

INFO SCO

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THE SCO SUMMIT
IN DUSHANBE
SEPTEMBER 12, 2014

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OF SOME UNIVERSAL TRUTH...»

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EMOMALI RAHMON

By joint efforts we can realize the enormous potential of the SCO



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SCO MOSCOW BUSINESS DIALOGUE



2014, 12 – 13 November

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Dear readers,

Today, we are pleased to state that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has succeeded in becoming a factor of international politics. In a relatively small amount of time, the SCO has found its niche in the global political and economic architecture. The Organization plays an increasingly important part in regional and global affairs; its international authority and attractiveness are growing.

We have shaped efficient mechanisms and the necessary legal framework for cooperation. We are consistently developing interaction on political and security issues, expanding trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian contacts between the member states. All these achievements have been made possible by our – and yours – joint efforts and the focused work of the SCO structures.

At the same time, we are positive that the SCO still has not fully utilized its potential for turning our region into a territory of peace, stability, friendship, prosperity and harmonious co-development.

This is why Tajikistan's efforts today are focused on unlocking this potential and ensuring new practical results in all spheres of the Organization's activities.

*Emomali Rahmon,
President of the Republic
of Tajikistan*

SCO SOBERLY ESTIMATES TODAY'S CHALLENGES

Sirojiddin Aslov, Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, spoke about his country's presidency in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in an interview with the Asia Plus newspaper.



Q.: Mr Aslov, what have you achieved during the year of presidency at the SCO? What has Tajikistan done to develop the Organization?

A.: The motto for Tajikistan's presidency was "Cooperation, co-development, co-prosperity." One of the main goals for the period was fulfillment of the tasks that had been set and of agreements that had been reached, as well as maximum assistance for intensifying development of mutually beneficial and productive political, economic, cultural, humanitarian and security cooperation.

During its presidency, Tajikistan, with active support from its partners, achieved some visible results in certain areas of the SCO's activities; a number of important events at the level of heads and experts of ministries and agencies of the SCO member states were held.

Notably, the SCO Council of National Coordinators met seven times during this period – in Dushanbe, Tashkent and Beijing; there were several consultations between foreign ministers in Beijing devoted to different issues of the Organization's activities; the 24th meeting of the Council of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure took place in Tashkent. Dushanbe and Kairakkum hosted the 9th meeting of Security Council Secretaries, a meeting of defense ministers, a meeting of heads of frontier services that have powers to fight illegal drug trafficking, a meeting of culture ministers and an international research and practical conference titled "The Role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Ensuring Regional Security: Problems and Outlook."

Before the end of the year, we will hold a meeting of the Council of the Inter-Bank Union, the Business Council and the SCO business forum. There will be exhibitions and fairs of industrial and agricultural products, art exhibitions and an international youth football tournament.

In September, during the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, the SCO member states plan to promote and adopt a resolution of the UN General Assembly on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the SCO. I first saw this initiative emerge during my work as Tajikistan's representative to the UN.

My colleagues – representatives of the SCO member states – and I worked closely on it, and today adoption of such a resolution has become an annual tradition.

I would like to emphasize that during Tajikistan's current presidency, the SCO member states for the first time in the 13 years since the Organization's setup, took inventory of the legal framework of the SCO's cooperation (through consultations between the foreign ministries and with support from the SCO Secretariat). During this process, the parties conducted legal analysis of the adopted decisions of the Council of the Heads of State, the Council of the Heads of Governments (Prime Ministers) and the Council of Foreign Ministers in order to execute them properly. We also verified information about compliance of internal national procedures with international treaties signed within the SCO.

As part of consultations between foreign ministries, we drafted a consolidated provision on SCO branding, which determines the procedure for using the Organization's symbols at some or other events.

Q.: In September 2014, Dushanbe will welcome SCO heads of state for the next summit. What issues are included in the meeting's agenda? Experts say the Organization could admit new members...

A.: We have already received confirmation from all invited guests that they are coming to the summit. During the event, the SCO heads of state will discuss the priorities and further improvement of the Organization's activities, exchange opinions on relevant regional and international issues, consider ways for improving interaction between the SCO and its observers and dialog partners and will also elect a presiding state for 2014-2015. After the summit, the heads of state will sign corresponding final documents.

The SCO's authority in the region and in the world is growing steadily year after year. This is confirmed by the huge interest in the Organization shown by many countries and regional organizations that see it as an influential and promising regional association. At present, five countries – Afghanistan, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan – are SCO observers, while Belarus, Turkey and Sri Lanka have the status of dialog partners. Some of them want to upgrade it. Some countries have asked to be made full members, while some dialog partners want to become observers.

During Tajikistan's presidency, interaction with SCO observers has intensified. Notably, the SCO Secretariat hosted the first meeting of national coordinators of the SCO member states with authorized representatives from the observer states, while the Executive



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Committee of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure held the first conference that was attended by anti-terrorist agencies of the observers. These are new formats and we are glad that they emerged during Tajikistan's presidency.

In order for admissions of new members, observers and dialog partners to progress within the legal framework, experts from the SCO member states have been working for several years on the draft procedure for granting the status of a SCO member and on a new version of the standard Memorandum on obligations of the applicant state for obtaining the status of a SCO member.

These documents will be considered and adopted by the SCO heads of state at the Dushanbe summit in September. This will be the last stage in the preparation of the legal framework for admission of new members.

Q.: How do you assess the SCO's prospects and its role in today's

world? This question is becoming especially relevant given the cooling between Russia and the West in recent months.

A.: I do not think it is appropriate to consider the prospects of an organization in the context of other states' bilateral relations. I would like to point out that the SCO is founded on the principles of good neighborliness, mutual benefits, equality, respect to cultures and joint development.

At the same time, in its relations with other countries and organizations, the SCO is guided by principles of mutual trust and does not direct its activities against some third party.

Besides, efficiency of any organization is assessed by the way it resolves some or other problems of its member states, the way it responds to international threats and challenges, but not in connection with international or regional developments at a given moment on a given territory. We believe

that the SCO member states soberly estimate the modern problems and challenges, which still include ensuring peace and stability and fighting against the "three evils" – terrorism, extremism and separatism- and also against illegal drug and arms trafficking. And they are counteracting these threats with a certain amount of success.

Yet another priority for the SCO is development of trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation. Nor can it stay away from the problems of Afghanistan and is regularly contributing to the efforts aimed at bringing stability and social and economic revival to this long-suffering nation.

Recently, the SCO has been addressing important tasks of counteracting threats to information security, political and criminal ones. Moreover, the range of issues that is being discussed within the SCO is expanding year after year. This is why we can state that its prospects are quite optimistic and its role will continue growing.

CHARMING MONDAY

Irina Dubovitskaya, staff reporter of InfoSCO in Tajikistan

Isn't it strange to call a city – Monday?
This is how Dushanbe translated from Tajik language.
But who gave it this name?
A short answer is – history, Genius loci...



Back in III-IV centuries B.C. it was a large antique city of mysterious Kushan dynasty, which competed with China, Roman and Parthian empires. But almighty Time played its chess game on the desk of Earth and this civilization was taken to nowhere, and only some myths and artifacts were left.

But Genius loci did his best to save the place itself... And in the second half of XVII century a settlement appeared on the remains of Kushan city, at least, the first notes about Dushanbe are dated with this period. The kishlak nestled in a fertile Gissar valley, on the height of 1000 meter above sea level at the

crossing of many roads. Many caravans met here, with many trade people from many countries, and locals were glad to host them. Monday was never considered to be a hard day – it was a feast, with trade, communication, and interesting events and it was the main day of the week.



A vast bazar opened as the sun went up into the sky, and its smell and sounds stopped when the first stars appeared, and it was like a huge flower. Local people were very pragmatic and also they were thinkers, who understood their mission and their luck. These bazars became a long-term tradition, and they brought prosperity to the city. They became one of the main elements of the Great Silk Road. And kishlak got its name – Dushanbe. This village was meant to have a perfect “career”. As centuries passed, it became a capital, political, cultural and economical center of Tajikistan, a young sovereign country in Pamirs.

Every new visitor of the city dreams to meet a real fairy-tale – because of its reputation. Yes, you will see a city dressed in green clothes of chinars under the hot sun, with its huge and magnificent bazar, with so many exotic fruits and vegetables, with loud bearded marketers in turbans and tagiyahs, in unusual chapans – Tajik dressing gowns. Traveler’s eyes will also be attracted by beautiful women in bright dresses, Turkish-style pants and colorful kerchiefs. Another side of this city is about landscape art and architecture, original and unusual. During recent years they build palaces in neo-classic style, such as Palace

of Nations (“Kasri Millat”) or trading center “Poytaht”, or sky-scrappers – “Dushanbe Plaza” and “Dushanbe-80”. Dushanbe also has a large developed industrial complex (230 enterprises, which produce more than 300 kinds of products), also there are a lot of colleges, research institutes, theatres and museums – everything that builds up a modern capital.

There is an oriental saying – “he is beautiful who looks like nobody else”. Individuality of Dushanbe is hidden in its special atmosphere, which can’t be removed by time or modern innovations. This special energy comes, first of all, from Pamir Mountains, rising up to the blue sky. As well as all these colorful women’s clothes and jewelries, noisy bazars and their inhabitants. We can’t leave aside golden hills of pilaf on painted ceramic plates, this “celestial food” which will never disappear from the tables of friendly Tajik people.

Citizens of Dushanbe love their city and know all its peculiar places where you can feel its heart better. One of such places is botanical garden on the left side of Dushanbinka river.

13-meters statue of lying Buddha in the Museum of Antiquities of Tajikistan.

“Buddha in nirvana” was modelled in clay 1.6 thousand years ago. This is the largest sculpture of the deity in the region.



*Penjikent, V-VI centuries AD.
Researchers from many countries
with good reason call it a pearl
of ancient Asian culture comparing
its wall paintings with
those of Pompeii.*



Created in the middle of 1930ths, it saved all trees and plants, planted by the first enthusiasts – scientists from National institute of biology. Hundreds of unique plants from all over the world grow here on this fertile land and seem to be quite happy among their friends and relatives. Many of them are on the Red List.

In hot countries shadow is one of the most valuable things. The alleys of botanical garden are covered with tops of the trees, as with a special cover. The best time is early morning, when birds start singing, dragonflies chopper around and sweet smell of acacia teases your senses in the bouquet of other aromas.

To continue this wonderful contact with nature, you can rest in a cozy wooden pavilion, decorated with elegant ornament, or visit the open-air ethnographic village. Here you will learn a lot about traditional way of living of Tajik people, you will see old types of houses and mills, creameries and bath-houses...



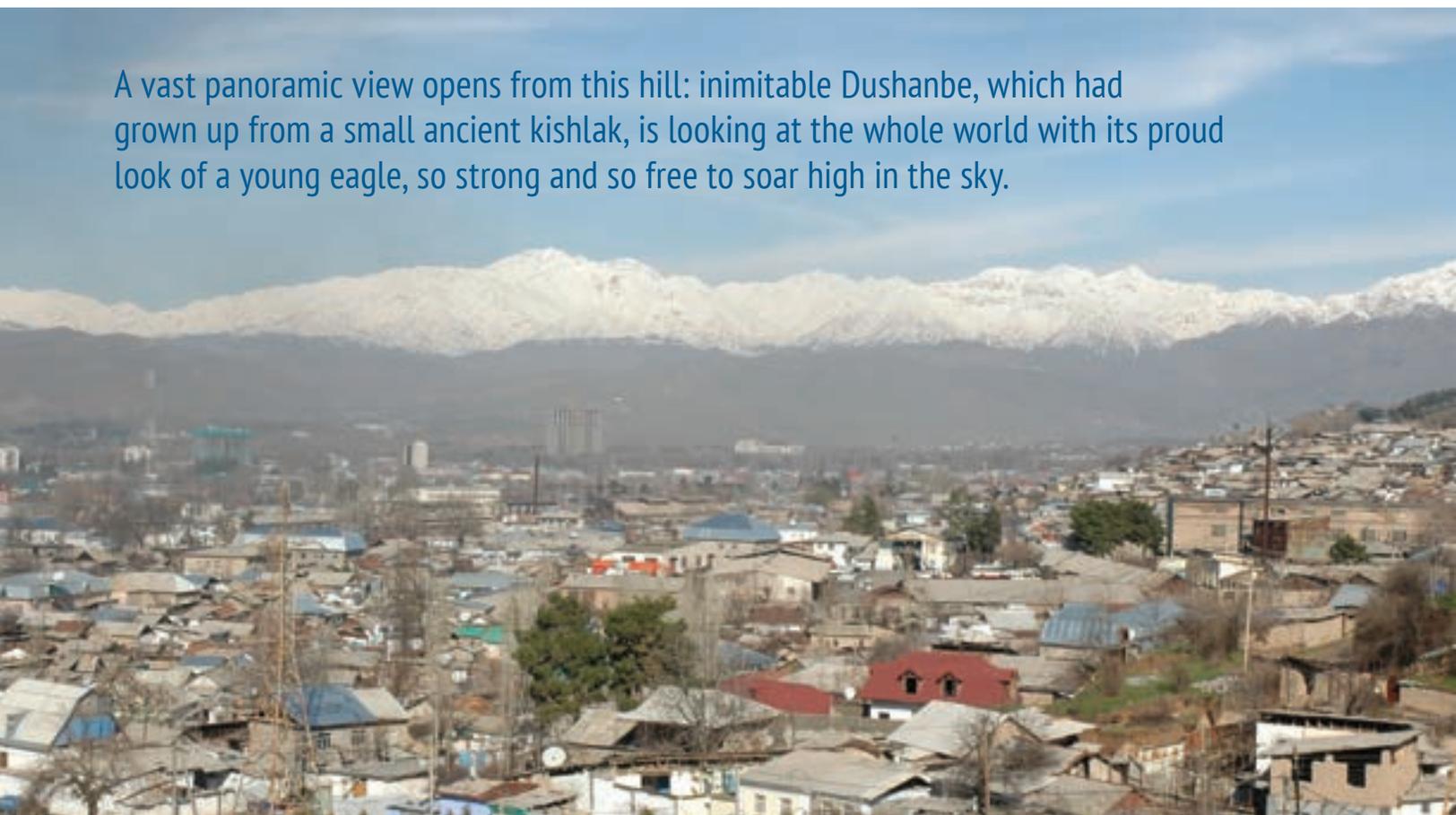
The curiosity shop and museum of ethnography are the good places to continue acquaintance with local history. Many exhibitions show the whole picture of Tajik history, through hundreds of generations of people, who were born in the country of mountain peaks and deep gorges. You will see thousand years old cloth pieces, made by weaver of Bazar-Dara miners village, and wonderful ivory-carving, and elegant small statues of antique gods and fawns from the mysterious ancient town of Tahti-Sangin on the shore of Amudaria river (in ancient times the river was called Jeihun, which means “wild”). Next are graceful lions of ancient Khulbuk period, they may be found on the dishes and bronze cassiolette...

Frescoes of medieval Penjikent strike imagination with their refinement. One feels the breathe of their époque, and the same feeling comes from the giant wooden panels from Shakhristan, telling about heroes and deeds of immortal epos «Shakhsname». And every visitors becomes numb when he comes to a 13 meters long statue of Buddha, lying in nirvana state for fifteen centuries, since the times when local people were Buddhists. Sleeping Buddha is guarded by dozens of Tajik archeologists and restorers, who had found it more than fifty years ago among the ruins of Buddhist temple Ajina-Tepe on the shores of Vahsh river. This sleeping Buddha is the largest statue of Buddha in the region... Recognition, amazement, astonishment

– this is what one feels here, because he touches a unique world of ancient culture. Not everybody can accept this knowledge and these impressions, but everyone is deeply surprised. And we can say, talking in the manner of ancient Hellenes, that “he who saw this – is he who saw this” – i.e. a person who acquired some new qualities.

So we will finish our short story about Tajik capital – and we stop on the scenic viewpoint of the Park of Victory, built in memory of Second World War heroes. Tajik people are the brave warriors and they were fighting against Hitler together with all other nations of the former USSR, and even now, being an independent country, they didn't lose the feeling of brotherhood.

A vast panoramic view opens from this hill: inimitable Dushanbe, which had grown up from a small ancient kishlak, is looking at the whole world with its proud look of a young eagle, so strong and so free to soar high in the sky.



SCO IS SEEN AS A SOURCE OF UNIVERSAL TRUTH...

Tatiana Sinitsyna, editor-in-chief of the InfoSHOS web portal, interviews Kirill Barsky, the Russian President's special envoy to the SCO, Russia's national coordinator at the organization and ambassador-at-large.



The SCO has never positioned itself as an organization that “will be friends against someone”, aimed against third countries, that will try to respond to existing challenges in a confrontational or even military way.

Q.: *You have once said that the “SCO is one of the most dynamically developing regional organizations both in Eurasia and in the world.” But its opponents think differently: they say the SCO lacks energy, progresses slowly and is stalled by serious problems.*

A.: The problems the SCO encounters are not the same that are ascribed to it. It is, for example, said that the organization has failed to become really “sharp-toothed” and is unable to perform its functions of ensuring security in the region, unable to perform the functions of a military alliance and cannot say “no” when – some analysts and journalists believe

– the core interests of its member states are encroached upon. But the SCO has never had such goals. It has never positioned itself as an organization that “will be friends against someone”, aimed against third countries, that will try to respond to existing challenges in a confrontational or even military way.

This is the core issue that needs to be understood in order not to look for the SCO’s problems in the wrong place.

Of course, the SCO has its own problems and difficulties. To begin with, it is still a very young organization, it is just 12 years old, but it is growing and developing fairly fast for its age. Let me say that many regional unions

needed decades to define their goals and tasks, to prepare the necessary legal framework and institutions of cooperation, to shape full-fledged mechanisms for interaction in different areas.

Say, ASEAN has been around for over 40 years, but its members formulated the goal of building an ASEAN community only a few years ago. It is seen as a triune community: a security community, an economic community and a social and cultural one.

But in the beginning, in the 1960s-1970s, ASEAN set itself different goals and cooperation developed only in separate areas.



The SCO member states set themselves the goals of developing political, economic and humanitarian cooperation when the organization was only being shaped and immediately decided that the SCO would develop as a full-format regional organization. Naturally, it is impossible to reach all the set goals over a short period of time. But the fact that the SCO is purposefully moving towards them is obvious to everyone who is capable of impartial assessments.

The problems the SCO encounters stem to a large degree from the alarming regional situation, the difficulty and acuteness of threats and challenges to security. It is necessary to find adequate and efficient answers to these threats and challenges.

Dealing with these tasks, the SCO is growing stronger, maturing and improving its legal capability. We are not used to boasting of our successes, but I can say that the SCO has built a solid legal framework for cooperation in different areas in recent years and created practical mechanisms for this cooperation that function quite properly.

For example, the key role in the security sphere belongs to the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) with headquarters in Tashkent, the RATS Council and meetings of heads of different law-enforcement agencies.

Other executive “verticals” have been built in the economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres. Problems are inevitable, but they exist to be dealt with.

Q.: Can we say that the SCO’s dynamics is ensured by the energy of the recognized unity of the Shanghai Six, who clearly understand their goals and prospects? Apparently, we cannot disregard the boisterous energy of the young sovereign Central Asian states...

A.: To some degree, you are right. Indeed, the SCO comprises the states that are at different stages of their development, but were nevertheless motivated by the common goal of establishing and strengthening their own nationhood, developing their economy, etc. Naturally, they were looking for additional footholds in this complicated world in order to act upon their own national interests.

And it is very positive that they found such a foothold in the SCO, which declared a program of varied multilateral regional cooperation in the interests of all of its members.

Q.: The SCO member states have common interests in different areas. But the organization’s textbook goal is to resist the “three forces of evil,” as our Chinese partners put it, i.e. terrorism, separatism and extremism. Could you tell us how these efforts are united in the most important areas?

A.: At the time the SCO was set up, all countries that became its founders were facing similar problems: as the bipolar international system went down, terrorism and its accompanying forces – separatism and extremism – were raising their heads. As is well known, it is easier to deflect threats together.

This created a natural need for uniting efforts, all the more so, as a majority of these countries were connected to each other with strategic relationships.

This is why ensuring regional security and counteracting terrorism, extremism and separatism were seen among priority goals for the Shanghai organization from the very beginning. These goals are still relevant for it.

Q.: This “vile trio” was later joined by “untraditional challenges.” What does this term stand for?

A.: Unfortunately, as the situation in the region developed, new problems were added to the existing ones: illegal drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, use of information and communication technologies for destructive purposes, problems related to terrorism financing, money laundering, weapon smuggling, human trafficking, illegal immigration, etc. These are the issues we generally describe as “untraditional challenges.”

There is no doubt that it is important to counteract these threats. The problem of drug trafficking alone, which has flooded all countries of the region, is huge. Besides, it is important to understand that many of these phenomena are interrelated and feed each other. Therefore, the SCO member states have been paying special attention to these issues in recent years.

Q.: Did the Bishkek summit discuss the possibility of setting up a universal SCO center on the basis of the RATS, as was proposed by Russia?

A.: The Russian party came up with the initiative of setting up a center for counteraction to threats and security challenges of the SCO member states based on expert assessments that are



The SCO summit in narrow format

completely shared by other countries' analysts. The impending threats to the region's countries are so closely interwoven that it is difficult to deal with each one separately. For example, it is very difficult and perhaps even impossible to eliminate the terrorist threat without dealing with drug trafficking, which to a large extent finances and arms terrorists. This should be done comprehensively.

The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure is an important permanent SCO body, which hires representatives of specialized agencies, and its results are quite good. However, the RATS addresses only tasks it has been given, namely, fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism. Consequently, it is necessary to expand its functions.

Speaking of the Center for counteraction to threats and security challenges of the SCO member states, it is necessary to say that it is now objectively needed.

By the way, many SCO heads of state spoke in favor of this option for boosting the SCO's operational capabilities at the Bishkek summit.

Of course, it is not easy to do. But the task is made easier by the fact that the Center can be and should be set up on the basis of the functioning institution, the RATS.

The Russian party presented its view of the center's concept. Now it is time to jointly develop it in a six-party format.

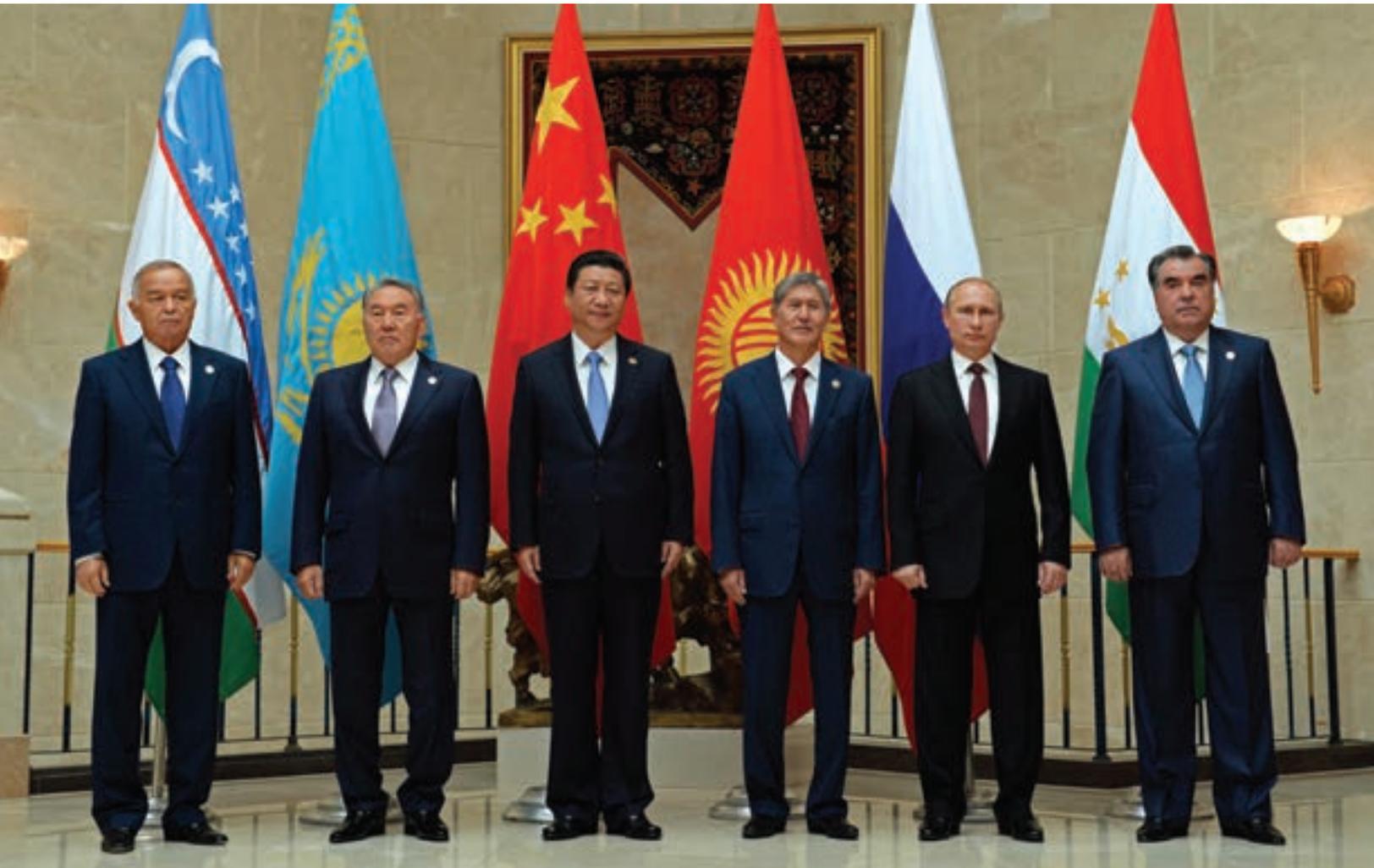
Q.: My next question is controversial for the world and sensitive for the SCO – Afghanistan. I remember once standing on the Uzbek bank of the Amu-Darya and seeing Afghans on the other bank, at a hailing distance... Soon the International Security Assistance Force will be gone. Apparently, nothing good will come out of it. What is the SCO doing to prepare itself for this period?

A.: Of course, the SCO cannot stay away from Afghanistan's problems. Unfortunately, we have to admit that threats and challenges to the security, safety and stability of the SCO member states come first of all from the Afghan territory, which is not fully controlled by the republic's government.

However, the SCO cannot take up functions that are foreign to it. Say, its competence cannot include ensuring security in a country that is not its member. So "replacing" NATO after the coalition forces' withdrawal from Afghanistan is not on the agenda.

At the same time, the SCO is quite capable of assisting Afghanistan's government with strengthening its law enforcement system, restoring its economy and social sphere and participating in international efforts to promote national reconciliation.

Actually, this is what its members are already doing, first of all, on a bilateral basis. Assistance from neighboring



countries is also an important factor that strengthens the position of the incumbent government, its international stand and Afghanistan's "return" to the regional family.

By the way, this was the goal of the decision that was adopted by the six leaders at the SCO summit in Beijing in 2012 and gave Afghanistan the status of an SCO observer.

The best way the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can contribute to strengthening security in the region and resolving Afghanistan's problems is improving the efficiency of its own efforts to counteract terrorism in its member states, spread of extremist ideology, invasion of militants, shutting down channels of drug supply from Afghanistan.

The SCO intends to involve the Afghan authorities in these joint efforts.

Q.: But is there a common, six-party SCO program, a recipe of joint effort?

A.: The SCO has a common stand on Afghanistan, which was recorded in final documents of several summits, including in the Bishkek Declaration. There is an Action Plan of the SCO and Afghanistan on combating terrorism, illicit drug trafficking and organized crime that was coordinated at the International conference on Afghanistan held under the auspices of the SCO in Moscow in March 2009. There is also a practice of regular consultations on regional security at the level of deputy foreign ministers of the SCO member states, observers and other interested parties.

Afghanistan's leaders have been invited to the meetings of the Council of Heads of State and the Council of Heads of Government for eight successive years, they have spoken at these meetings, letting their SCO counterparts know about their views, concerns and requests.

Kabul is now getting better opportunities to be involved in the SCO's activities. This first of all means involvement of Afghanistan's relevant agencies in the work of the RATS (there is a legal framework for this) and Afghan representatives' more active participation in ministerial and expert meetings on economic and humanitarian problems. As to the SCO's joint effort with regard to Afghanistan, I am positive that, sooner or later, we will reach the moment when the organization will have

a coordinated program of cooperation with the republic. There have already been proposals to this extent.

Q.: I attended the SCO Forum in Beijing and met political analysts from Afghanistan. Both from the Forum's stage and in personal conversations, they firmly objected to the term "Afghan drug threat." "It is the world that takes drugs, and we are just a poor land where, unfortunately, these drugs are produced," they said. What do you think?

A.: With regard to this issue, the SCO uses terms that are objectively correct and do not offend our Afghan friends, "the threat of terrorism and illicit drug trafficking coming from the territory of Afghanistan." Of course, the problem of "Afghan drug trafficking" is multi-faceted. It includes such aspects as existing demand for drugs outside Afghanistan and supply of precursors for production of heroin (sadly, they mainly come from developed European countries). So, of course, we should address the drug problem all together. It is a truly global problem.

Yet I would not agree that our Afghan partners have nothing to do with this problem. The Afghan government needs to be more proactive in fighting planting of black poppy, production of drug supply, drug laboratories and drug smuggling instead of pretending that it

is a normal business: Afghan peasants don't have anything else to do and planting opium is their only source of income. We will continue insisting that the official Afghan authorities fight drug production and trafficking with the help of the international community. The SCO member states are willing to provide possible assistance in resolving these problems.

Q.: There were expectations that the SCO would announce that new members were joining its ranks at the Bishkek summit. It is known that several countries – India, Pakistan, and Iran – applied for a permanent member status long ago. But the SCO is in no hurry. What deters it?

A.: Of course, any regional organization, if it is open, is interested in expanding its geography, political influence, and economic opportunities, in increasing the number of its allies and associates, in new members joining its ranks. The same is true for the SCO. The principle of openness is recorded in its founding documents.

At present, the SCO is in the establishment stage and its central tasks are internal consolidation, strengthening of mechanisms of practical cooperation and achieving higher return from joint efforts. But the expansion has long been present on its agenda.

It's impossible to accomplish all the intended objectives for a short period of time.

But it's obvious for everyone who takes things unbiased that the SCO purposefully is on its way to those goals.

An expansion needs meticulous preparations. It requires making provisions for a lot of aspects, drafting legal documents, thinking through the procedure of granting the member status, working out specific mechanisms for involving the "newcomers" in the organization's activities. New members will have to learn to work within the alliance they are joining, and the organization itself will also have to adapt to the new members.

Setting itself the task of preparing an expansion – and the SCO has already received official membership applications from Pakistan and Iran, while India has repeatedly said it will seek full SCO membership – the SCO has to be sure that the expansion procedure is thought out thoroughly, and admission of new members will not result in a disruption of the organization's activities. A lot has been done to achieve this. In 2010, the organization endorsed the Provision on the new members; admission procedure, and in 2011, the framework memorandum on obligations of an applicant in order to receive the status of an SCO member state.

Work is now being completed on documents that will spell out the legal, financial and organizational terms for admission of new members. It will be something like an internal instruction on the SCO admission procedure.



The SCO has been and will be an organization that first of all fights terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, etc.

When we complete this work and prepare all the necessary documents, then we will start considering official applications.

Q.: *Economic cooperation is one of the promising components of the SCO's activities, which is quite logical. However, this sphere often becomes a target for criticism. What is the truth?*

A.: The SCO was set up as an organization whose priority was to counteract new threats and challenges. This task has not been withdrawn: the SCO has been and will be an organization that first of all fights terrorism, separatism, extremism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, etc.

In recent years, under the pressure from economic cooperation processes that are gaining momentum in Eurasia and also from the unfavorable situation in the global economy, when countries are trying to make up for difficulties on global markets by participating in regional organizations, more and more voices are calling for boosting the economic component in the SCO's activities. There is a reason for this: a multilateral union that comprises such economies as Russia, China, Kazakhstan and Central Asian countries has huge opportunities for developing

mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Cooperation in this area is also attractive because it can make a real contribution to the stable social and economic development of the member states, to their national development. We live in a common space, our countries have a lot of common interests, and it would be a shame not to use this economic potential. As the SCO's interest in economic cooperation grew, the business community also began acquiring the taste of it. Specific joint projects started emerging. I see this as a crucial difference between the current situation and the one we had two or three years ago.

At the meeting of SCO prime ministers in Bishkek last December, they endorsed the List of Events for further development of project activities within the organization. Besides, a number of interesting ideas are being implemented or considered by the SCO Business Council and the Interbank Association. Now that we have agreed to stick to flexible schemes of cooperation (we should not try to ensure that absolutely all SCO members or their companies participate in a project and make this a prerequisite for its implementation), things will move faster. Two, three or four SCO members, plus an observer and a dialog partner, and a project may become viable. Other players may join it later if they get interested.

Q.: *A similar principle seems to have been used to set up the SCO University. What can you say about this innovative project?*

A.: The SCO Network University is one of the organization's most successful humanitarian projects. Today, it unites 80 universities from the SCO member states and Belarus and teaches seven coordinated master's programs.

There are already the first graduates. A new module, the SCO School of Young Scientists, has been launched. I won't say that the SCO University doesn't encounter problems – they are inevitable in the development of this daring initiative. Such a powerful consortium of universities requires adequate management, it is necessary to strengthen the University's administration, which, it has been decided, will sit in Moscow. It is also necessary to determine sources of financing. The need has aroused to sign an inter-government agreement on the SCO University. We also need to think about ways to improve the efficiency of the education programs, to encourage students who now prefer studying in Russia or China to go study in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan has not yet joined the project, and our common goal is to prove to our Uzbek partners that the SCO University can be beneficial for them, too.

Q.: *When the world became aware of the SCO and its philosophy of interstate relations, the organization was described as the "hope of the world," the "stronghold of the new international order." Will the SCO live up to these expectations?*

A.: The interest the world and the region show in the SCO – and we feel this interest in the form of applications for membership, expansion of the number of observers and dialog partners, in the kind of the "associates' club" that has gathered around it, in its expanding ties with international organizations – proves that the SCO is interesting and attracts attention.

The SCO is seen as a source of some universal truth, a ray of hope for peace and justice in the region, a model of inter-state partnership.



At the SCO summit

Cooperation within the SCO is based on equality and respect. This organization gives countries that have their own political philosophy, their own view of how they should develop a possibility not to be on someone else's team, to voice their views freely and unite efforts if these views are shared.

Remarkably, states that are united in the SCO or around the SCO are those that want to conduct an independent foreign policy in the current international situation. It is no coincidence that the SCO member states, observers and dialog partners include countries that either are considered a regional center of power or have a well-developed self-esteem and highly appreciate their right to have their own opinion.

At the same time, they want to work together to strengthen their regional and national security, expand multilateral economic cooperation, give a new quality to cultural and humanitarian ties, therefore cementing

their common space. I am positive that the SCO is just beginning to unlock its huge potential.

Q.: I don't think I will be mistaken if I say that you read our InfoSHOS web portal from time to time...

A.: Yes, I read it regularly. Part of my work is analyzing everything that is published and reported about the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and using all opportunities available for informing the broad public about the SCO's activities and Russia's participation in it. And I think that even those who are not involved in the SCO's activities professionally, but are simply interested in international and regional politics, will find a reliable source of information about the SCO and regional affairs in the InfoSHOS portal.

So, if anyone is interested in spreading their positive information related to the SCO, the best way to do it is to post it on the portal,

and it will immediately spread around the world. Speaking of media coverage of the SCO's activities in general, I have to admit that it cannot be described as satisfactory. Unfortunately, this damages the organization's image for our domestic and foreign readers. Frequently, the SCO is judged partially because it is little known.

This means that the possibilities of the SCO member states, their government bodies responsible for information policies and their electronic and print media are not used to their full capacity and there is room for improvement.

I am positive that the SCO is just beginning to unlock its huge potential.

TODAY'S REALITY INCREASES IMPORTANCE OF SCO, BRICS FOR RUSSIA



Mikhail Konarovskiy, leading research fellow of the Center of East Asia and SCO Studies, the Institute of International Studies, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary

The West has all but declared a “crusade” against Russia. In these circumstances, the task of neutralizing this confrontational scenario that could result in international political and economic isolation has become of extreme importance.

Resisting this threat requires more action and dynamics in foreign politics, first of all in regions where the country has vital interests, stable positions and where Washington and Brussels do not have monopolistic influence forcing other states to partake in their foreign policy.

For Russia, this means southern and eastern regions where a majority of states have so far remained neutral in the escalating confrontation between Russia and the West. Securing our foothold in these countries will require significant efforts and spending from Moscow. However, the success of dealing with this challenge will to a large extent determine the country's ability to resist the strategically motivated attack of the West.

The end goal of this effort is in fact to incur heavy geopolitical and economic damage on Russia and thus ensure a historical revenge.

This is why it is necessary to respond to the West with mounted efforts towards development of bilateral relations with countries that have not succumbed to the “magnetism” of the US and the EU and are not drawn in the orbit of their unilateral conflict with Russia.

Simultaneously, it is, of course, necessary to focus effort on increasing the geopolitical weight of those international and regional associations whose activities are based on the principles of multipolarity and distancing from the West.

Recently, after the Ukrainian crisis gained momentum, we have seen new tactical success in these areas. In addition to the setup of the Eurasian Economic Union, the outcome of the recent BRICS summit was an important achievement (Russia will soon take over presidency in the alliance). Despite heavy pressure from the West, BRICS has already adopted impressive decisions to strengthen multipolar trends, including economic ones. Decisive steps in the same direction need to be taken within another alliance, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The SCO summit that will take place in Dushanbe in September will provide such an opportunity. The forthcoming APEC summit will also be of huge importance for Russia.



Matters of regional security still cause the biggest concern. Without combining efforts in this sphere, everyone is going to lose.

Afghanistan has been the cause of a separate concern.

The meeting of the SCO Foreign Ministers that took place in Dushanbe at the end of July drafted a set of decisions to be adopted by presidents of the SCO member states. Matters of regional security still cause the biggest concern. Without combining efforts in this sphere, everyone is going to lose.

Afghanistan has been the cause of a separate concern due to “factor 2014,” i.e. withdrawal of the NATO troops.

The second round of presidential election in the country has still not produced a winner. It did not simply fail to have a positive effect on the situation, but also revealed the entire depth of inter-ethnic contradictions in this country and the deep crisis in interactions of its political elites.

All this plays into the hands of the armed opposition with all the consequences that come with it. In these circumstances, the SCO, which unites almost all direct and more

remote neighbors of Russia, needs to take proactive steps, first of all political and diplomatic ones.

This includes additional measures to protect the borders of the SCO member states and to mount fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

If the Dushanbe summit adopts new versions of documents that set down the obligations of new members and the admission procedure, this will open a door for the Organization’s expansion. Such influential neighbors as Pakistan and India have long been showing interest in joining, and close cooperation with them within the SCO would definitely boost its geopolitical potential.

However, given the current uncertainty on the international stage, it cannot be ruled out that the admission of new members to the SCO will be stalled. Russia will take over presidency in the Organization in September, and the West may put enormous pressure on its SCO partners (with view of spiting Moscow).

We also need to take into account that politicians from the SCO member states are also not willing to rush the process and would wait for the conflict in Ukraine to be settled or at least for political signs of its de-escalation.

At the same time, economic problems and absence of mechanisms for joint financial support of its projects remain the Organization’s Achilles’ heel. Comprehensive and balancing decisions on these issues are yet to be made.

This glaring gap becomes especially obvious when compared to the recent BRICS agreements with their clear economic component, the setup of the Eurasian Union (involving SCO members Russia and Kazakhstan and SCO dialog partner Belarus), and Beijing’s initiative to build an economic belt along the Silk Way.

These initiatives are to be implemented using first of all the resources of corresponding

countries-SCO members. The Chinese initiative and algorithms of its connection to the existing Eurasian mechanisms, where Russia is an active player, needs to be studied in detail.

All the above named components of the SCO political and economic agenda that have been discussed for many years need to be addressed promptly. Otherwise, the Organization will lose its dynamics and will not live up to its role of a unique international structure whose activities are based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and consideration of each other's interests.

Russia has always been interested in the opposite, and this interest has grown manifold given current international developments.

Moscow's forthcoming presidency in the SCO (and in BRICS) will give it a unique chance to bring these alliances to a new strategic level

by strengthening the positions of proponents of a multipolar world and breaking free from Western financial and economic structures.

Also, year 2015 would give Russia new opportunities for securing its position as a main geopolitical counterweight to the hegemony of the West.

All key players of the SCO and BRICS are interested in seeing it in this role, even though they won't openly admit it.

As to the SCO, it will require serious effort to ensure favorable conditions that will move it forward.

Apart from important preliminary decisions made by the Foreign Ministers' Council in July (that are yet to be approved by the September summit), the meeting in Dushanbe showed there were disagreements on a number of issues, first of all, one that is extremely sensitive for Russia – Ukraine.

Our partners seem to be worried about the decision to retake the Crimea, believing this move to contradict the international principle of territorial integrity (no one seems to recall the right of nations for self-determination stipulated by the United Nations). At the same time, the counteraction to the “three evils” (as China puts it) – terrorism, separatism and extremism – is one of the key principles of SCO activities in the security sphere. Burdened with historical conflicts, multi-ethnic Central Asian countries and China put a special emphasis on the issue.

The final document of the ministers' meeting was limited to condolences with regard to the tragic crash of Malaysia's Boeing brought down from the scene of fighting in the southeast of Ukraine. Russia made a special statement promising to make an amendment to the draft declaration of the SCO summit in Dushanbe with regard to the situation in Ukraine.



At the same time, economic problems and absence of mechanisms for joint financial support of its projects remain the Organization's Achilles' heel.

FACTOR 2014: AFGHAN CHALLENGES

Mikhail Alekseyev, political analyst



The expert community has been discussing different scenarios of developments in Afghanistan and the region after 2014 for a long time. Negative forecasts prevail. It seems that the new government of Afghanistan will anyway be actively oriented towards political Islam. The hostile factor of the Taliban and other ethnic and religious opposition groups must also be taken into account.

An important question is how Kabul will interpret political Islam after 2014. Everyone's interest is in preventing or, at least, significantly weakening the possibilities of radical political Islamism in the south. Further strengthening of its foothold in Central Asia may create a threat to national security of not only the regimes in the regions, but also of China and even Russia. Such backslides on the part of the Islamist south can be addressed by the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization. This, of course, can be done only if it achieves an even greater consolidation among its member states. Still, one can hardly expect the Shanghai Six to shoulder some special responsibility for the situation in Afghanistan. The Organization's specifics does not provide for such activities, so even after 2014 it will be able to take mainly political measures in Afghanistan, based on consensus assessments and statements.

It is extremely important to achieve a clear international consensus about not allowing the future Kabul authorities to turn Afghanistan into a source of terrorist and extremist threats.

Counteraction to the spread of terrorism, separatism and extremism in the region is the corner stone of the SCO's security policy. Its ability to overcome inertia and start having a serious impact on the situation in the

region, first of all, along its southern borders, in the near term is gaining special relevance for the Organization's foreign political potential. This is becoming all the more important since the US and NATO will withdraw most of their troops from Afghanistan by the yearend.

The current consensus approach to the situation in Afghanistan boils down to supporting the United Nations' leading role in coordination of diverse efforts in the name of a settlement and preventing the spread of terrorism, separatism, extremism and drugs from the country.

Showing interest in restoring a peaceful and integral Afghanistan, supporting efforts to stabilize the political and economic situation there, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization believes that peace and stability in the country need to be ensured by Afghan people themselves, taking into account their specifics and history.

In this context, interest in consolidation of cooperation has recently been growing. Terrorist groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, that have moved to the northern parts of Afghanistan present a greater danger. The movement was founded by natives of Central Asia, and coordinates its activities with separatists from China's Xinjiang. The name of the new president

of Afghanistan is yet to be announced, and it is still unclear how long the uncertainty after the recent election will last. It cannot be ruled out that it will become just a new stage of the difficult process of developing mutually acceptable wordings of national consensus. It is also important to keep in mind the "American factor." President Barack Obama has voiced his intention to fully withdraw US troops from Afghanistan by 2016, which has given rise to numerous speculations in the Afghan community.

Some analysts even expect drug production in Afghanistan to grow after the foreign troops leave. The situation will sustain for an uncertain period while the new Kabul authorities are getting used to the new political situation. Prevention of drug trafficking from Afghanistan after 2014 should also be comprehensively consolidated and expanded, both due to the growing cohesion of the SCO relevant national structures and further strengthening of coordination of its efforts with other international organizations. The Regional Anti-Terrorist Centre deserves a special attention in this context.

The willingness of the SCO member states to develop economic cooperation with Afghanistan and provide necessary assistance, which is invariably emphasized in the Organization's documents, lays a ground for mobile and diversified economic ties of

its members with Afghanistan, both bilaterally and multilaterally. A fairly positive economic agenda for the long-term settlement of the Afghan issue after 2014 could be ensured by the Istanbul Process, the goal of which is to unite the efforts of Afghanistan and its neighbors with view to expand economic cooperation and simultaneously recognize the role of Afghanistan as a crucial link between the region's countries. At the same time, practical implementation of these plans needs to be more specific, and there still is no complete certainty that they will be carried out.

Serious uncertainty about Afghanistan after 2014 objectively predetermines further improvement of contacts of the SCO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization and growth of the SCO's role in providing military and political security in Central Asia, protecting it from threats from the south. Even though Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the CSTO limited its possibilities, it is necessary to maintain comprehensive bilateral contacts with Tashkent in the security sphere.

All this seems especially relevant given the cooling between Russia and the West, first of all, the US. Suspension of the Russia-NATO Council has in fact eliminated the possibility of the CSTO's partnership with NATO in Afghanistan, which was earlier suggested by the CSTO.

Still, one can hardly expect the Shanghai Six to shoulder some special responsibility for the situation in Afghanistan. The Organization's specifics does not provide for such activities, so even after 2014 it will be able to take mainly political measures in Afghanistan, based on consensus assessments and statements.

CYBERTERRORISM: CHALLENGE THAT REQUIRES RESPONSE

Valery Tumanov

Many often take the word “hacking” contemptuously, like an innocent joke or prank. This is a serious mistake



According to the FSS, the websites of the Russian president, government and parliament come under a thousand attacks daily.

But the problem is not just the number of attempts at network aggression, but the qualitative change in the nature of cyber threats.

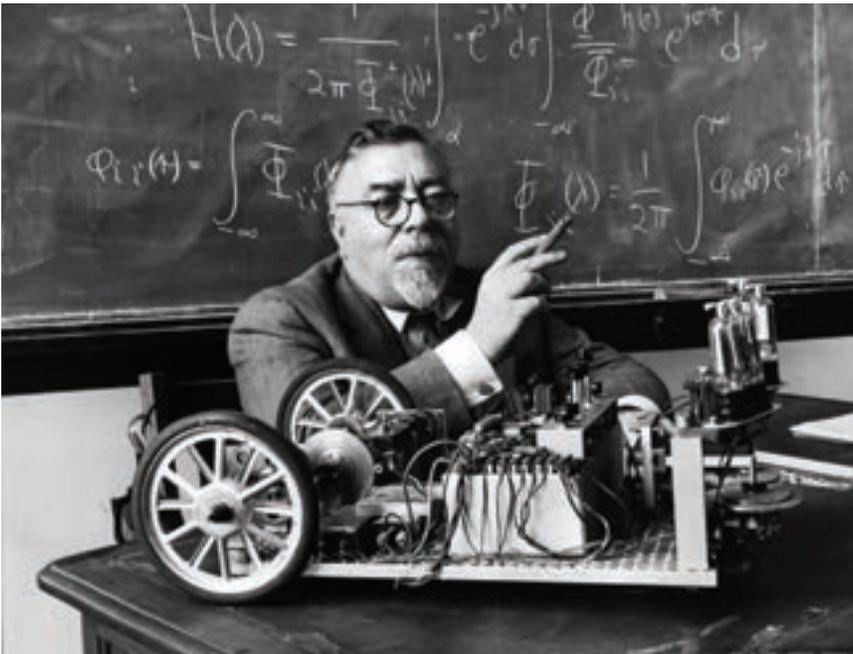
When Norbert Wiener, the outstanding American mathematician, the “father of cybernetics” and the “20th century Pigmalion”, was working on his famous model – artificial intelligence – he, of course, had no idea that his brilliant invention he wanted to serve people could become not only the invaluable assistant to the humankind, but also a dangerous weapon in the hands of individual swindlers and entire states. A weapon, which now, more than six decades after the emergence of cybernetics, needs to be fought against.

A problem has emerged that has been named cyber security. It is so relevant that earlier this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin was forced to sign a decree on the setup of a system for efficient counteraction of computer attacks, the scale and damage of which already remind of the real warfare.

According to the decree, the new system should not only be able to manage the consequences of cyber attacks on state information resources, but also ensure their early discovery and in the future, prevention.

The seriousness of electronic threats in the 21st century is clearly illustrated by the fact that responsibility for maintaining cyber security at an adequate level vests with the Russian Federal Security Service. The decree applies to the entire state information structure, and Russia’s diplomatic and trade missions abroad. Private information structures may also receive assistance from the “digital counterintelligence,” if they wish.

What does the mysterious term “cyber security” stand for? Let me



*Norbert Wiener,
outstanding American
mathematician
and philosopher,
founder of cybernetics
and the theory
of artificial intelligence*

digress a bit. Almost half a century ago, in 1964, the author, then a five-year student at the automation and computing equipment development, was lucky to do an internship with the famous Kiev Institute of Cybernetics, the country's leading institution, which at the time was headed by academician Viktor Glushkov, the pioneer of Soviet cybernetics.

I remember how, showing us, interns, around the institute, and delivering a fascinating speech about the prospects of cybernetics, Glushkov emphasized that this science would give people such huge possibilities that there would definitely be those who would want to abuse them, to use them in their own, purely selfish or even political purposes, and cybernetics would have to be protected against such people. Those were truly prophetic words, but, as it often happens, they were not taken sufficiently seriously.

Development of hardware for decoding, reading, adjusting, withdrawing and replacing crucial information has now reached a scale

that was unthinkable just a few years ago. According to the FSS, the websites of the Russian president, government and parliament come under a thousand attacks daily. The number of attacks against individual companies' websites is significantly higher. But the problem is not just the number of attempts at network aggression, but the qualitative change in the nature of cyber threats.

Many often take the word "hacking" contemptuously, like an innocent joke or prank. This is a serious mistake. Today's hacker is not a lonely teen trying to play a joke on someone or mess with his network enemy. Behind such virus attacks on information resources of the Iranian nuclear facilities as Stuxnet and Flame, there were big multi-profile teams with solid financing (and, quite possibly, with state support).

Having launched in October 2012 an investigation into illegal hacking of diplomatic missions' network resources, experts from Kaspersky Lab discovered plenty of signs of a global cyber-spy network with centralized management. The Lab established

numerous facts of penetration into PC and mobile computers, phones, communicators and corporate networks on the entire territory of the former Soviet Union and in some East European countries. Apparently, this is how the name of the cyber network, Krasny Oktyabr, has come into being.

The first interventions of this network into the websites of diplomatic missions, government structures, energy, space and research organizations took place in 2007. The results of the investigation conducted by Kaspersky Lab are so similar to a global conspiracy theory that they were checked several times and released only in January 2013.

Yevgeny Kaspersky says Russia is the most vulnerable to cyber terrorist attacks. According to his information, there are about 35,000 malicious programs designed to break into computer networks active in the web now and over 200,000 new computer viruses are created in the world daily. It won't be an exaggeration to say that the virtual environment has turned into a real battlefield.



It has already been decided to set up a state situation center in Russia for around-the-clock monitoring of cyber threats and working out a system of response to them.

But this is just the first, even if an important, step in ensuring Russia's sovereignty in the electronic information field.

Today, it is not necessary to strike a real blow against an enemy's infrastructure; it is enough to buy an iPhone 5s and strike a virtual blow on an information system that will paralyze your adversary.

"Unfortunately, cyber threats have one serious peculiarity that makes it more difficult to combat them – they are lightning-fast," says security expert Roman Romachev, head of the Reconnaissance Technologies for Business project. "It takes one second to cut off all communications for systems and people in a specific country, to paralyze everything! But our special services and law enforcement bodies cannot act very fast. With regard to cyber threats, the country's security system is too outdated for the present-day reality."

Fight against cyber threats, the need of which has so long been emphasized by security experts, became a publicly debated topic after a failed attempt of a hacker in Krasnoyarsk against the Russian president's website. The response was immediate.

The president's press secretary Dmitry Peskov said, "The state is being attacked, we need to take measures to protect crucial information." Peskov pointed to the growing sophistication of intruders, whose activities incurred material and moral damage on Russia.

It has already been decided to set up a state situation center for around-the-clock monitoring of cyber threats and working out a system of response to them. But this is just the first, even if an important, step in ensuring Russia's sovereignty in the electronic information field.

Other steps will to a large extent depend on the answer to the question, "What agencies are responsible for cyber security?" In the United States and Europe, structures for counteracting web threats are organized at the state level and have solid powers and resources, including financial ones. In the US, the Pentagon, the CIA and the FBI are involved in these activities. Many experts believe that in Russia, the same agencies that are responsible for the country's defense and security

should deal with cyber threats. It is necessary to mention that the FSS has already addressed problems of information and high-tech security. Now we can expect that its measures will be concentrated, centralized and streamlined in coordination with other government agencies, for example, the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Ministry and the Communications Ministry. The main goal is to protect government information and ensure national cyber security.

...Norbert Wiener published his famous book "Cybernetics," which opened the new science for the world, in 1948. It was the beginning of the Cold war, the decades-long confrontation between the two superpowers – the Soviet Union and the United States – recent allies in the anti-Hitler coalition that had combated Nazism, the plague of the 20th century. Now they should join efforts with other countries to combat cyber terrorism, a danger that should not be underestimated and that can become the plague of the 21st century.

THE SCO UNIVERSITY COMPRISED 80 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES OF THE SCO MEMBER STATES



For the purpose of promoting youth exchanges in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, within the next 10 years China will provide governmental grants to 30 thousand students of the SCO member states, declared the President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping, speaking at the "Nazarbayev university" in Kazakhstan.

Youth is the future of nations, the new force for deepening peoples' friendship. The cooperation in the sphere of education between the SCO member states provides to youth a platform for enhancing exchanges and contacts as well as for deepening friendship.

In 2006 the governments of the SCO member states signed an Agreement on cooperation in the field of education, defining the direction of cooperation development in this sphere. In 2007 at the SCO summit in Bishkek the President of Russia Vladimir Putin put forward the suggestion on creation of the University of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (USCO) which was unanimously approved by other member states of the organization.

«The SCO university functions as a network of already existing universities of the SCO member states for the purpose of creating an effective international integration platform for cooperation in the field of education», declared to the Xinhua agency the Secretary general of the internal coordination council

of the Chinese universities of the USCO, Sui Zhan. The number of the USCO institutes of higher education already reached 80. The preparation of the USCO students, generally post-graduates, is provided in the following fields: Regional Studies, Ecology, Power Engineering and Nanotechnologies. Headed by the chairman of the Chinese Council of rectors the Dalian University of Foreign Languages has already started the work on choosing 30 students who will study Regional Studies in the framework of the SCO. However, the USCO universities face various difficulties and problems including questions of financing and low activity of some of them.

“The SCO University is an absolutely new form of cooperation. Therefore, the search for solutions of problems in practice is still on the agenda”, underlined the head of the SCO Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Sun Chzhuanchzhi. As the overall cooperation within the SCO deepens, the humanitarian cooperation, will also gain significant development as such interaction is strategic, – considers Sui Zhan.

He expressed hope that at the forthcoming meeting of the Council of heads of the SCO member states in Bishkek the bigger attention would be paid to the development of the USCO and that it would also be put on the agenda of future summits. Sui Zhan also expressed confidence that by means of joint efforts of the member universities, cooperation in the field of higher education within the SCO will reach favorable results.

SCO ENERGY CLUB: STRUCTURE READY FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERACTION, NOT SHANGHAI SIX'S ELITE CLUB

Sergei Kanavsky



Speech by Sergei Kanavsky, executive secretary of the SCO Business Council, at the international forum Energy Cooperation and Security in Central Asia: the SCO and the Eurasian Economic Union, which was held under the auspices of the SCO Business Council in Aktau.

Even though economic cooperation has been declared the most important track for the SCO, it remains the least developed area in the organization's activities. This is also true for such a fundamental sector as energy. Yet objective prerequisites for intensifying energy

cooperation between the SCO countries are quite favorable. The aggregate area of the organization's member states takes up three fifths of Eurasia, with a population of over 1.5 billion people. Their aggregate GDP equals one fourth of the world's total

(\$12.4 trillion). The territory of the SCO member states holds about 25% of global oil reserves, over 50% of gas reserves, 35% of coal and about half of the world's known uranium reserves. The biggest oil and gas pipelines have been laid or are being built here. So, the SCO comprises



The setup of the SCO Energy Club should contribute to deepening interaction between energy producers (Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Iran) and energy consumers (China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan and Mongolia) and become the first step towards shaping a common energy system both in the regional and global contexts.

both countries that are big energy producers and importers. On the one hand, this makes them internally dependent on each other, but on the other, it creates the basis for multilateral interaction. The SCO Energy Club could provide a suitable platform for such interaction.

The idea of setting up this structure was first voiced by Russian President Vladimir Putin at the SCO summit in Shanghai in June 2006. In the past seven years, the SCO member states have repeatedly gone back to this initiative and held several forums devoted to the setup and activities of the future Energy Club. At the recent SCO summit in Bishkek, President Putin once again confirmed

the need to launch practical work of the SCO Energy Club. He said it would create additional opportunities for implementing promising energy projects between the SCO member states, observers and dialog partners. Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev agreed with him. "We consider it necessary to set up the SCO Energy Club, which would directly address problems in the sector," he said. "No one will resolve them for us."

Russia and Kazakhstan are the most active in addressing the issue. On request from the secretariat of the SCO Business Council, leading expert institutes of the Russian Academy of Sciences have got



Actau harbor

involved in drafting the concept of the SCO Energy Club. Experts believe that the Energy Club format would allow jointly finding ways to resolve such pressing issues as:

- coordination of energy strategies and long-term programs for development of the SCO member states and observers and their partners;
- drafting and implementation of measures of collective energy security;
- development of a system of transport energy communications;
- development of a joint economic mechanism

for implementation of the member states' energy policies;

- coordination of the member states' investment plans;
- information coordination;
- mutual informing about activities on the global energy market.

The setup of the SCO Energy Club should contribute to deepening interaction between energy producers (Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Iran) and energy consumers (China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan and Mongolia) and become the first step towards shaping a common energy system both in the regional and global

The SCO Energy Club is being created first of all to establish and conduct an expanded dialog on improving energy security, streamlining energy strategies, coordinating efforts and comprehensive discussion of the prospects of cooperation in different sectors of the energy industry in the interests of the SCO member states.



contexts. Given the instability of the global economy and the dependence of its recovery on the economic growth pace in China and India, which are net energy importers, a more active energy policy on the part of the SCO could play a significant part in ensuring a sustainable growth of the SCO member states' and observers' economies and would also have a positive impact on the world economy in general.

The SCO Energy Club is being created first of all to establish and conduct an expanded dialog on improving energy security, streamlining energy strategies, coordinating efforts and comprehensive discussion of the prospects of cooperation in different sectors of the energy industry in the interests of the SCO member states.

But the Energy Club's activities cannot be limited to these general tasks if it is seen not as an elite club for the select six member states, but as a structure ready to interact with different countries, international organizations and business communities.

The broader the range of the SCO Energy Club's participants,

the greater benefits it will bring the organization's member states: they will include the possibility to attract attention to their problems and investment opportunities, to find optimal partners based on the interests of their own development, etc.

Experts have different opinions on the configuration and format of the Energy Club. Some believe that it should be a fairly rigid association that envisages delegating certain sovereign powers to it. Others (the majority) propose going from simple to complicated, i.e. finding points of tangency without going too far ahead and jumping the gun.

In our understanding, the Energy Club, the setup of which is finally beginning to get a shape after numerous failed attempts, should proceed from real possibilities and willingness for an informal exchange of opinions among as big a number of interested parties as possible.

The SCO has the necessary official bodies that make coordinated decisions, but nevertheless, multilateral economic cooperation

still remains the least developed area in the organization's activities. We view the Energy Club's task as creating the atmosphere of openness and trust in discussing relevant economic and legal problems, free exchange of opinions on ways to resolve them, first of all at the expert level, not restricted by the rigid limits of accepted procedures. Eventually, such free discussions can result in specific proposals for government structures authorized to make the necessary and economic decisions.

At the initial stage of the Energy Club's setup, it would be worth announcing that membership is not obligatory even for the SCO Six. After all, the previous attempts to set up the Energy Club failed to a large extent due to lack of consensus among the member states, first of all Uzbekistan. However, Article 16 of the SCO Charter allows bypassing this alleged obstacle.

It reads, among other things, "In case one or other member states are not interested in implementation of individual cooperation projects that are of interest for other member states, these member states' refusal

The SCO united energy suppliers and consumers.

That makes them, on one hand, internally dependent from each other, but, on the other hand, gives the basis for multilateral cooperation.

to participate does not prevent the interested member states from cooperation and at the same time does not prevent the specified member states from joining such projects later.”

The club format allows expanding the range of experts participating in the Energy Club’s events as much as possible. Apart from the member states, observers and dialog partners, it would be useful to brief countries that are members of international organizations with which the SCO has cooperation agreements and – via mass media – the broad global energy community of the club’s agenda and upcoming events, giving them the opportunity to participate in the Energy Club’s work.

This, of course, will require certain organizational measures and financial spending, but the multiplying effect will by far make up for this.

The Energy Club can become an association of energy suppliers, transit countries and consumers. It can also become a coordinating body that would contribute to the development of economic and energy ties between states and companies.

At present, such interaction can be based on the edited Program of Multilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation, which was adopted by the SCO heads of government. The main areas of activity in the energy sector could be:

- modernization of existing generating capacities and power grids;
- development of transport infrastructure in the region;
- joint development of new hydrocarbon fields and geological exploration;
- creation of conditions for mutual access to electricity markets and its transit;
- energy saving and energy efficiency;
- training and advanced training of energy specialists.

Alongside these general areas of cooperation that can serve as targets when creating the agenda for debates at the Energy Club, it would be rational to search for and discuss new projects in such areas as power engineering, deep processing of hydrocarbons, nuclear power generation and hydropower generation.

During broad discussions, their participants may see the need to shape a common SCO energy space, which will require coordination and certain streamlining of the SCO member states’ energy strategies.

Before taking these proposals to the SCO’s governing bodies, they should be discussed in detail within the Energy Club. Overall, issues of the SCO members’ energy strategies, their monitoring and regular updates should, we believe, be constantly present on the Club’s agenda.

In the long run, shaping of a common SCO energy space will require political decisions on such issues as price liberalization, unifying of energy transportation tariffs, working out of a common tax base, coordination of activities at the suppliers’ level in order to avoid useless competition between them.

To resolve these and related problems, the SCO countries may use the experience of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus in setting up the Eurasian economic space.

Staying realistic, we should not hope that the Energy Club is destined to succeed only due to some objective prerequisites. The previous attempts to set it up have shown that this is not so.

No matter how interesting are the theoretical problems of economic and energy cooperation in the SCO for participants of discussions within the Club, long-term stable interest in the platform on the part of business structures will sustain only if there are specific bilateral and multilateral projects guaranteed with both investment and political support.

So the activities of the Energy Club should be harmoniously included in the sphere of the SCO member states’ inter-government relations, including the setup of a system of regional security and its important component, energy security.

Given the ongoing instability of the global economy, the SCO’s proactive energy policy would play an important role in ensuring sustainable growth of the organization’s member states and would also become a positive factor in the global economy.

IVAN GRACHEV ON “UNASSAILABLE FACTORS” OF RUSSIA’S ENERGY SUPERIORITY

*Head of the State Duma’s energy committee gives an interview
to Tatiana Sinitsyna, InfoRos editor-in-chief*



Q.: *Today, energy problems are closely intertwined with geopolitics, geoeconomics and geophilosophy and are viewed only in the context of factors of sustainable development. Experts are speaking about the emergence of a new energy civilization. What do you think?*

A.: I don’t think that a new “energy civilization” is going to emerge, but philosophical thoughts about it confirm that there is a certain shift in the global mind. Today, we are witnessing a return to the normal understanding of things: there cannot be progress without an increase in

energy supply. Throughout the entire history, existence of the humankind was dependent on energy demand. Progress will always be proportionate to energy consumption – this is the truth, both philosophic and practical.

Overall, progress is measured by accumulation of three forms of property – things, information and energy. They are partially interchangeable, but the thing is that the structure of relations between these forms of property has for a long time been changing in favor of information: there was talk about an information society, the goal of which was to explain the newest phenomena created by scientific and technological progress, computer and information revolutions. This view forced Western countries to give up the economy and to develop virtual markets, apart from purely information technologies, and at a certain point led them to think that progress was possible without an increase in energy consumption.

It was believed that the share of energy property was going to drop in the long run. These views are more than utopian. The latest crises have shown that the share of information in the information society has certain limits and cannot take up more than 50% to 60%. Today we are witnessing

a return to the reality, and the regular pattern is back: progress on average is proportionate to the amount of generated energy. So the classic formula “energy – progress – civilization” remains unshakable.

Q.: *What can you say about Russia’s current energy policy? What are its general goals?*

A.: Inertia drives us along the path of commodities supplying countries. The reason is of course the fact that on the global scale, our biggest advantage is energy. It is not only because of our rich hydrocarbon reserves, but also because of the huge, scarcely populated territory. Ecological restrictions are not limited only to CO2 emissions, which is actually disputable, and I can talk about this topic separately, because I am a physicist and I have professionally studied the influence of solar radiation on the atmosphere.

Ecological restrictions are also related to energy production per area unit. Such restrictions are thermodynamic: you cannot significantly exceed the index of solar energy flow fluctuation per area unit. If you are coming really close to this threshold and produce a critical amount of energy, negative consequences are inevitable.

If we don't want to stir the nature – locally and globally – we should assimilate with the natural background so that the level of energy production is insignificant in terms of solar energy flow fluctuations.

Following the same logic, the European Union or Japan have quite limited reserves for energy growth, because their territories are fairly small and densely populated, while energy consumption is high.

Russia, which spreads from the Baltic to the Pacific and has a small population compared to its territory, can increase its energy production manifold. This natural, huge, unassailable advantage is, of course, taken into account in the adequate, well-considered strategy. It states that energy will be industry No.1 in Russia under all scenarios, including the innovative one.

Everything else is added to this backbone: what should be done and how, in order to have lots of jobs, a high knowledge level, high intellectual potential, etc.

Q.: So, the unassailable factor of Russia's energy advantage is comprised of available resources, gigantic area and modest, compared to the territory, population. But will this trump card be used properly?

A.: There is no doubt that this advantage will be needed, it is a guarantee of the country's economic prosperity. Russian hydrocarbons and other countries' interest in them are logically connected. For example, I am positive that China will make use of Russia's energy possibilities, regardless of what is being said today.



The country is being gradually poisoned with coal it burns in huge amounts, and very soon it will need sources of clean energy and ask for them, and the closest ones are near at hand, in Siberia.

Q.: To what extent do such psychological phenomena as the residual "Soviet" mistrust of us, rejection of our way of life and our mentality hinder building of relations with the Europeans?

A.: Let me give you an example that partially illustrates the situation. An Italian MP, a young man from Milan, contacted our inter-parliamentary group and said he was immensely interested in Russia's South Stream coming to North Italy. His arguments were clear: in this case, the highly industrialized part of the country will receive guaranteed supply of gas at moderate prices. By the way, the spot price of 1,000 cubic meters of gas for them is over €1,000, which is, of course, expensive. So the Italian was guided by pure pragmatism, nothing more. This representative of the younger generation must not know a thing about the former confrontation of the two systems, about the Cold war, he was just amicably and interestedly discussing a project beneficial for Italy.

Another partner, from Germany, was obviously biased and spoke in the tough language of complaints: you are inflating prices, etc... And he absolutely refused to hear our arguments.

But we had a chance to play a "nasty trick" on him: we offered him to join a group of European experts going to Yamal, where gas, the price of which the German considered inflated, was produced. It was winter, and the frost was severe. And we showed them the solid production infrastructure built in these extreme conditions. Our guest was shocked to see the hard labor needed to produce gas that comes to Europe across Eurasia, the cost of the specialized equipment, the pipeline system, ensuring gas workers' normal living conditions. Upon return to Moscow, this critic said something completely different, "I now understand how difficult it is for Russia to produce this gas,

I don't think that a new "energy civilization" is going to emerge, but philosophical thoughts about it confirm that there is a certain shift in the global mind.

why the price is such...” So people are different and most of them don’t know much about Russia’s specifics, and we need to enlighten them, to tell them about ourselves and explain things they are doubtful about.

Q.: The energy sector, just like our dear two-headed eagle, looks not only to the West, but also to the East, which also lures it with numerous opportunities. Where does Russia have more chances? Where can it expect to find good returns, productive cooperation and amity?..

A.: The East has huge opportunities, indeed. But this question is complicated. I believe integration as it is fully formulated – “Pan-Eurasian energy space” – is an ambitious thing, but it is the right one. Our partners have engineering and technological advantages, say, Germany has always been way ahead in terms of implementation of advantages.

Russia, in its turn, is strong with intellectual outbursts of discoveries, tends towards fundamental sciences. In order to integrate in the Pan-

Eurasian energy space, we need to be attractive as a country that ensures its partners’ energy security. Movement of interests should be mutual and balanced, because believes are good, but people also need to see their own profit and practical sense... Of course, we should cooperate with both Japan, China and Korea. I believe their appetites will be even better than that of the European Union, and their aggregate demand can be even higher.

Let’s take Japan. Even before the Fukushima tragedy, I said that it would turn down its nuclear reactors sooner or later, but I was always told that it was “propaganda.” But if you think of it, you should not build nuclear plants on the land that is constantly shaken from within and attacked by tsunamis from the ocean. The Japanese are now shutting down their nuclear plants one after another, and nuclear power generation can be replaced with either gas or electricity. Obviously, the country will buy resources from different countries, but only Russia will be able to supply this developed high-tech country the amount

On the global scale, our biggest advantage is energy. It is not only because of our rich hydrocarbon reserves, but also because of the huge, scarcely populated territory.

of energy it needs, which is about 70 GW. So this is objectively a huge market for Russia.

We, in our turn, are interested in innovative Japanese technologies, notably, cryogenic and helium ones. Helium is an important component of natural gas. We have plenty of fields rich in helium, first of all in East Siberia and Yakutia, so we are extremely interested in the gas chemical industry, the prospects of which, with the presence of own resources, are truly big.

Japan asks us to sell our gas to it cheaper. But how can you sell something cheaper in a market economy? In response, I suggest that they join development of new fields, with technology and money, which is mutually beneficial. This is a brilliant solution: they will have gas and we will develop a new area in gas chemistry.

Q.: I would suppose that the prospects related to China, the world’s second biggest economy, are also good. What is the present level of the Russian-Chinese energy dialog?

A.: China has a huge demand for energy. According to my estimates, it will have to take about 100 billion cu m from Russia. At present, few people agree with my estimates, to be honest, but we’ll wait and see. China vests big hopes in slate gas. As part of a Russian delegation,



Integration as it is fully formulated — “Pan-Eurasian energy space” — is an ambitious thing, but it is the right one.

I met our Chinese colleagues and told them that they should not expect cheap slate gas, because it simply doesn't exist. There is a fundamental physical explanation: if there is no flow, there will be no cheap gas. Slate gas production envisages constant water blasting, which is not cheap. The Americans are now very enthusiastic about slate gas, but I believe that soon they will see a rise in prices.

We live in the active phase of inflated virtual markets, where excessive resources flow and therefore cause them to collapse. But these virtual markets exist with certain anchors of real markets that are exaggerated and, due to absence of bans, inflated to unbelievable dimensions. Earlier, a similar thing happened to real estate; now, slate gas is in the center of this process. It is accompanied by a hype in the media, and some people get caught into it.

Q.: *At the Caspian Forum in Aktau in September, you once again emphasized that it is impossible to stake on alternative sources as being able to meet the civilization's energy needs. But the world is hypnotized with the possibilities of non-traditional energy sources...*

A.: Alternative power generation is also a candidate for virtual market bubbles, this is why it is being promoted. There is another



consideration: there have always been inventors of the “eternal engine.” In the past, ten or fifteen years ago, when I said that mass solar power generation is utopian, that it is expensive and it wouldn't be possible to start mass generation, people argued with me and said that it was theory and hoped that in practice they would do it cheap and in huge amounts.

Time has passed, and how much does a kilowatt/hour of solar power cost today? Let's take a solar power station in Germany, for example. First of all, it functions only 900 hours a year, i.e. 10%, so for 90% of the time you need to supplement it with something, most probably, a thermal power plant that uses coal. Calculations show that 1 kWh of power generated from solar batteries costs €0.22. To compare: thermal power plants generate power that costs €0.03 per kWh.

This is numbers. It does not mean that German engineers are bad, it is just that they were optimistic when working on this task and hoped to make the cost of solar power competitive. However, there

are objective physical limitations: incoming flow of solar power is very small and scattered, it is, for example, incomparable to the power of water flows going through a dam of a hydropower plant. It has been analyzed by Russian physicists, notably, academician Pyotr Kapitsa.

But this does not mean that it is necessary to shut down work related to alternative energy sources — solar, wind, tidal power, etc. As a development of the engineering thought, a new technology such stations have the right to exist and improve. But their importance is not total and requires sensible positioning. For example, there are a lot of winds and sunny days in Yakutia and on Chukotka, so alternative sources can be used there.

China vests big hopes in slate gas. As part of a Russian delegation,

I met our Chinese colleagues and told them that they should not expect cheap slate gas, because it simply doesn't exist.

RUSSIAN DEED IN BUSHEHR

Olga Haroletz



The destiny of nuclear power plant “Bushehr” looks like a hard-boiled thriller with a thrilling dramatic storyline, nontrivial heroes, full of intrigues and challenges, ups and downs, rows and reconciliations. And finally there was a happy end with Champaign and encouraging perspectives.

**“IRANIAN PEOPLE
HAD TO WAIT LONG
AND FINALLY THEY
GOT WHAT THEY
WANTED”**

In the annals of this unusual nuclear power plant one will find smell of Russian sweat and spirit; incredible labor, feats of engineering and a great will power have made it possible. And today it’s clear for everybody that NPP “Bushehr” is completed and it works. It has only one nuclear reactor, the 436th on the planet.

Huge resources were spent for this project – human, technologies, brainpower. Impossible to forget about serious diplomatic efforts which played an important role in various circumstances.



NPP “Bushehr”, built by Russian specialists on the shore of Persian Gulf started its full-scale life. Only a small group of best experts still stays there for consultations and technical support, while the total number of Russian specialists was about two thousand.

Now exploitation of the station is fully under responsibility of its owner. Together with construction, in Russia they were preparing Iranian personnel (more than thousand people) at the training point in Voronej.

Huge resources were spent for this project – human, technologies, brainpower. Impossible to forget about serious diplomatic efforts which played an important role in various circumstances.

A whole bunch of difficult problems was solved during this construction, it concerns engineering, contracts and other fields, which require nonstandard decisions, flexibility and compromises, and besides – great deal of patience, persistence

and self-forgetfulness. Thanks God, Russians have plenty of all these qualities! Guinness Book of world records can’t miss the case which will hardly ever happen again: 37 years passed from the moment when the idea of NPP “Bushehr” was born till the moment when the station started working! Such a long-delayed construction is unique: as a rule, nuclear power plant is constructed for less than 5 years.

“FRAGRANT SETTLEMENT”

Bushehr is rather large sand peninsula in Persian Gulf. It is warm and sunny here but in summer the weather is too hot, with more than 45C. Wet sea breeze is the other option for locals. They love this climate, but for Russians it is a severe challenge. I stayed in similar climate in Ethiopia for a long time and I can say that it’s not the best variant for Europeans, especially if they need to work in the open air.

Since ancient times, even before Islamic culture, the city of the same name as the peninsula sits on the gulf shore.

Remains of ancient settlements and of the Dutch fortress tell us about historical battles and peaceful times. The seaport town was always open to all ships, though not all visitors had good intentions.

Scholar of Persian language Peter Goncharov told me that the name Bushehr may be translated as “fragrant settlement”.

A hot breath of desert together with sea winds cause violent growth of beautiful roses, tender oleanders, magnificent trees of orchids, figs, almonds, dates and citrus plants. And of course, desert had always been a birthplace for palm-trees, aloe and cactuses.

Bushehr is the center of the same-name province, there are a lot of popular professions here, and we can say that it is the second seaport of the Islamic Republic.



It could easily live its old life for many more years but suddenly its carrier was pushed forward. It was in 1975, during the ruling of Shah Mohammed Reza Pekhlevi, when the place for the future nuclear power plant was chosen in a quiet place 18 km far from the city. People of the peninsula supported the initiative because they understood that civilization was coming to their land and due to the NPP their province would get a special status and economic expansion, and this would open new perspectives.

BUT THE SNAKES WERE VERY FRUSTRATED

The first contractor was Kraftwerk Union A.G. – department of German transnational holding Siemens. They managed to do a lot for the construction when Islamic revolution happened in 1980. Shah was expelled and the American Embassy in Teheran was occupied. Of course western world announced embargo for bringing high technologies to Iran and Siemens had to break the contract.

Germans left the country and everything that they had done, and nobody in the world didn't want to finish the project, though Iran made a lot of efforts to find any possibility to have the station finished.

But embargo remained in force. Besides, technical task was unprecedented – several projects had to be put together and various equipment had to be connected. Iran called for Russians to help as for its last hope. And our decision could hardly be positive, if not the hard times of historical disturbances



and social-economic reforms. Soviet country was ruined and all levels of society came to misbalance, and many fields of life were at the breaking point.

Now-deceased Academician Viktor Mikhailov, who was the Minister of Nuclear Power at that time, told me that “specialists of nuclear industry were still having an ill fame after Chernobyl, and they had bad times of stagnation. Skill of building nuclear power plants was not in demand and the society didn’t accept it. But professionals

realized that they had to save the nuclear elite, the best experts who were left on the sidelines during the cruel breakage, and they understood it quite well in the Kremlin”. They accepted Teheran offer. On August 24th, 1992, governments of Russia and Iran signed the cooperation agreement in the field of peaceful application of nuclear power, and the next day they signed the agreement about construction works in Bushehr.

...“When we, I mean a group of Russian specialists, first came

to Bushehr, to the abandoned construction site, in order to understand what we were dealing with, we were shocked and numb, – Valeriy Tjurin, the interpreter of the group, told me. – We saw broken walls, almost covered with sand. The reactor itself was almost ready but its spherical containment was unfinished, and the building had huge holes since the times of Iranian-Iraqi war. For almost 20 years it stayed under the scalding sun, as a plaything for sand devils and salty winds of Persian Gulf.



We went inside and a lot of snakes met us hissing angrily, they were disturbed by our visit. They were slithering away to all sides...”

But difficult tasks are a challenge for real professionals. So they started their work – very hard and very interesting from engineering point of view. They took their families there, for the village was rather comfortable – Germans built it for themselves, in a hope for a long-life project. But their fate was to go away in five years and to leave everything to Russian team.

“SUCH CONSTRUCTION IS IMPOSSIBLE!”

“I hope we never see another construction of such kind!

Such project is really impossible! We started this project because of despair, – Alexander Afroy, a former director of the Office of NPP Engineering in Iran told me. – We had a contract for construction of two blocks of medium power BBER-440, and we were going to build them on a new site. But this reasonable proposition wasn’t approved in majlis and the deputies suggested that we finished the existing construction.

The decision was totally wrong from technical point of view – of course, deputies didn’t know much about nuclear power. But we couldn’t argue. Construction part was not the worst thing, but we had many problems with the equipment.

According to the terms of contract, we had to integrate all that was left

from Germans, into our project, and they brought a lot of equipment –more than three quarters from the total amount”.

All this equipment was in a very bad condition and it required serious technical research. Our experts had to check every small part to evaluate it, discard and test. They checked more than 35 thousands of various parts, constructions and systems for NPP.

This titanic labor took us four years. Finally it turned out that we could use only 5 thousands of units, and all the rest was broken or it was totally incompatible with our project. Iranian commission was inspecting all our work and all decisions were made together.

At first it was supposed that reactor plant, turbine plant, special building for radioactive waste storage and some other systems would be Russian. After long engineer review of German heritage we had to order some missing equipment from Siemens and accept what was done on Russian plants.

So about 46 tons of various equipment was checked by our experts (14 tons was German, integrated into the project). We made incredible efforts to integrate everything into hi-tech project, install, bring into accordance and attain (the only possible way of work in atomic industry).

There was no similar precedent in the world and we had to learn

on our own mistakes, and to find better ways to combine totally different construction ideas, two self-sufficient styles and principles of work – German and Russian. So, in two words, the skill of overcoming various difficulties was on the highest level, the same as virtuosity of famous Levsha, hero of Leskov story, who managed to hack a flea.

IT WAS A CHESS GAME FOR GROSS MASTERS

Usually builders celebrate laying of the first cubic meter of concrete, but in Bushehr they celebrated... the first cutting out of 3.5 thousand of cubic meters of concrete from reactor plant. It was necessary in order to put Russian equipment inside.

The dimensions were different from German ones, the reactor plant was totally different, and steam generators were vertical, as opposed to horizontal ones from Siemens. And there were so many “small” mismatches everywhere.

But somehow the decisions were found and the construction was in the process. “It was a high class chess game where we had to make decisions and look many steps ahead, not to receive mate in the end”, – told us Gennadii Tolbukhin, one of the participants. Russian-Iranian contract was signed in January 1995 and Zarubejatomenergostroi company started its work.

Later the whole project was finished by its successor-engineering company Atomstroieksport, a part of state corporation Rosatom.

According to the contract, Russia had obligation to build one reactor BBER-1000 and nuclear fuel and to train Iranians for service and maintenance. All works were to be finished in 1999. But it turned out to be a very optimistic prognosis. NPP Bushehr needed another

decade to start working. The project, where 2.750 people were doing their work (1.735 were Russians, and others were Iranians, who worked under control of our experts) was a complete mess. The parties were arguing about all questions, having constant conflicts, the works were stopped or slowed down from time to time. And all this went together with severe climate and huge amount of things to be done.

“For almost 20 years it stayed under the scalding sun, as a plaything for sand devils and salty winds of Persian Gulf. We went inside and a lot of snakes met us hissing angrily, they were disturbed by our visit.

They were slithering away to all sides ...”





NUCLEAR FUEL ENTERED BUSHEHR LIKE A KING

Many years passed and on August 21st, 2010, head of Rosatom Sergei Kirienko came to Bushehr and announced the end of construction works on NPP and start of the new stage – starting up the reactor. Process of core fuelling took place under unfaltering watch of IAEA.

I would also like to note that nuclear fuel is not a liquid, or some hard substance, or something like that. It is prepared and delivered as fuel clusters, which are put inside the reactor. This particular model in Bushehr NPP consisted of 163 clusters, filled with tablets, each for 8 grams of uranium dioxide.

Totally there are more than 17 millions of such tablets which need to be put in the reactor and each tablet is the equivalent of 50 barrels of oil, or 40 tons of coal or 900 cubic meters of natural gas in terms of energy.

Now it is clear why many countries, while having natural resources like oil and gas, (like Iran does), still want to have nuclear energy sources – capacious, ecologically-friendly, which let the country save its disposable natural resources.

Of course there is a problem of nuclear waste. It's not something like usual garbage which can be put on a scrap-heap, as many people think, but something that can be called "precious" – because it contains

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so many expensive elements. Until now scientists didn't find the way to utilize nuclear waste, because many of them contain products of long decay and they need to be kept vitrified, in special storages. But life is going on and future physics will probably find some ways. Maybe they already listen to professors in the universities or still play in kindergarten...

...Nuclear fuel (atomists say "fresh") was brought to Bushehr 20 days before the start, on the first day of August. This act was a kind of symbolic for Teheran, because the country lived in the atmosphere of political quarrels and distrust, connected with the so-called "Iranian nuclear dossier".

That's why ceremony of nuclear fuel delivery to the storage was a kind of triumph: it seemed that Kir the Great himself came to Bushehr on his chariot. Russians were also very glad to meet the fuel because they wanted to finish the "eternal" project. But the story couldn't be finished so fast. According to the demands of IAEA inspectors fuel was put into reactor and then taken out again. They were looking for something but they didn't find it.

EVEN A HEAVY BOEING WAS NOT A THREAT

Four days before Sergei Kirienko visited Bushehr, on August, 17th, 2010, there was an emergency event, which ended with the usage of missile

launcher. On August, 17th, Iranian fighter F-4, without any visible reason broke into 20 kilometers long no-fly zone around Bushehr NPP. The airplane was crashed down with the help of missile system.

Everybody had the tragedy of American Twin Towers in memory. Both pilots manage to catapult from the plane. It turned out that they were doing practice flight and got lost because of technical problems.

An uninformed one may imagine a situation when the NPP is already working and some terroristic airplane appears in the sky with clear aim to crash into the building... What would happen then?

Nothing. Chernobyl tragedy was a cruel but very effective lesson for Russian atomists and now they plan and build power plants with huge stock of strength. In particular, the Bushehr reactor will not be damaged even if a heavy Boeing would fall down from the sky.

We can't forget another emergency event – earthquake with magnitude of 6.6, which happened in Bushehr in April 2012. Several villages were destroyed and there were dead and injured people. NPP Bushehr also was in the tectonic zone – as though the Earth itself decided to test its durability.

Epicenter was just 100 km far from the NPP and the shocks were tangible but the station was working as usual and radiation background was normal. Russian experts said

that the building can stand the earthquake with Richter magnitude of 9 points. And in India the same reactor stood a strong tsunami.

Now we should say a word about safety of Bushehr NPP. The facts are the following: there is a possibility of one breakdown in million years. And if we talk about life cycle of 40-60 years, it's like one moment in comparison with such numbers. The same as human life.

JOULE REIGNS THE WORLD AND WE CAN'T HELP IT

"Hard work makes people insensitive to frustrations", said Cicerone. Bushehr was exactly this case. Of course there were very serious troubles.

Sometimes the whole project was hung by a thread. Let's remember the political background with many conflicts, endless IAEA committees – from 50 to 70 review groups per year, which inspected documents, evaluated safety measures and went into details. Iran was very polite – it promised to announce dates of NPP start, agreed to send spent nuclear fuel back to Russia, and to join Vienna convention on nuclear safety (this intention was confirmed by Iranian President Hasan Roukhani).

But why Iran, one of the ancient civilizations of the world, can't have such ambitions? I mean peaceful aspect, of course. IAEA rules don't forbid NPP construction to anybody.



And nuclear countries should help others in NPP construction to avoid dangerous dilettantism. International society would prefer to live in peace and comfort if all international conventions would run like clockwork.

Sanctions towards Iran and unprecedented pressure from USA, which did their best to cause troubles for Bushehr, are explained easily: Americans didn't want the NPP to be finished: first reason is that the "outsider country"

would get a nuclear object, and second is that Russia was the contractor and thus it strengthened its image of reliable professional partner together with its positions in the Middle East in general.

Bushehr construction was a desperate action, almost crazy, with so many risks, with unpredictable result, and with the country image and honour at stake. But today it's clear that Russia made right decision. Creative and innovative engineeringwork was

done successfully. And all "snakes" were left behind. Iranians ask Russia to build the second block because paired NPP is more effective and efficient.

They have ambitious plans, yet without any expert evaluations and economic justifications, to create 11 blocks or more... But as they say, "Man proposes but God disposes". They "proposed" to build Bushehr with the help of Germans, but God gave this work to Russians...



Today Russian company Rosatom has a wait-list of customers wishing to build nuclear power plants: Turkey, Belarus, Vietnam, Argentina, Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia and so on. Even England is eager to use services of Russian nuclear plant builders.

That's it, joule rules the world...

Bushehr construction was a desperate action, almost crazy, with so many risks, with unpredictable result, and with the country image and honour at stake.

But today it's clear that Russia made right decision.

SCO BUSINESS COUNCIL DISCUSSES INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ISSUES

Valery Minin

The Alexander House in Moscow hosted a roundtable organized by the SCO Business Council. The centerpiece of the discussion was Importance of Intellectual Property for Actual Integration Processes of SCO Innovative Economies.

The event was attended by Sergei Kanavsky, executive secretary of the SCO Business Council, employees of the SCO Business Club Denis Tyurin, Vladimir Gorbanovsky and Valery Bas, and also the Business Club's representatives in Turkey and Iran Vasily Isaul and Alexander Sharov. Researchers and experts interested in the problem were invited to the discussion.

They included Oleg Demikhov of the SINO-RUS Association for Development of International Trade and Economic Relations, Ivan Bliznets, rector of the Russian State Academy of Intellectual Property, Li Feng of the Association of Chinese Entrepreneurs in Russia, Sing Long of the Greenwood international trade and exhibition center, Yelena Krasnova

(EnergoStil), Konstantin Bakulev (the Institute of Social and Economic Modernization), Pavel Provintsev (the Russian Fund for High Technology Development) and Iranian researcher Bekhruz Abtakhi.

The discussion was opened by Sergei Kanavsky, executive secretary of the SCO Business Council. He shared his view on the problem of intellectual property protection and said that the SCO Business Council was willing to support ideas and initiatives voiced at the meeting.

The main speaker at the roundtable was Doctor Ivan Bliznets, a renowned Russian legal expert and rector of the Russian State Academy of Intellectual Property. He described the situation in the area and existing

problems and also offered a number of possible solutions.

The participants exchanged opinions and expressed their views on issues related to intellectual property and voiced proposals to create a single patent for the SCO member states and a single agency responsible for intellectual property. The initiative envisages the setup of a single, independent patenting system in the SCO. The SCO's desire to set up such a structure seems quite natural. For example, under national laws and international treaties, a trademark is protected only on the territory of the country where it is registered.

In each country, a trademark is registered at a national patent agency. In other words, registration

of a trademark in one country (for example, Russia) does not prevent a third party from registering it in any other country.

If there is interest in foreign markets, it is absolutely necessary to timely register a trademark in corresponding countries.

The reason is that the so-called squatting - registration of a trademark that is well-known, but not registered in a given country by a third party – is quite developed in some of these countries.

Later this third party demands a huge compensation for this trademark; attempts to sue it back also result in huge expenditures.

The participants of the roundtable also considered making the procedure of issuing titles of protection, valid in all SCO member states, easier and cheaper, streamlining protection of copyright holders' rights within a single patent space.

A single patent system should give applicants numerous advantages, such as making patenting faster and easier; a single patent valid in all the SCO member states; a legally stronger patent as it will be issued only after substantive examination, while national legislation in some countries does not envisage examination (a registration system). There are not enough experts to carry out this

idea, and the participants discussed the problem of training patent engineers.

Education programs have already been developed, standards defined and the entire package has been submitted to the Russian Education and Science Ministry. The roundtable discussed the possibility for the SCO Business Club to announce master's programs and advanced training programs for patent engineers at the Russian State Academy of Intellectual Property.

The next proposed step is to set up an auction of intellectual property exchanges that will serve as a platform for meetings between patent holders and businessmen.

The parties also discussed other countries' experience. Namely, they spoke about Belarus, which had already adopted laws that encourage support to intellectual property and where research institutes receive different privileges.

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YUZHNOURALSKY LOGISTICS CENTER

The construction of the Yuzhnouralsky transport and logistics center is proceeding in the Uvelsky district of the Chelyabinsk region. This is an ambitious project that has been endorsed by the SCO. Its fundamental goal is to allow increasing the trade turnover between Russia and China. When it is inaugurated, time needed to deliver cargoes will be reduced to ten days. At present, it takes almost two months by sea and a month by the Trans-Siberian railway. As they say, the game is worth the candle.

The government of Russia's Chelyabinsk region and representatives of the people's government of the Xinjiang-Uygur autonomous area of China (XUAR) launched the construction of the Yuzhnouralsky center.

Sergei Komyakov, chairman of the regional government, and Shi Dagang, deputy head of the XUAR government, together laid the first stone and a time capsule – a letter addressing future generations – in the foundation of the future center.

The legal framework of the project, which allowed launching it, is the agreement on cooperation on the Yuzhnouralsky center, which was signed in May 2012 by the Chelyabinsk region's governor Mikhail Yurevich and the government of the XUAR.

It envisages the construction of a huge logistics center that would distribute Chinese goods that have undergone customs clearance to any area of Russia. The inter-state agreement

was endorsed by Russian President Vladimir Putin. "A little time has passed since the signing of the agreement," Sergei Komyakov points out.

"The project offers absolutely new opportunities to optimize transport flow and turn the South Ural area in the center supplying goods from Asian countries to Europe. The project has been coordinated at a high inter-government level. It has received support from the Business Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. A lot of preparatory work has been done. All organizational problems have been settled."

Kazakhstan's national railway company has joined the ambitious project initiated by the Urals region. It will ensure a "green corridor" for Chinese goods coming to Russia and back. A corresponding agreement was signed a week ago.

"At present, cargo shipments from China to Russia by sea takes about

50 days, the distance is 23,000 km; shipments by the Trans-Siberian railway (12,000 km) will take over a month, but the new route, from Urumchi to the Yuzhnouralsky center across Kazakhstan, is just 3,000 km and takes ten days. The center will receive up to 400 containers from China daily, or, approximately 2.5 million metric tons of cargo a year. And this is only the first stage," Komyakov emphasized. The governor said that his Chinese counterpart had promised to increase the trade turnover and supply up to 10 million metric tons a year, and added, "Our transport and logistics center will manage that amount, too."

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Centers of business activity are now actively moving from big industrial centers to provinces. Apart from the construction of the transport and logistics corridor in the Uvelsky region, Komyakov pointed to the example of the district power plant that is being built in Yuzhnouralsk and the crane plant in Korkino. "China and Russia are fast-developing countries," said Shi Dagang.

"The Chinese say that together we can achieve a lot. This road opens a door to both Russia and Europe for us. Our goods will spread all over the world. We are also interested

in receiving high-quality goods from Russia. Indeed, this is a new Silk Way!" But what is the Yuzhnouralsky project? It takes up 180 hectares. The center itself will take up 120 hectares, and 60 hectares will be allocated for the industrial zone. Investment in the first stage of the project amounted to €120 million.

The general investor was Russia's State Transport and Logistics Company. Kazakh companies are also involved in the project: Kedentransservice will provide comprehensive support to container shuttle shipments, while the railway company Kazakhstan Temir Zholy will be responsible for railway shipments across Kazakhstan. The center's cargo turnover will be 2.5 million metric tons a year. What tasks will Yuzhnouralsky's launch resolve?

The fundamental goal is to make it possible to increase Russian-Chinese goods turnover. The center's setup will reduce the time of goods shipments to

ten days. At present, it takes almost two months by sea and a month by the Trans-Siberian railway. Kazakhstan has also joined the project. The agreement with it guarantees a green corridor for cargo shipments across the republic's territory. The center will process 2.5 million metric tons of cargo a year, and the amount may be increased to 10 million.

Goods turnover with China is among Russia's top five, but it is not the biggest yet. The Yuzhnouralsky center that is under construction will allow using the potential for its increase. It will process about 400 containers daily.

Then there will be change of tracks for cars, transit across Kazakhstan, storage and distribution of containers that will move in different directions: from China to Russia and Europe and back. So the Chelyabinsk region is becoming an important link between Asia and Europe.

UFA IS PREPARING TO HOST THE SUMMIT OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) IN 2015

Ruslan Mirsayapov,
director of ANO "Office-group of SCO BRICS "Ufa-2015"

Next year the meeting of SCO member heads of state will be held in Russia, in the city of Ufa. It is the capital of Bashkortostan, the largest region of the Russian Federation, with a rich industrial, scientific and technical and cultural potential. Oil production and oil processing, chemical clusters, machine and machine-tool construction, unique development and technologies – is far not the complete list of what Bashkortostan has now.

The republic for the first time is going to become a platform for carrying out such a significant event as the SCO summit. Realizing an increasing role and weight of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on the geopolitical arena, its immanent opportunities for forming cross-cultural dialogue at all levels, Bashkortostan seeks to be integrated into global economic and innovative trends of space of the SCO.

Preparation for carrying out the summit started in 2013. Development of infrastructure of Ufa became the focus of attention – everything is done to provide guests of the summit with the most comfortable conditions for work and business communication. Currently the Congress hall – a place where the meeting of heads of member states of the SCO will take place is modernized. Cultural city facilities where the events of various formats will take place are reconstructed, new hotels of well-known world brands – Hilton, Sheraton, Holliday inn

are under construction. The largest in the history "upgrade" is carried out by the International airport "Ufa" – the runway is modernized, the new terminal will be constructed, etc. In a word, Bashkortostan is actively and thoroughly preparing for a meeting of participants and guests of the summit – from China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

The main political policy of Bashkortostan which is correlated with the basic principles of interaction of the SCO, – is an access to higher and more effective level of interregional cooperation of the SCO process participants. The republic is ready to work over creation of multicultural projects in the most various spheres – from the industry and science – to multiethnic art. Bashkortostan has already accumulated a positive experience of business partnership with the SCO countries. Thus the leader of the republican mechanical

engineering – Ufa Engine Industrial Association – closely cooperates with the Indian "Hindustan Aeronautics", having a 10-year contract for the production of a turbojet for the SU-30 aircrafts. In China Bashkortostan has partner provinces – Liaoning and Jiangxi. In the near future the republic will set up a joint venture with the Liaoning Neftemash company

Bashkortostan seeks to be integrated into global economic and innovative trends of space of the SCO.

A scale work of Bashkortostan on development of interregional cooperation with the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization leads to the obvious positive results.



for the production of the heavy drilling equipment. Representatives of the business community of Bashkortostan actively take part in the events of the SCO Business council, hold presentations of their projects at the organization's business forums. It is in Bashkortostan where the ideas of establishing the Venture Fund of the SCO for increasing the innovative capacity of the SCO member states, development and financing of high-tech, science-intensive industries were born.

There is a systematic work on the installation of business political connections. Cooperation agreements with the regions of a number of the countries, members of the SCO, are concluded. Thus in October 2013 in

Astana the agreement on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Working Group was reached. This Group will be from Bashkortostan represented by the Cabinet of the republic, and from Kazakhstan – by the Ministry of regional development, whose functions are system work on the activation of the economic relations and cooperation in cultural and

spiritual, scientific and sports fields. In May of this year an agreement signing between the government of the Republic of Bashkortostan and the national government of the Province of Jiangxi of China about cooperation in trade and economic, scientific and technical and humanitarian areas took place. The document was ratified by the president of Bashkortostan Rustem Khamitov and the governor of the Province of Jiangxi Lu Sinshe.

Bashkortostan is actively developing humanitarian cooperation with the SCO countries. On continuing basis there is a cultural dialogue, an exchange of theatrical tours, participation in the international festivals. In 2013 the Bashkir state pedagogical university of M. Akmulla was included into the SCO University system, and already in 2014 was the organizer and the main platform for carrying out the “VII Week of education of member states of the SCO “Education without borders”. A scale work of Bashkortostan on development of interregional cooperation with the countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization leads to the obvious positive results.

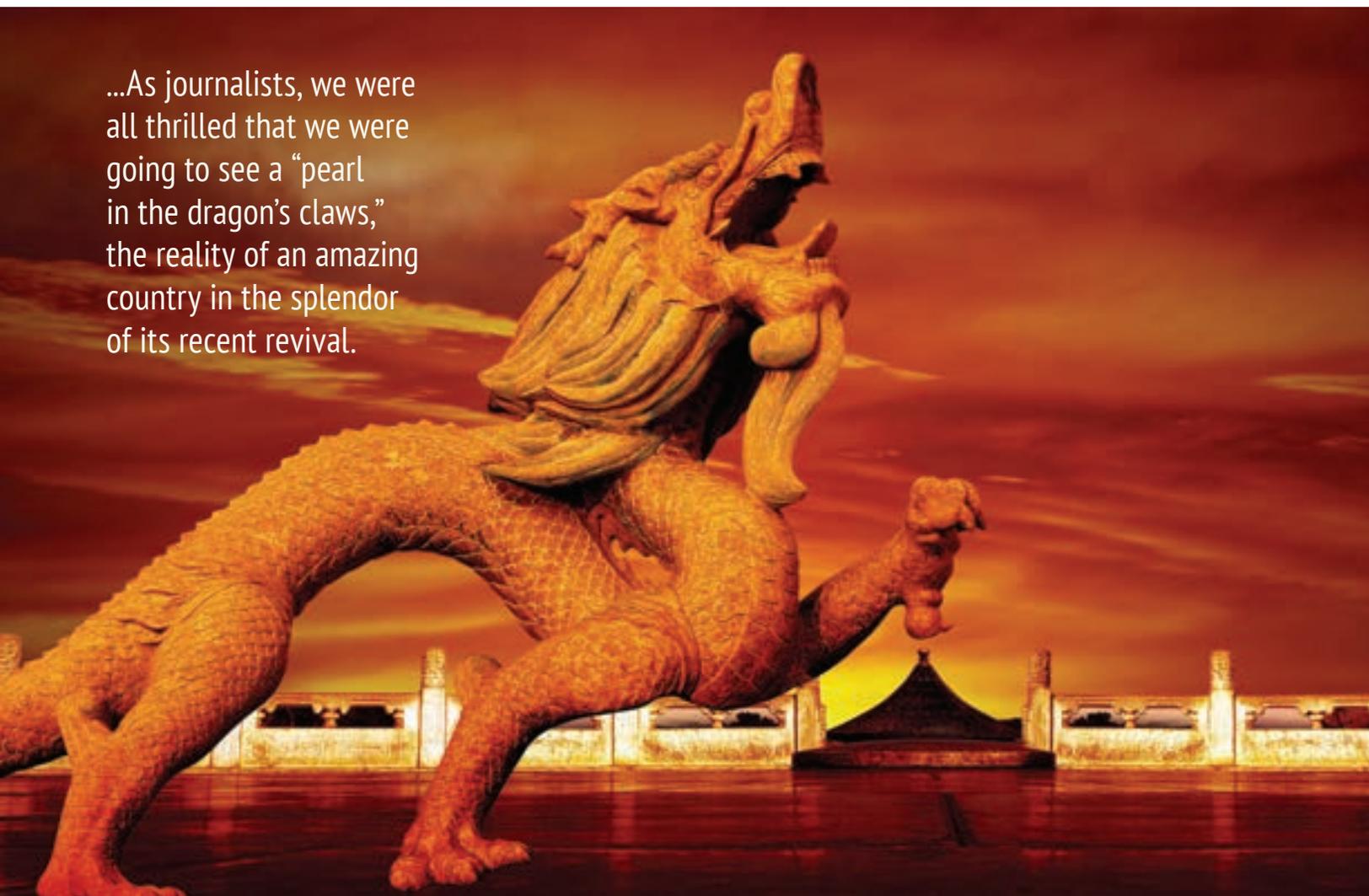
It is no accident that Ufa won the right for holding the largest trade forums. Thus in October of this year Bashkortostan will host the specialized exhibition “Power system of the SCO” which will gather about 200 organizations operating in this field. Government of Bashkortostan together with the Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation will also organize the XIV Russian energy forum “Green power system”. More than 1000 people will be guests of this event.

Particular attention has traditionally been paid to humanitarian issues. The International festival of opera art “Shalyapinsky evenings in Ufa” and the Rudolf Nureev XXI International festival of ballet art will be held with the new scope. On the special account in 2015 – there is the “Role of the USSR in a Victory over Fascism and Liberation of the Far East” exhibition devoted to the 70 anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War and the end of World War II. The exposition will be presented in two cities – in Ufa and Beijing. Bashkortostan is going to host the SCO-2015 summit in an appropriate manner.

PILGRIMAGE TO FLUFFY IDOLS

Tatiana Sinitsyna

...As journalists, we were all thrilled that we were going to see a “pearl in the dragon’s claws,” the reality of an amazing country in the splendor of its recent revival.



The out-of-the-box thinking China treated the Year of Chinese Tourism in Russia in a big way, inviting 165 journalists from all over the country

on a large-scale press trip. As editor-in-chief of InfoSHOS, I found myself among this unusual landing party. ...At the Sheremetyevo airport,

the Moscow representatives of Hainan Airlines saw us off solemnly and cheerfully. We boarded an A-330-300, taking up half of the airplane.

“PEARL IN THE DRAGON'S CLAWS”

The curbs of the road from Beijing's international airport were smiling with roses that were wet from the rain. This country gives special importance to gardening, since greenery can mitigate the gigantism and modernism of contemporary architecture.

In the evening, the Russian guests were invited to a grand reception at the Summer Palace of Chinese Emperors; the event was attended by Russia's ambassador to China Andrei Denisov. The amicable gathering was also attended by Shao Qiwei, head of China's National Tourism Administration and Cheng Hong, Beijing's Deputy Mayor. All speakers agreed that it was important to continuously strengthen the “bridge of friendship” between the two countries and they all described tourism as a “powerful mechanism” helping to achieve this goal.

Bidding us farewell, Denisov confessed, “I have lived in China for many years, but this country is still an enigma for me...” His idea was clear: of course, China is a mystery! It is seen as such not only in Russia, but also in the entire world. However, the path of knowledge is alluring; walking it, you may touch the mystery. So we left Beijing for different parts of the country, in search of Chinese miracles. It was admission to the

secret, to the beauty and grandeur of the ancient Chinese civilization. Our group of nine journalists was bound for the southern part of Central China, the province of Sichuan. It is the homeland of giant pandas, the beautiful black and white bears that have the entire world charmed. Like true pilgrims, on our way to see these fluffy idols we walked the path of holiness and purification that went through many sacred places and temples.

THE ART OF UNSINKABLE EXISTENCE

For five thousand years, the Chinese have been among the best students at the eternal university of Life. They have learned to exist without elbowing each other and, more importantly, to turn not only their achievements, but also their mistakes, in energy for development.

Their wisdom has allowed the Chinese to discover the secret of unsinkable existence in the Time Ocean. History has allowed China to rise to the peak of state grandeur and then put it on the

brink of survival for so many times! But the collective mind of the people that generated a host of sages and that are unbelievably good at closing ranks for achieving a common goal has survived the highly turbulent historical atmosphere without losing its stability.

Today, China is witnessing an era of “reform and openness.” That this country has managed to rise to its current state of a geopolitical superpower seems work of magic. China does not conceal that it wants to become the world's No.1 economy (it is already No.2!).

All this is achieved by artfully maneuvering under sails of change in foreign and domestic policy, keeping a balance between the tough and the flexible and respecting oneself and one's partners. You should feel and sense powers in motion and patiently swim with the wave, not trying to fight the current – teaches Taoism.

Sichuan is the homeland of this philosophy that has become a national religion. “Today's Chinese, like their ancestors, are all connected; they have a fantastic genetic memory. Hence the unusual strength of their

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Terraced rice paddies in China

society,” Professor Alexei Maslov, a Chinese scholar from Moscow, told me in an interview. You can feel this as soon as you arrive in the country. What is this, an inherited ethnic peculiarity? No, the natural human egoism, which pulled the Chinese society off track, was broken down by the great Confucius in the 6th century.

His epiphany allowed him to discover the formula of stability of human formations: only a society that complies with certain ethnic rules and laws and is linked by traditions is viable. “A family is a small state and a state is a big family,” the wise man used to say.

EMBODIMENT OF PARADISE

The province of Sichuan is definitely one of the biggest gems in the magnificent crown of Chinese tourism. Within its territory lie several historical monuments that

have been awarded the status of the UNESCO World Heritage: Huanglong (the Yellow Dragon national park), the landscaped area of Mount Emei, the Giant Buddah Statue in Leshan, the Dujiangyan irrigation system, Mount Qincheng and giant panda sanctuaries. We were to see a significant part of this.

The rich, prosperous land in the southern part of Central China, not far from the Tibet, is unbelievably beautiful and unique in many respects. For its natural riches and possibility of two to three harvests a year, Sichuan is nicknamed a “paradise on earth.” However, this paradise is often hit by earthquakes and floods. This is the nature’s way to balance out the subsurface wealth and the favorable climate.

Sichuan is warm and damp (humidity can reach 87%), it rains often and the sky seems to be covered with a foggy veil, through which rays of the sun pass but seldom. There is even a proverb, “A Sichuan dog barks at the sun.”

The province is quite densely populated with about 90 million people. However, you don’t get the feeling of an “anthill” since the life of this huge society is harmonized and delicate. Thanks to the subtropical climate, the industrious and hard-working Chinese gather one harvest after another: sugar reed, sesame, peanuts, cotton, exotic fruits and vegetables, all kinds of citruses, rice and wheat.

The province is also industrially developed. Its industrial potential lies in such areas as car-making, electronics, the petrochemical industry, power generation, machine-building, textile manufacturing. It produces coal, gas, vanadium, cobalt and titanium. Besides, the local nature is unbelievably varied: about half of all plants and animals registered in China can be found in Sichuan.

In the foothills of the subtropical forest, very democratic in its spirit, we saw the umbrella pine alongside magnolias and cypresses typical for the Black Sea region, Central Asian sycamores, African palms and the lilac crowns of jacarandas. Yet the main inhabitants of this area are bamboo groves and azaleas covering hills.

The high humidity is ideal for pandas. Scientists have counted up to 850 animals in bamboo forests in the foothills, which is 85% of all

Chengdu city Sichuan province

pandas remaining on the planet. These relic animals, valued in China as a national treasure, have become the global symbol for endangered species. This is sad. However, there is a hope that pandas will not become extinct in the near future. China is taking enormous effort on the state level to save these unique bears from extinction and these efforts are supported by the entire world.



CHENGDU, CITY OF BROCADE AND HIBISCUS

“This is a city you won’t want to leave once you’ve come here...” Chengdu patriots have spread this

motto at the entrance to the city. The life of this urban heavyweight with a population of over 14 million people is varied and well streamlined. It is a comfortable place to live, with unique architecture that blends well with the luxurious local greenery. The hibiscus is considered

to be the leader of Chengdu’s green symphony; it adds festivity to the city’s appearance. Local women have a reputation for being the most youthful and beautiful in the country: the humid climate is good for the skin. At all times, they were successful with silk:



they grew silk moths, reeled the silk, span it, wove and embroidered brocade silk. They are still doing well in the silk business.

Meanwhile, Chengdu residents believe that their city, despite its

full life, is somewhat boring and is better suited for grown people with families who appreciate a settled life without urban madness and turmoil.

But the young and ambitious, with high career aspirations should

better prove themselves in Beijing or Shanghai. Yet this opinion was somewhat diluted when we learned that Sichuan also develops high technologies, including in the aerospace industry, and there is room to play after all.



Statue of Buddha in Leshan

SACRED NATURE'S SHOW

For four days we watched a sacred nature's live show in Sichuan. It harmoniously combined the divine with the talent and inherent

workaholism of the Chinese. In the vast Sichuan basin surrounded by mountains, the cataracts of heaven come together with the cataracts of earth. Four rivers led by the Min Jiang (a tributary of the great Yangtze) alternately flooded these areas

or left them without any water. In 256 B.C., ancient potamologists managed to rein them in and adjusted their course. They built the Dujiangyan irrigation system 55 km of Chengdu, and it has been in use ever since. Hydrologists worked under the order of Sichuan's

governor Li Bing, who acted with his son's assistance. For their great deed, the two were declared "saints" and two Taoist temples were built to honor them, as people saw them as gods. The Chinese use a special code to denote the beauty of natural zones.

The one we saw had five As and a golden horse, which means, "a gem of global treasures." It truly was a miracle! The Dujiangyan water system has still retained its practical importance. Its constructors must have been magicians.

Anyway, the implemented project has forever protected the Sichuan valley against draughts and floods, ensuring its stable prosperity. The grand task of reining in the river was achieved through a handmade miracle, a simple



stroke of genius. Its secret is in the water stream being balanced with the help of a barely seen "soft dam" of special configuration. It is made of bamboo cages filled with big stones. People also taught the muddy stream to get rid of sand in it. In the way of three

rivers, in the town of Leshan, where the water was especially violent, ancient sculptors carved a gigantic 72-meter Buddha from the riverside rock. They cut off "everything unnecessary", and the strict sitting Buddha emerged. In the name of what was all this

sweat? The colossus was expected to tame the river that was washing out the shore, and this goal was achieved. Apparently, the river got scared of the giant's stern stare.

MAN CAN BECOME GOD

The Chinese say that “kind people love the river, smart people love the mountains.” In our fairytale trip across the province of Sichuan situated in the southern part of Central China, we, nine Russian journalists, were both kind and smart. At first we enjoyed the solemn panorama of three rivers that had been tamed before the Common Era; then we rode their waves on board a steamer. Then we had a difficult test in store: climbing towards Mount Qincheng, which was well worth the effort.

We stubbornly moved up the path of pleated steps that seemed endless. Having walked this difficult road worth of true pilgrims, we saw the temple crowning the mountain, solemn and sad.

“It is the cradle of China’s Taoism,” our pleasant guide Zoya said. She chose the Russian name for the sake of simplicity, since the Chinese language is truly another Great Wall.

Tao is literally translated as “a way of things”. It is the traditional Chinese teaching with elements of philosophy and religion.

It received energy from magic cults and shaman practices to offer new ideas to the society. It was in the province of Sichuan that the School of Five Rice Ladles and later the School of Heavenly Teachers were opened. The temple on Mount

Qincheng is kind of a monument to the source of Taoism, which was finally shaped by the ancient Chinese wise man Laozi.

Many of the country’s citizens are followers of this philosophy that has acquired some traits of a religion. Taoist postulates are broadly used in China, not only in the society, but often even in international politics. Taoism is close to paganism, with plenty of deities that pervade the life in its different aspects. It is believed that ordinary people can become gods, too.

The Chinese have managed to “count” the number of experiences in a person’s life; there are 180 of them. If, caught in earthly emotions, one will be able to get rid of them and to perfect one’s soul and thoughts, one will become a “little Buddha” with a chance to rise to be a god. So, the golden seed of Taoism is the supreme spirit aspiring perfection.

The main postulate of Taoism seems contradictory for a European: “Action through inaction.” But it has a deep meaning: the philosophy calls for living in harmony with the nature, learning from it and resolving conflicts using the art of soft power, reaching a consensus.

Apparently, this is why people in China smile so often, no matter whether the life is kind or cruel to them. They appreciate it as it is, at all ages. The Chinese don’t usually ask, “How old are you?”

What does it matter! Trying to prolong one’s life is a national goal, one of the peculiarities of the Chinese mentality. This is why this country has always been known for its healers, recuperation systems and all kinds of means to achieve longevity, vigorous body and clear mind.

TEMPLES IN THE SKY

Mount Emei will remain one of the best episodes in my nomadic journalist life. It is one of the Four Sacred Mountains of Buddhism, together with Mount Putuo, Mount Wutai and Mount Jiuhua. These mountains are also known as the Four Beauties, as their outline reminds of a woman’s brows.

We left the town of Emeishan behind and moved up, to 1,900 m above the sea, where we found the Wuatang temple that was built in the 1st century AD.

It is surrounded by a range of temples and monasteries that live their own centuries-old life. At first we climbed the mountainous road in a small bus, then by the cable railway and then on foot up the stairs.

Clouds hung above the mountains like huge gray airships and sprinkled the earth with water. Wuatang is No.1 temple because it is situated higher than the rest and is turned towards the Tibet. The Gold Buddha looks in the same direction.



For centuries, the Emeishan temples saw only pilgrims. These unique places were opened for tourists only in 1960, after China's reformer Deng Xiaoping, the father of "reforms and openness," rehabilitated this place, which had been in disfavor with the authorities, and suggested laying a tourist path there. The Chinese enthusiastically took up the difficult task.

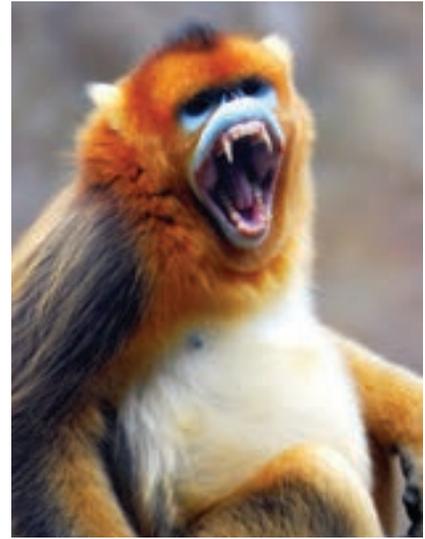
They carved a serpentine in the rock, repaired the neglected temples, built a tourist base and, finally, built a reliable and huge cable railway with a transparent gondola for a hundred people. The road along the slopes of Mount Emei towards the Wutang temple deserves a more

detailed description. Grand mountain views came one after another, it was a live gallery of the nature's great art.

Folded mountains, huge boulders thrown from the top by earthquakes, rocks crying with purest spring tears and descending waterfalls...

It is almost always damp and sunless here – the ideal conditions for the luxurious subtropical forest that covers the mountains. Its residents are umbrella pines, plane trees, hazelnuts, cypresses, magnolias, irises, jacarandas, hibiscuses – a total of 5,000 species, including the phyodea, a tree from the Mesozoic era, a favorite treat of dinosaurs.

The tops of the hills were covered with crimson azaleas, the beauty of which is highly appreciated by the Chinese and often reflected in poetry, on silk and paper. All this eclectic natural magnificence, enchanted with still air, was pierced with a slight fog, and only leaves shivered when raindrops fell. The rich expanses of Mount Emei are the home of a huge animal family. It is the habitat of giant and lesser pandas, gold snub-nosed monkeys, snow leopards, clouded leopards – a total of about 3,000 species. And there were countless birds, swimming in the air, calling to each other, their roulades, thanks to the mountainous acoustics, sounding as if in the Bolshoi Theater.



Swerving around the mountain slope, the serpentine took us higher and closer to Wuatang. This area is not wild, it is well reclaimed by people. As we moved up, so did small pagodas with their typical curly roofs. This is hardly surprising: Buddhism is one of the most ancient religions that was brought to China by missionaries from India. The first ones were forced to hide in the mountains.

At 1,300 meters above the sea, the road began to ramify. We were nearing the village of Mei. First we saw tiny villages crowded in the mountains, and then beautiful stone buildings with TV antennas on the roofs, with tourist hotels and restaurants.

In Mei, we left the bus, received warm coats and bamboo sticks and got in the transparent dome of the cable railway that took us even higher. At the final stage, we were climbing stairs that had seen millions of human feet. The sticks were not

just for symbolic support, but also for protection against annoying monkeys, including the rare gold snub-nosed monkeys. The nature has given these primates a skin that can be compared to a purple and gold royal robe. However, the behavior of these beauties is far from royal: they find great amusement in pestering strangers.

Still, the rain seemed to keep their temper in check: after all, their skin was golden! With our hearts tumbling, we finally covered the last flight on the way to the top. But instead of the reward, we found a huge disappointment: the Gold Buddha sitting on the three-headed elephant was covered with thick clouds.

But a mirage was shining through the white mist and for a second it seemed that the elephant was about to break away from the clouded jail and the Buddha would appear in front of us like Pushkin's Stone Guest.

The legend has it that a person lived on this mountain who went the way of purification and awakening, after which he became Buddha.

Then he flew away from the top on his three-headed elephant. But people believe that Mount Emei is the place where his spirit will live forever. We spent a lot of time wandering around this sacred place, looking at temples, watching prayer rituals and the quivering lights of huge wax candles that stood in front of the altar like pines in the forest.

In niches inside the main temple there were plenty of small yellow-clad Buddhas decorated with heavy pearl necklaces, the symbol of purity. It was time to go down and I cast the last glance from this holy mountain at the created world, the beauty of which could not be described with words and demanded silent contemplation. Everything was "below me," as Pushkin wrote. And, talking of Pushkin...

PUSHKIN DREAMED OF SEEING CHINA

The poet had a chance to visit China in 1830, with a Russian mission that was bounded for Beijing. However, Earl Benkendorf, head of the third department of His Royal Majesty's chancellery, rejected his request, saying that it was too late and the mission had been chosen.

Meanwhile, Pushkin was getting ready for a trip to China with passion. His interest in the ancient country came from his friendship with monk Father Iakinf.

The oriental scientist, connoisseur of the Chinese culture, his command of the Chinese language was perfect. He translated ancient chronicles and legends and compiled a Russian-Chinese dictionary.

Monk Iakinf spent almost 15 years in Beijing with a Russian mission. The poet's passionate desire to see the walls of the "immovable China" caught the imagination of Chinese artist Gao Mang and he decided to repair the wrong.

In 1999, for the 200th anniversary since Pushkin's birth, Gao Mang painted the Russian poet walking on the Great Chinese Wall with a top hat and a cane...

Dreams, as is well known, sometimes come true in an unexpected way...

WHY DO WE LOVE PANDAS?

These black and white bamboo bears have made the entire world fall in love with them. How they did it is their secret. What force catches human feelings? The fact that these animals are charming, funny and kind or the realization that they need our care? Or the grief that their life is already measured? We always have a special treatment for those already doomed.

The gates of the huge Wolong nature reserve that led to the home of pandas were decorated with the Tao symbol, the black and white circle divided by a wavy line, which, according to the Chinese philosophy, unites Yin and Yang, the feminine and the masculine.

The nature packed the panda's life in a beautiful black and white skin that corresponds to the colors of Tao. Perhaps, it is their "Taoist" coloring that makes these pandas special for the Chinese, as well as for others.

Pandas are named the treasure of the country and are considered a national symbol. The government takes incredible effort to save these ancient bears, the ancestors of all other bears, and finds a lot of support for this initiative. The giant panda is the emblem of the World Wildlife Fund, which has eternalized it.

...This is almost a place of pilgrimage. People from all over the world are coming to Wolong to see pandas, the nature's beautiful children. Here you will always hear a Babylonian mix of tongues from all the foreigners in the park.

Excited, I'm walking the narrow path laid for tourists, my eyes keen, searching for pandas, waiting for the encounter.

Suddenly, around the bend, an almost sacred view opens: seven pandas together, big and small. They are all in cute poses, diligently gnawing at bamboo sticks they are holding in their paws.



The reserve has over 70 adult pandas and approximately as many babies, which have their own lodgings and supervisors. The pandas' health is closely monitored by specialists, who regularly check the animals' general state, take blood tests, check blood pressure and conduct

different manipulations to adapt their wards for living in the wild. The look of pandas is so unusual they seem to have come from another planet. Scientists from different countries have come up with lots of versions about their ancestry, but they have agreed that pandas

are the most ancient representatives of bears, the forbearers of even the Russian brown bear. Remarkably, the first poetic mention of the giant panda was made in the Book of History and the Book of Songs. These cultural monuments are over three thousand years old.



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So pandas excited the human soul even back then. There is another remarkable fact: the genome of pandas coincides with the human genome by 68%. Charming, harmless blimps, sluggish and lazy, idle in their black and white furs. Their agate eyes, shining from the

black of their "spectacled" sockets, seem bottomless and mysterious. The nature has gifted these animals with unbelievable charm. Everyone who was watching them beside me – Russians, Americans, Swedes, Germans, Poles – was smiling, and women couldn't hide

their tears of tenderness. Bamboo is pandas' only love, and this is one of the reasons for the species' fragility and lack of viability. Of course, they will never go hungry here, in the reserve. To diversify their diet, nutritionists have created special cookies made of pressed

bamboo. Pandas also like apples, but all this is good only as a treat, for dessert. Their diet is always based on bamboo, and they prefer a certain sort that grows up in the mountains, at 2,000 meters above the sea, so Wolong's supply officers bring them this high-altitude bamboo, smelling

of mountains, every day. In human care, pandas live 30-35 years; in the wild, their life is ten years shorter. There they suffer not only from shortage of food, but also from predators. Long ago, pandas were predators, too. Their Chinese name means a "cat-bear," because they

could eat a small animal in addition to bamboo. However, 700,000 years on earth has for some unknown reason adjusted their taste and pandas have become vegetarians. They have lost the ability to adapt and aggressive skills typical of the wildlife and have acquired suicidal



Lesser panda

pacifist traits. It is as if pandas had got tired of life and sunk into apathy and idleness. Many of them do not want to climb up trees, which are considered a "protected bedroom," even for rest. In the wild, a panda sleeping on the ground can become the prey of any passing predator.

In the reserve, this is not possible. Fluffy idlers are indifferent to what is going on around them. They don't pay any attention to tourists, but sometimes they do cover their faces with paws, as if saying, "Enough! Stop looking at us from morning till night!" It seems there is little energy under

their impeccable fur. However, to eat 30 kg of bamboo – and this is the daily ratio of each fluffy individual – you need strong paws, good jaws and an enduring stomach. This means there must be life steaming within pandas, it is just that their temperament is too childlike.

The founders of this reserve and recreation area chose the perfect forest in direct proximity to Chengdu, the capital of the province of Sichuan. Like the mountainous subtropical forest, Wolong has lots of bamboo groves that are a natural habitat for pandas.

These wild animals found themselves on the brink of extinction in the last century, when for some reason bamboo began blooming actively, which meant its death. A direct connection was seen here: bamboo colonies were being depleted and pandas died of hunger. But what will explain the process of this loop of degradation? Scientists believe that the main reason of this disaster is man's excessive interference with the wild life. Before coming to Wolong I did not know about the existence of lesser pandas. These are unbelievably

beautiful big cats, which also like bamboo. Their outfits are amazing: red, with black marks, white ears and a black trim on the face, while the tail is bright red with white stripes. You can see that the nature let its imagination loose on these ones. Like giant pandas, they gnaw at bamboo from morning till night and part with it only in order to get some sleep. In the wild, pandas mate in the spring, they have not lost their reproductive instinct. Yet in captivity they don't (as if they were embarrassed to do this in front of the entire world!).

So scientists have resorted to artificial insemination, and the reproductive project is already yielding results: Wolong regularly welcomes new panda babies. The reserve has created all conditions to prepare youngsters for going back to their natural life

in the wild. This honorable effort gives us hope that the "fluffy idols" will not disappear from the earth any time soon.

...Our fantastic trip to China is over, and we are again born high in the Asian sky by Hainan Airlines, this time towards Moscow. We had interesting companions on board, a group of elderly Chinese. They were accompanied by a young man who said he was taking these elderly tourists to Moscow and St Petersburg – they had spent their youth in these Russian cities, studying and working. And now they ventured on a long nostalgic trip, not put off by their age. "You should breathe with a full chest till the end," one of the travelers said. "As if you had plenty of hearts, and all of them healthy." These words held a deep Chinese meaning, with a mysterious shine of smiling wisdom and the spirit of vivid optimism.



IN CHINA A POET IS NOT A POET AT ALL

*Kirill Barskiy,
diplomat and poet*



It is not that easy being a poet. No matter when and where. But being a poet in China was much more difficult than anywhere else, and the most challenging period for poets was pretty long – from ancient times to pre-revolutionary period.

“...I buy some wine ... pour it into small nephrite jar, nestle down in a hut and enjoy the landscape and sound of rain. Or I invite the best people, wonderful scientists – to sit around me – and we discuss poetry. Bamboo grove is all around us and bamboo is poetry in itself, and painting, and calligraphy – is absolute inspiration. The whole nature accompanies this music of our poetic souls with the white clouds in the clear sky...”

Such image of poetic art was embedded in the mind of V. Alekseev, philologist, member of the Academy of Science, one of maotres of Russian sinology. He knew Chinese poetry as nobody else. We will come back to this sacred thing, to this special state of soul and mind, connected with inspiration and insight, as well as to the mystery of calligraphic and poetic masterpieces creation. And now we will change subject a little.

It is not that easy being a poet. No matter when and where. But being a poet in China was much more difficult than anywhere else, and the most challenging period for poets was pretty long – from ancient times to pre-revolutionary period.

So who were the poets of ancient China? Or vice-versa – who could become a poet in China after Han dynasty, when Confucianism became

national ideology? Only civil servants could. This was Chinese peculiarity: to become literate one had to learn Confucian canons by heart, and to become educated one had to learn philosophical tractates and to pass exams to become a civil servant.

The exams were rather unusual: the candidate had to write an essay on the given topic. The most important thing was his ability to outline the “ancient wisdom” in the lines with eight symbols each.

So the ability to write poems was a mere duty, but not the personal, intimate thing dealing with talent and heart calling as it should be. Every civil servant in China had to be a poet, otherwise there was no way for him to be respectable

and honored society member with successful career. But there were hundreds of thousands of civil servants, and how many real poets will we find among them?

We can find another side to the story. Only the most educated people could be poets in China due to its great culture prevailing over everything else. Huge amount of knowledge, saved for centuries, and Chinese literature itself didn't leave them any other options.

Intelligence and poetical talent were not enough. A poet could not be a poet without being an educated person, Confucianist and civil servant. And it was this contradiction between force of duty and calling of the heart, which afterwards led

people to the conflict. Some were expelled and persecuted, some left on their own will. But there were some of them, who put their duty on the first place.

Chinese poets were remarkable and outstanding persons. Often they were poets, calligraphers and painters at the same time. It means they had a whole bunch of shining talents. Nowadays we have their poetry together with paintings. And hieroglyph is a story in its own right! Made by a real master, with his own style and energy, it was an all-sufficient masterpiece.

Chinese poetry was something with huge responsibility, because the culture and knowledge were a real cult and reached incredible



excellence. It was considered to be a most important storage and translator of cultural tradition. The task of poetry and of Chinese culture in general was to teach and educate, to discipline and humanize, ennoble and make people better. And taking this into account, the burden of being a poet was a very hard one.

A poet had to be a philosopher, a teacher, a man of wisdom. Country wanted him to bring the ideas of patriotism and law-obedience to people, and government tried to make poets their flags and speakers. Society insisted that poets should have been the guardians of traditional values.

Thus, a fragile soul of an artist found itself at gunpoint of

thousands of eyes which was a heavy moral burden. Both Earth and Sky had severe requirements to a poet, and it was hard to bear.

And still the poets of ancient and medieval China managed to find some themes and special intonations and words, and they managed to give their poems such a nerve and elegance that all these masterpieces seem very up-to-date even now. Moreover, in our mad XXI century they become even more acute and they touch our souls. “Isn’t it strange, that about two thousand years passed after the times of Cao Zhi and more than thousand and a half since the times of Tao Yuanmin, (not speaking about recent times of Li Bo, Du Fu, Su Shi and Lu Yu), and still the time

never killed the emotions of these poets and we still feel the same anxiety and sadness as they did?” – a famous translator of Chinese poetry L.Z. Eidlin wrote. “Patina of the ancient times, which lies upon the surface of these poems, didn’t deaden life in their depth”.

The answer is easy: the main subject for all poets always stayed the same – a human being with his feelings and passions, problems and joys. What were the main topics for those ancient poets? They were the same: friendship and love, home and separation, life imperfection and frailty of life. Central place was always occupied by sadness – for the author himself, for all people, for becoming old, for losing our close people.





But there was no fear of death. Chinese poets accepted it with wise calmness. Only life attracted them. They praised magnificence and beauty of nature. Harmony of mountains and rivers, beauty of birds and flowers, joy of seeing something beautiful. They were always aware of similarity of nature and human soul.

The high art was always a kind of a splendid flower among wild herbs, it grew up in spite of chaos and darkness around it, among rudeness, ignorance and cruelty of everyday life. To challenge reality – this was their mission, even if the poets didn't want to fight. They were different, that's all. They suggested to praise beauty instead of lapping up power, to do

good deeds instead of killing others. In some sense poets of medieval China were a kind of dissidents, being in open or hidden opposition to the despotic country and conformist society. So mostly they were very brave people with a strong spirit.

For poets who were at the same time fighters, defenders and dreamers, the most natural thing was to escape from society and the most popular way to do it was reclusion. Misunderstood and unrecognized, lonely and haunted, they went to the mountains and settled in faraway villages, became misanthropic, became wanderers or ascetics. But most of them didn't stop thinking about people and their loneliness made them feel all contradictions of the society as their private tragedy.

Another challenge for the poets of this country with strong traditions was a necessity to downfall mental stereotypes which controlled the minds of their contemporaries.

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That special kind of culture which was formed during the reigning of Qin Shi Huang was so depressing that led to serious deformations in national mentality.

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Habit of thinking and acting according to some pattern, of following informal rules and traditions gave the country a huge advantages concerning governing but was ruinous for the arts. No wonder, that periods of decay and fragmentation of the great empire became the best periods for the artists – these were the times with “many flowers and poets”. But even then it was hard for the poets to create. It was hard for them to overcome rigidity of public opinion. How loud and arrogant must have these everyman judgments sound for these peculiar people who were doomed for telling opposite things to those “correct” ones which were considered to be standards, or for drawing in the way opposite to the classic style, and for struggling against the stream!

And the standard was so high that not everybody could be up to it. But everybody who felt necessity of becoming an artist – tried to live up to the high requirements of a real master. Here is another phrase of the member of the Academy of Science V. Alekseev, who showed us internal springs of traditional Chinese poetry: “...Inspiration is a kind of wild streams of water which go to all sides (and can’t stay in thin channels!), it’s a chaos of mountain ranges, their virgin forests; cane, a lot of cane, and one can’t see if frost has melted already... And you shouldn’t clear up your picture and make it better! You just should say it loud and straightforward – everything you have in your heart, and give your name and don’t hide your reputation!...”

Leaving aside high titles, positions and talents, poets of all dynasties had to be more than poets also because of peculiarities of Chinese language. Ancient Chinese written language had more than demanding grammar – with fixed sentence structure where every word had its place.

So the author was subject to a strict symmetry and rhythmic pattern of traditional poetical forms, as well as to harmony and orderliness of phrases. So it was more than difficult to create refined and warm-hearted poems or to paint on rice paper freely in these fixed borders.

And still these men of great spirit did it excellently. And power of their words and images managed to outlast time and centuries.

Chinese poets never waited for inspiration. They called for their muse and tried to draw her coming nearer. They tried to reach state

of wu-wei with the help of Taoism principles, such as close contact with nature, dismissal from earthly concerns and life in harmony with their heart. Such poems could be written only by special people in special atmosphere. Their helpers were fantastic nature, devoted friends and fellow-thinkers, and inspiring rice wine, of course.

Traditional Chinese poets may be imitated. They may be translated with full exactness and beauty, which was successfully done by such outstanding translators as A. Gitovitch and M. Basmanov. We can only dream of getting into a time-machine which would bring us into the past to join their company.

But we can't create like they did, unfortunately. Poet in China is not a poet at all, – he becomes a unique event for world culture. So we can only admire them. We will enjoy this miracle, which they left for their unworthy descendants.



“PEOPLE ARE POLITE AS KINGS IN THE CITY OF SUN AND GENII..”

Naina Aminova

Ancient Bukhara, crafts center, the land of great thinkers, scientists, poets, who glorified the city in their work



The air of narrow streets of Bukhara is filled with legends and everything here has a smell of history. Each stone in the walls of old mosques and in the carved minarets keeps its secret. Ancient Bukhara is the arts and crafts center, a birthplace of philosophers, scientists and poets, who celebrated the city in their works.

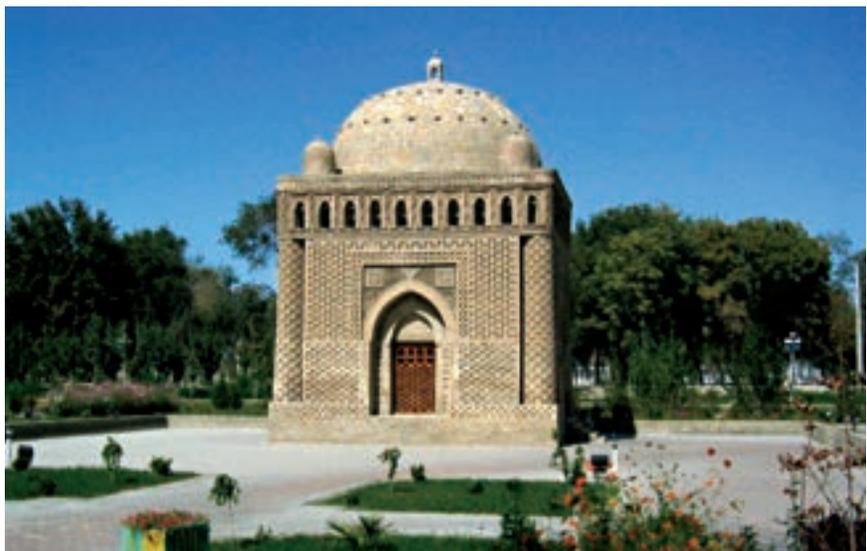
In the Middle Ages a famous Venetian traveler Marco Polo said about Bukhara that “people are polite as kings in the city of the Sun and genii”. Even now, in XXI century, people of Bukhara are known for their kindness and tactfulness.

As a huge magnet, Bukhara attracts millions of tourists from all over the world, who come to see it and feel it. Charming view of architectural complexes will forever remain in the heart of any person who once visited the ancient land. Today Bukhara is one of the regional centers of Uzbekistan, a home to 300.000 people of more than 30 nationalities. Antiquity and modernity get along here, the city keeps its harmonious look and its every corner is unique and mysterious. In 2010 a monument called “Ancient but forever young Bukhara” appeared on one of the squares as the initiative of Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov.

For the last two decades more than hundred of architectural monuments of the city entered the list of UNESCO World Heritage. Such monuments as Samanid mausoleum, Kalyan minaret, Lyabi-khauz, Sitora-I-Mokhi Hosa Palace, Sheikh Jalal city gates and sacred places Khoja Ismat Bukhori, Fatkhobod, Bkhishtiyon, Abu Khavs Kabir were successfully reconstructed. Other ancient city gates Namazgoh, Shergiron, Uglon and Mazari Sharif will be reconstructed soon. The city itself is a museum and its ancient spirit stimulates dynamic growth of tourism.

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*Picture of:
Samanid mausoleum*



There are more than 70 touristic organizations in the city now, and about the same amount of private hotels, —says Akhmad Khusainov, chairman of the board of Bukhortourist company. Last year more than 60 thousands of tourists from neighboring countries and beyond used their services. We accept guests from Russia, USA, Japan and Korea, Pakistan and Uruguay, Malaysia, Italy and Spain, France and Germany.” Tourism helps to develop such fields as arts and crafts, and this means more workplaces. Professional college of tourism in Bukhara prepares young people for professional work in this industry. This year 170 graduates got workplaces in the city hotels.

Rare pieces of architecture, which were built during many centuries, are the creation of painstaking human work and creative imagination of great masters. Magnificent architectural ensembles – Poi Khalon, Lyabi-Khauz, Bolo-Khauz, Registan square, Ark Citadel, Chashmai-Iy-Ayub and Samanid mausoleums, Sitara-I-Mokhi Hosa Palace, Chor-Bakr and Bakhouddin Nakshband necropoleis impress people and awaken strong feelings in any soul.

One of the inherent parts of city look are the monuments created by modern architects, which depict great citizens of Bukhara, including

a famous doctor Abu Ali ibn Sinna (Avicenna), writers and educators Abdurauf Fitrat, Sdriddin Aini and Akhmad Donish. And of course it was impossible to leave aside famous Khoja Nasretdin Afandi, a wise hero of national legends and citizen of Bukhara! This sarcastic old man with a sharp tongue is still alive – his adventures still attract readers and his sneering though deeply philosophical words live their own life in the language.

His sculptures are delicately fit into general ensemble of the city and give it a very special national flavour.



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*Picture of:
Sherdor madrasa
on Registan Square*



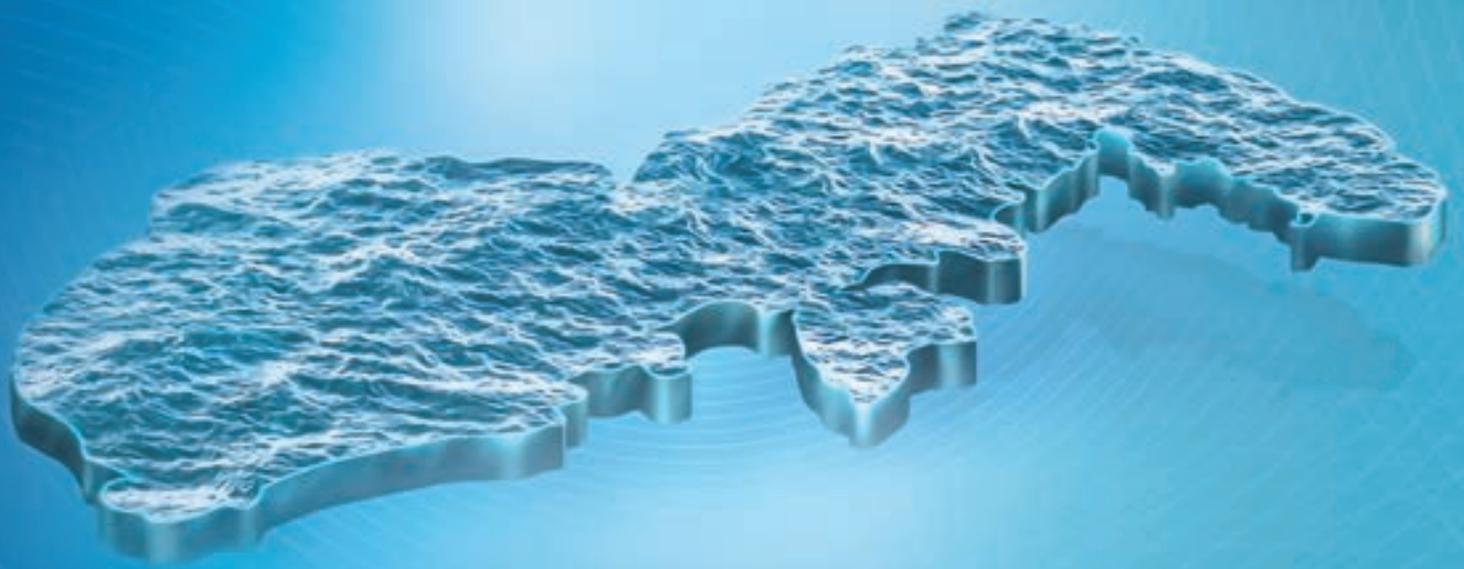
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