A.F. Klimenko, "Znachenie Tsentral'no-Aziatskogo regiona. Razvitiye strategicheskogo partnerstva mezhdru Rossii i Kitaem v ramkakh ShOS i nekotorye napravleniya sovershenstvovaniya etoy organizatsii," in: *Problemy stanovleniia Shanghaiskoy organizatsii sotrudnichestva i vzaimodeystviia Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral'noy Azii*, Moscow, 2005, pp. 62-92; A.V. Boliatko, "Strategicheskaiia obstanovka v Tsentral'noy Azii i voenno-politicheskie problemy stanovleniia ShOS," in: *Problemy stanovleniia...*, pp. 122-134.

Uzbekistan hoped to catch up with the process of setting up regional security structures and head this process if possible. It also hoped to use SCO potential to address domestic economic problems and suppress domestic opposition by hoisting the flag of struggle against international terrorism and religious extremism. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan demonstrated their loyalty to Russia while flirting on the side with the Americans and Chinese. They used the SCO structures (in particular RATS) to deal with their domestic problems and to obtain access to additional sources their economies could use.

There was another problem: the SCO and other integration alliances in the post-Soviet expanse (CST and EurAsEC) addressed more or less similar problems. China, which suggested that the experience acquired by the CST members should be used when drafting the SCO key documents and setting up its structures,¹⁶ probably tried to convince Moscow to speed up the process of setting up SCO permanent structures. China's interests in Central Asia are much wider than its cooperation in the economic and security spheres: it seeks greater political and cultural influence as well as greater presence as a demographic component. This hardly fits Russia's interests in the region.

The need to specify the nature of the SCO-NATO dialog, as well as the SCO members' positions vis-à-vis the U.S.-led counterterrorist coalition, was the third problem. While dealing with a seemingly isolated problem, namely regional security, the SCO, NATO, and the U.S. were pursuing different aims, which complicated the situation still further.

America's presence in the region created another (fourth) problem not only because certain regional leaders tended "to sit on the fence," but also because the United States wanted, and could, split the SCO.¹⁷ The potential was unlimited, starting with propaganda campaigns in the Western media about "Russia's Euro-Atlantic choice" and "its inevitable drawing closer to the West" and ending with paying money to some of the Central Asian leaders and subjecting them to economic and political pressure.

The above was directly connected with another uncertainty factor. Being fully aware of the threat created by the growing American military presence in Central Asia, China and Russia did not want a direct confrontation with the U.S. A revived anti-Western pole fit badly into Vladimir Putin's policy of Russia drawing closer to NATO and the United States. Some Russian experts believed that the SCO could have served the cornerstone for another organization integrated into Western structures and rooted in open regionalism; such structures could have attracted a wide range of observer states and members.¹⁸ China, however, could not accept this.

The interest Mongolia, Afghanistan, Iran, India, and Pakistan showed in the SCO has created another problem. None of the SCO members objected to their membership, however, certain doubts lingered. Indeed, would wider membership diffuse the SCO's functions and priorities? Could it undermine the efficiency of the regional security mechanism on the brink of failure?

Finally, the organization's declarative nature was another hindrance: first, the United States demonstrated that the problems the SCO outlined as priorities could be resolved much faster and much more effectively. Second, the SCO members have different ideas about what should be described as terrorism, ethnic separatism, and extremism. Third, economic cooperation remained nothing much but words.¹⁹ Fourth, no one knows whether the SCO is ready to guarantee the domestic stability of its members and outline measures the regimes can use in crisis situations.

¹⁶ ITAR-TASS, 15 March, 2002.

¹⁷ In this context President Karimov's St. Petersburg speech sounds even more adequate (see footnote 14).

¹⁸ See: A.F. Klimenko, "Analiz izmeneniy v Tsentral'noy Azii posle 11 sentiabria 2001 goda i ikh vliania na deiatel'nost ShOS," in: *Problemy stanovleniia...*, p. 24; S. Luzianin, "Shanghaiskaia shesterka uzhe nikogo ne ustrivaet," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 6 June, 2002.

¹⁹ Chinese Foreign Minister Shi Guansheng's proposal "to discuss the possibility of setting up a free trade zone" inside the Six made on 28 May, 2002 at the meeting of foreign ministers of the SCO countries held in Shanghai was not hailed and was not included in the final documents.

Judging by what the West has to say about GUUAM, the Organization failed to justify the hopes it pinned on the new structure. According to Roy Allison, despite the fact that the GUUAM members did look for ways to boost their political, economic, and military potential to be able to neutralize, to a certain extent, Russia's influence in the CIS, the Organization never developed into an "anti-CIS."²⁰ Its appearance was accompanied by a noisy propaganda campaign, but practical measures left much to be desired. The project set up to create alternative transportation routes for Caspian fuel remained, at least at that time, unrealized. Designed to protect the territorial integrity of its members, GUUAM produced the opposite result: instead of reaching an agreement with the separatist leaders, it was confronted by the Association of Unrecognized States.

GUUAM, however, achieved a lot in its institutional development. On 6 November, 2000, at the 55th Session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York, the presidents of the GUUAM members met to produce a New York Memorandum that made cooperation within the structure multi-layered. It was decided to regularly convene GUUAM summits and meetings of foreign ministers, as well as to set up a Committee of National Coordinators (CNC) as the working structure.

On 7 June, 2001, the GUUAM presidents signed the Yalta GUUAM Charter, which created the GUUAM Alliance. The Charter identified the main goals: "promoting social and economic development; strengthening and expanding trade and economic links; developing and efficiently using the transport and communication arteries, in the interests of the GUUAM states, with their corresponding infrastructure situated on their territories; strengthening regional security in all spheres of activity; developing relations in the field of science and culture and the humanitarian sphere; interacting in the framework of international organizations; and combating international terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking."²¹ The Charter said nothing about the military side of the collective activities²²; nor did it mention concerted peacekeeping or regional conflict settlement.

This can be interpreted as a bow to Uzbekistan, which, after withdrawing from the CST, announced its principled position of keeping away from military blocs. The gesture proved futile: on 14 June, 2002, Uzbekistan left GUUAM because of "the absence of progress in its activities." Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov confirmed the decision by saying: "Uzbekistan's involvement in GUUAM was dictated by its desire to integrate into multilateral economic cooperation, but we failed to detect any positive shifts in the right direction in the four years of our membership." The foreign minister went on to say that his country "does not see why it should continue cooperating with GUUAM. It intends, instead, to concentrate on friendly and mutually advantageous bilateral relations with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova."²³

A week later Uzbekistan changed its position and explained that it had been misunderstood: it had not wanted to leave the structure, but merely to suspend its membership. Anyone could detect White House pressure. On 16 June, the U.S. State Department announced that it believed that GUUAM membership would strengthen Uzbekistan's position as regional leader and that it hoped the Uzbek government would retract from its decision.²⁴ Tashkent could not ignore its strategic partner. It remained a formal GUUAM member, but its president never attended its summits.

²⁰ See: R. Allison, "Tsentral'naia Azia i Zakavkaz'e: regional'noe sotrudnichestvo i faktor rossiiskoy politiki," *Carnegie Moscow Center. Working Papers*, No. 10, 2004, pp. 6-7.

²¹ [<http://www.guam.org.ua/226.472.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

²² Earlier this sphere was rapidly developing. In January 1999, the GUAM members agreed on joint maneuvering and military exercises and on cooperation in military education. Three months later, Ukrainian, Georgian, and Azeri officers of the staff and paratroopers carried out the first joint exercises at the Georgian cities of Supsa and Poti designed to raise the level of safety of the oil pipelines and terminals in the region. In September 1998, the border guards of the GUAM countries signed a cooperation treaty (see: R. Allison, "Tsentral'naia Azia i Zakavkaz'e: regional'noe sotrudnichestvo i faktor rossiiskoy politiki," p. 7).

²³ "GUAM s odnoy 'U,'" *Pravda.ru*, 17 June, 2002, available at [<http://www.pravda.ru/>].

²⁴ Reuters, 16 June, 2002.

Uzbekistan's decision to stay away from the Organization put the security issue back on the agenda. At the Yalta summit on 19-20 July, 2002, Ukraine suggested that a "safety belt" be established along the members' state borders to uproot terrorism and other non-traditional security threats.²⁵ The summit stressed once more that any efforts to support separatist and extremist forces should be resolutely stemmed; the same applied to all efforts to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the member states. It was pointed out that the conflicts should be settled in full conformity with international legal norms and principles. The heads of state spoke of the prospects for a Euro-Asian Oil Transportation Corridor within the conception of diversified transportation of Caspian oil to the world markets.²⁶ The project looked utopian because of the insufficient resources, however, in view of the increased interest in transportation routes from the Caspian to Central and Western Europe, GUUAM could expect international support. Speaking at the summit, William Taylor, the U.S. State Department coordinator of U.S. assistance to Europe and Eurasia, said that his country wanted several more oil pipelines in the region besides the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline and promised America's support if the Organization was prepared to launch the project and create an oil transportation corridor.²⁷

There were unpleasant surprises as well, President of Moldova Vladimir Voronin being the author of one of them by saying: "The fact that Uzbekistan suspended its GUUAM membership should be treated as a warning and a sign that we should revise its prospects" and "Moldova has many reasons to be concerned with GUUAM's viability and with our country's place and role in the Organization and the emerging system of relations in it." He went on with more detailed arguments: "Economic integration within GUUAM looks fairly artificial. This is confirmed by the drop in trade turnover within it. We have obviously failed to identify the priorities of our economic cooperation. I think that the entire complex of economic, social, and cultural problems, which GUUAM intends to address have been just as fully and as promisingly developed within the corresponding CIS programs."²⁸

The years 2003 and 2004 proved to be trying for GUUAM, which found itself on the brink of disintegration. The Yalta summit on 3-4 July, 2003 was ignored by three presidents: Uzbekistan was represented by State Foreign Policy Advisor of the President of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov; Azerbaijan by Prime Minister Artur Rasizade, and Moldova by First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Stratan. The large number of foreign guests could obviously not fill the three gaps. Late in July Foreign Minister of Moldova Nicolae Duceu made a statement to the effect that his country doubted its continued GUUAM membership as useful, since "Chisinau was not very sure of the effectiveness of the cooperation mechanisms."²⁹ The 2004 summit did not take place.

GUUAM remained afloat thanks to American funding and, strange as it may seem, the appearance of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in May 2003, which revived the military aspects of GUUAM. Georgia and Ukraine, at least, agreed to appoint military coordinators.³⁰

The sponsors revived their former interest, while the United States made an effort to revive the Organization itself. In December 2004, Richard Armitage met with the ambassadors of the GUUAM members in Washington to discuss the possibility of giving the structure a new lease on life.³¹ Later developments revealed that it had been decided to strengthen GUUAM's ideological component to turn it into a mechanism of regime-change in the post-Soviet expanse.

²⁵ See: R. Allison, "Tsentral'naia Azia i Zakavkaz'e: regional'noe sotrudnichestvo i faktor rossiiskoy politiki," p. 8.

²⁶ See: Zakliuchitel'noe Kommiunike Sammita GUUAM 2002, Yalta [<http://www.guam.org.ua/181.623.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

²⁷ See: A. Volk, "GUUAM: temnoe budushchee organizatsii s neiasnym nazvaniem," *Gazeta SNG*, 22 July, 2002.

²⁸ RIA Novosti, 21 July, 2002.

²⁹ RIA Novosti, 26 July, 2003.

³⁰ See: *Vremia novostey*, 5 May, 2003.

³¹ RIA Novosti. 27 April, 2005.

Fight for the Geopolitical Expanse

A first step in the right direction took the form of the Carpathian Declaration President Saakashvili and President Yushchenko signed early in January 2005. It said that their coming to power launched a new liberation wave in Europe, which “will spread the final victory of freedom and democracy across the European continent.”³² This meant that the two chief “democrats” of the CIS had been given the role of GUUAM revivers on the platform of the Color Revolutions which were expected to engulf the entire post-Soviet territory.

Uzbekistan’s position was more or less clear, therefore the revivers had to tread cautiously so as not to scare away Ilham Aliev with their Color-Revolution ideas, while attracting Vladimir Voronin into their “democratic” company.

The latter turned out to be easy prey: first, late in 2003, Chisinau refused to sign the already agreed upon Kozak Memorandum, which contained Russia’s plan for settling the Transnistrian conflict; this soured the previously friendly relations with Moscow. Second, President Voronin had enough reasons to believe that the opposition might turn the Color-Revolution tide against his regime: he armed himself with liberal slogans, thus pulling the “democrats” supported by the West to his side. In February and March 2005, the three leaders met several times on a bilateral basis before finally reaching a consensus.

Azerbaijan tactfully kept away from the project, but never rejected it: on the eve of elections, the safest place in the country was on the “democratic” side of the barricades. Ilham Aliev continued to regard GUUAM as an economically attractive mechanism designed to expand the pipeline network to move Caspian fuels to the world oil markets.

President Karimov turned the deaf ear to the “revivers:” late in January he warned them that the political biases of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova had forced him to revise his attitude toward GUUAM.³³ On 5 May, he sent a letter to the Moldovan president in which he substantiated his decision to leave the structure. It said, among other things, that “due to its geographic location Uzbekistan sees no possibility of realizing its economic and security interests within the new initiatives and projects GUUAM intends to promote and, therefore, is leaving the Organization.”³⁴

The Chisinau summit convened on 22 April, 2005 was expected to formalize the new role of the old structure. Not all the expectations came true, however, the Declaration “In the Name of Democracy, Stability, and Development” demonstrated that GUUAM was not only alive, but had also acquired a new role in the post-Soviet expanse.³⁵ First, it clearly stated that it would export Color Revolutions (to Belarus in particular); second, it described integration into Europe as the final goal of the member states; third, it revived the old idea of an alternative oil and gas production and transportation network designed to leave Russia in the cold; fourth, it bypassed in silence the right of nations to self-determination and described settlement of the “frozen conflicts” as one of the aims to “reintegrate uncontrolled territories into the states, of which they are a part;” to achieve which the members for-

³² “La declaration des Carpatés,” *Le Figaro*, 12 January, 2005.

³³ See: *Ekho*, 29 January, 2005.

³⁴ RTR-Vesti, 5 May, 2005. It looks as if this step was taken under Russia’s pressure. In any case, Uzbekistan left GUUAM and at the same time denounced the documents related to economic integration and trade and economic cooperation within this structure, namely the 2001 Yalta Charter; the Memorandum of Understanding among the GUUAM Participating States on Trade and Transportation Facilitation, and the Agreement on Mutual Aid and Cooperation in the Customs Sphere between the governments of the GUUAM member states (both documents were dated 2003). This means that Uzbekistan left GUUAM for geopolitical rather than economic reasons.

³⁵ [<http://www.guam.org.ua/226.489.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

mulated the fifth task as squeezing Russia out of the zones of conflict and replacing the Russian peacekeepers stationed there with peacekeepers from other countries.³⁶

On top of this, the two main “revivers” harbored geopolitical ambitions as well. The Declaration made no mention of them, however, they found their way into President Saakashvili’s interview with *La Repubblica*³⁷ and into the ambitious settlement plan in the Transnistria area President Yushchenko laid on the table at the summit.³⁸ The attempt to draw some of the East European states into GUAM can be interpreted as another ambitious project. In fact, President of Rumania Trajan Basescu and President of Lithuania Valdas Adamcus attended the summit as guests.

The final goal was absolutely clear: Russia should be separated from “old Europe” by a belt of pro-American regimes to prevent its revival as a superpower and to drive it back into the “outside administration” of the 1990s.

The response was prompt. The 10th SCO summit held in Astana on 5-6 June, 2005 added another dimension to it. First, the number of observers increased from one (Mongolia) to four (Iran, Pakistan, and India), which meant that the organization had rallied nearly half of the globe’s population and that its decisions, therefore, could hardly be ignored.

Second, the member states finally identified their mission. The Conception for Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism the summit adopted said in part: “The member states proceed from the fact that their priority is to fight terrorism, separatism, and extremism using the SCO’s own forces.”³⁹ According to President Karimov, “it was a vast strategic design, the final aim of which was to change the political and economic balance of power and domination in the Central Asian Region in our interests.”⁴⁰

Third, the summit removed the second vague circumstance created by the foreign military presence in Central Asia. Despite the frantic efforts of the United States and the West as a whole, they failed to drive a wedge between China and Russia, the SCO’s two locomotives, or to detach the Central Asian states from the tandem.

Judging by the summit results and reports in the Western media, the West lost the battle: on the one hand, America’s request for observer status in the SCO was ignored; on the other, the final declaration stated: “Taking into account the completion of the active combat phase of the antiterrorist operation in Afghanistan,” the SCO members deemed it necessary to point out that “the relevant members of the antiterrorist coalition make a decision on the deadlines for the temporary use of the above-mentioned infrastructure facilities and military presence on the territory of the

³⁶ The initiative belongs to Viktor Yushchenko who complained to the GUAM sponsors that the democratic states “could not get rid” of the Russian peacekeepers. In August 2006, at the Tbilisi meeting of the representatives of the defense departments of the GUAM members, it was decided to set up a peacekeeping battalion, which according to the heads of the Georgian defense ministry “was suggested by the GUAM members for taking part in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations under the U.N., OSCE, NATO, and EU aegis” (*Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 August, 2006).

³⁷ Immediately after the parliamentary elections in Moldova, President Saakashvili said with a great deal of conceit: “Europe is living through a geopolitical revolution no one expected. The balance that the continent achieved when the Berlin Wall fell down has been upset once more. The post-Soviet expanse wants reform, democracy, and freedom. Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, together with Rumania, will pull the Black Sea zone into the European Union. President Putin, who thinks that he can stem the process, will soon watch it flooding Moscow” (“Una rivoluzione scuote Europa. Putin non potrà ‘piu’ fermarla,” *La Repubblica*, 2 March, 2005).

³⁸ The plan may produce one of two results: either an independent state will appear in the Transnistrian area (something that Moldova is not prepared to accept) or the area will develop into a quasi-state dominated by Ukraine and Co. In both cases, the problem formulated by the summit (restored territorial integrity of the states with separatist conflicts) is not being solved. It seems that Taras Chornovil, one of the Ukrainian opposition leaders, was right when he said that the summit would end in a scandal for Ukraine since “Kiev interfered in the Transnistrian conflict without full understanding of how serious the issue was” (*Vremia novostey*, 22 April, 2005).

³⁹ [<http://www.kremlin.ru/interdocs/2005/07/05>].

⁴⁰ *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, 6 July, 2005.

SCO member states.”⁴¹ In other words, America was asked, on Russia’s initiative, to leave the region.⁴²

This was not all. The Declaration pointed to several circumstances in a way the U.S. and the West found unpleasant. First, it stressed the world’s cultural and civilizational diversity and insisted on the obvious right of every nation to choose its own road. This means that the SCO countries rejected all attempts at imposing certain development patterns on them.⁴³ Second, the member states voiced their conviction that “any efficient and just world order should be based on strengthening mutual trust and good-neighborliness and on the establishment of genuine partnership free from any claims to monopoly or dominance in international affairs.”⁴⁴ In other words, the policy of American domination was rejected. It seems that in anticipation of the Color Revolution methods applied in their countries, the local leaders preferred “authoritarian Russia” and no less authoritarian China as their strategic partners. Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov confirmed: “The corresponding structures of the CSTO and SCO can cope with the task of localizing and defeating the remnants of the extremist units that are crossing into the region from Afghanistan.”⁴⁵

In the fall of 2005, Russia took a second step. It made energy policy the main instrument of the CIS’s new strategy.⁴⁶ It was suggested that energy resources could either be supplied at world prices or at prices much lower than the world ones if the customer agreed to transfer its energy infrastructure to Russian companies.

The “gas conflict” with Ukraine, which in the winter of 2006 nearly undermined gas supplies to Europe, forced the EU to look for new methods of putting pressure on Russia. GUAM was selected as one of the levers. In May 2006, the GUAM summit in Kiev transformed the structures into the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM and significantly adjusted its tasks.

The final Kiev Declaration contained, together with the usual set of issues (combating international terrorism, extremism, and aggressive separatism; settling the still smoldering conflicts; continuing the advance toward European integration, etc.), two new interesting points. The first stated: “no economic pressure and monopolization of the energy market can be accepted,”⁴⁷ and pointed out that the countries should pool efforts to ensure their energy security through diversification of the supply routes, among other things, from Central Asia and the Caspian to the European market. The second confirmed the GUAM members’ course toward deeper integration with Europe and closer relations with the European Union and NATO.⁴⁸

The joint declaration on conflict settlement was worded in even harsher terms. First, it confirmed a principle according to which the conflicts should be resolved by “reintegrating uncontrolled

⁴¹ Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Astana, 5 July, 2005) [http://0-russia.shaps.hawaii.edu.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/fp/russia/2005/20050705_sco_07.html].

⁴² Several days later in his interview with Russian TV, Kurmanbek Bakiev specified: “Since Vladimir Putin raised the question (the time during which the American military base will remain in Kyrgyzstan.—K.S.) I have to say: yes, the situation has changed” (*Vremia novostey*, 19 July, 2005).

⁴³ SCO Executive Secretary Zhang Deguang has pointed out: “Export of a ready-made social model will not promote progress; it will create chaos, violate the normal course of political and economic development, and push society backward” (*Kazakhstan Today*, 5 July, 2003).

⁴⁴ Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

⁴⁵ *Vremia novostey*, 6 July, 2005.

⁴⁶ In October 2005, Russia’s foreign minister first raised the subject in a narrow circle. He said that the time had come for Russia to apply the entire set of levers of economic pressure to inadequately loyal CIS neighbors (*Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 13 October, 2005).

⁴⁷ American Senator Richard Lugar developed the thought at the Riga NATO summit on 27-28 November, 2006: “It would be irresponsible for NATO to decline involvement in energy security when it is abundantly apparent that the jobs, health, and security of our modern economies and societies depend on the sufficiently and timely availability of diverse energy resources.” The U.S. senator suggested that Art 5 of the NATO Treaty be altered to cover energy security (*Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, 8 December, 2006).

⁴⁸ [<http://www.guam.org.ua/181.611.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

territories into the states, of which they are a part.” Second, it openly stated that security in these zones was “ensured with the help of multi-national peacekeeping forces under the U.N. or OSCE aegis stationed there.”⁴⁹ In other words, Russia was indirectly informed that the presence of NATO units on its southern borders was already a settled issue and, if it continued to negatively affect Europe’s energy security, the EU would find the means and ways to make it see differently.

This looked threatening, but judging by the 2007 developments Russia ignored the warnings coming from GUAM and its Western sponsors. It was resolved to upturn these plans and even succeeded to a certain extent.

The initiative of the GUAM members to take the “frozen conflicts” issue in former Soviet republics to the U.N. General Assembly met with Russia’s active opposition. It struck back in 2007 in the form of referendums in support of independence in the breakaway regions, which asked the Russian Federation for associated membership. Let sleeping dogs lie as they say in such cases. Moldova sized up the threat and preferred to steer clear of stirring up any trouble with Russia; it looks as if its GUAM colleagues failed to grasp the situation. The political context in these countries is far from optimistic. In fact they cannot threaten Russia and are not even interesting enough for the EU and NATO.

The situation on the energy security front is far from clear. There is no shortage of projects. Indeed, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline is already in operation; there is a project for a trans-Caspian pipeline along the Caspian bed; Ukraine’s pet project of the Odessa-Brody-Plock-Gdansk oil pipeline, and the trans-Caspian gas pipeline. There is no shortage of projects, but there is an obvious shortage of oil and gas. Today GUAM has to decide what it can offer to entice the Central Asian countries into its orbit.

The year 2007 demonstrated that the struggle over transportation routes is serious to the extent that it called for the presidents’ personal lobbying. The informal GUAM summit in Krakow held on 11 May, 2007 and attended by Lithuania, Poland, and representative of Kazakhstan produced a communiqué on energy issues related to the construction of the Odessa-Brody-Plock-Gdansk pipeline. The next day, the presidents of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, who met in Turkmenbashi, signed an agreement on the Caspian gas pipeline and on additional capacities for the Central Asia-Center gas pipeline, which was also signed by Uzbekistan. The central issues of both summits were: Whom will the Central Asian countries befriend? and Which countries will serve as transit territories for the new pipelines?

It seems that Russia has won the first round: President Nazarbaev chose not to attend the Krakow summit; he kept Polish companies away from the oil projects in his country and refused to join the Odessa-Gdansk project without Russia. Without Kazakhstan, the Krakow summit became a discussion club of oil consumers: Azerbaijan did not have enough oil to fill the planned pipeline to capacity—it had to fill its geopolitical rival, the BTC pipeline.

Russia’s victory, however, turned out to be a Pyrrhic one: President Berdymukhammedov began lavishing promises of Turkmenian gas right and left, on Russia, Europe, and China. The transportation routes of Turkmenian gas were suspended once more when late in July Turkmenistan and China signed a treaty on a gas pipeline⁵⁰ and when, on 14 August, Assistant U.S. State Secretary for Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs Daniel Sullivan successfully completed his visit to Ashgabad by reaching an understanding on the trans-Caspian gas pipeline.⁵¹

⁴⁹ [<http://www.guam.org.ua/181.610.0.0.1.0.phtml>].

⁵⁰ Under the treaty, construction should be completed in 2009; the pipeline will move about 30 billion cu m of Turkmenian gas to China every year for the next 30 years (see: *Kommersant*, 19 July, 2007).

⁵¹ On 16 August, Chief Advisor of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency James Wilderotter and President of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic Rovnag Abdullaev signed a \$1.7 million grant agreement in Baku. Daniel Sullivan, who attended the ceremony, announced that the grant was intended for feasibility studies for two projects: the

The Bishkek SCO summit held on 16-17 August, 2007 attended, for the first time, by the president of Turkmenistan as a guest failed to clarify the situation. No agreement on an Energy Club was reached for the very simple reason that, first, the material interests of the supplier and transit countries clashed and, second, because there was much fiercer rivalry over the region's energy sources and China's active involvement in the race.

In the near future, the problem will loom high in the post-Soviet geopolitical expanse. In the past there was a lot of talk about Russia-the West competition and about the West's intention to set up a "cordon sanitaire" of sorts around Russia. Today, the West has to cope with "oil-thirsty" China. This factor will not go away: China will need more and more energy sources to cover its growing energy deficit. This means, on the one hand, that China, Russia, and the West will have to compete for Central Asia's resources and transportation routes. On the other, China's share in the region's oil and gas sector will inevitably increase. There is another aspect: the local countries might be tempted to exploit China's heightened interest in their resources to wrench concessions from Russia and Western companies.

Today, no one can predict the future developments in the context of China's snowballing energy deficit and Russia's resolve to dominate fuel transportation from Central Asia. As long as there is the common aim of keeping American influence in Central Asia in check, the Russian-Chinese tandem will continue to function. The same is true of the SCO, its main institution. No one knows what will happen to either country when the shared aim disappears and China grows stronger.

China will undoubtedly pursue its national interests, which at a certain development stage might clash with Russia's national interests and strategy. China might try to impose on the local countries the dilemma of choosing between its "investment potential" and Russia's "imperial ambitions." So far, the choice of the local elites is hard to predict.

trans-Caspian gas pipeline through which Central Asian gas would reach Europe and an oil pipeline to be laid along the Caspian bed to connect Kazakhstan with BTC. According to Mr. Sullivan, there was an agreement with the Turkmenian president on the former and with the Kazakh president on the latter achieved during President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliiev's visit to Kazakhstan early in August 2007 (see: *Kommersant*, 21 August, 2007).
