

Briefing Memo

The purpose of this column is to respond to reader interests in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS.

A “briefing” provides background information, among others. We hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex of issues involved in security affairs.

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First Ever Sino-Russian Joint Military Exercises — Russia Rapidly Moving Closer to China —

Senior Research Fellow, Fifth Research Office, Research Department, NIDS
Shinji HYODO

1. Overview of Sino-Russian Joint Military Exercises

From August 18 to 25, 2005, China and Russia engaged in the first large-scale joint military exercises in their history. The military exercises were announced near the end of 2004. Officially implemented within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), it demonstrates that a new stage has been reached in the military cooperative relationship between China and Russia.

Since information from the Chinese side is limited, this overview of the military exercise is mainly taken from information found in the Russian Defense Ministry newspaper *Red Star* and other Russian sources. The exercise was given the name “Peace Mission 2005,” with about 1,800 troops from Russia and about 7,000 troops from China participating. Russian participants included Army units from the Far East Military District, the 76th Airborne Division based in Pskov, an infantry corps based with the Pacific Fleet, two Tu-95MS strategic bombers (Bears) with missile-mounting capability, four Tu-22M3 long-distance bombers (Backfires), three Su-27SM fighters, one Su-24M2 bomber, five Il-76MF transport planes, one A-50 early warning and control aircraft, one Il-78 tanker plane, the full-sized anti-submarine warship *Marshal Shaposhnikov*, a full-sized landing craft, the destroyer *Burny*, and a diesel-powered submarine. While the participating Chinese forces were not revealed, it appears from Russian news reports that they included about 100 tanks and other armored vehicles, three Su-30MKK fighters, three H-6 bombers, a total of nine Il-76 and Y-8 transport planes, several Mi-8 and Z-5 helicopters, four destroyers, two minesweepers, six landing craft, and two diesel-powered submarines.

The first stage of the military exercise was a paper exercise by the Russian and Chinese Chiefs of the General Staff, Yuriy Baluyevskiy and Liang Guanglie, performed at the headquarters of the Russian Pacific Fleet in the Russian Far East city of Vladivostok. The second stage was the actual field exercise performed in China's Shandong Peninsula and in the nearby Yellow Sea. This field exercise was observed by the Russian Minister of Defense Sergey Ivanov and the Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan, as well as by military representatives from Central Asian SCO member countries and from other observer nations. The scenario for the military exercise was a racial confrontation arising within a hypothetical country situated in the Shandong Peninsula, with neighboring countries intervening at the request of the United Nations to resolve the conflict.

Both China and Russia have explained that the military exercise is intended to strengthen mutual trust and military cooperation, and is being conducted in response to international terrorism, and to separatists and extremists, and that it is not aimed at a specific third country. Nevertheless, many observers see the military exercise, with its emphasis on landing operations and seaborne blockades, as being conducted with Taiwan in mind, and US forces in the Pacific revealed that they would monitor the military exercise very carefully. A public opinion poll run by the Russian nationwide newspaper *Izvestiya* found that 65% of Russians believe that the exercise is aimed at the United States, while just 7% believe that it is a purely anti-terrorism exercise.

The Russian economic newspaper *Kommersant* reported that the joint military exercise was implemented at the strong behest of China, and that China assumed most of the expenses for the exercise. Furthermore, where Russia had originally proposed that the field exercise be conducted in the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, deep in China's interior, China proposed instead that the exercise be held in Zhejiang Province, near Taiwan. In the end, however, the exercise was conducted in the Shandong Peninsula, where China already has a large field exercise area, a good transport network, and local units representing all classes of the Chinese military. In addition, where participating Russian military forces were initially planned to be centered on ground forces and aircraft, a strong request from the Chinese side for the participation of seaborne forces became coupled with a Russian Pacific Fleet demand for attention after a submersible vessel accident, with the result that combined Russian land, sea and air forces came to congregate on Chinese territory.

2. Reasons for Russia Moving Closer to China

As can be seen from this joint military exercise, Russia is rapidly moving closer to China. The reasons for this are, first, acquisition of economic benefits due to stronger exports of energy and weapons. In late-2004, the Russian government needed to make a decision regarding construction of an oil pipeline extending from an East Siberian oil field, and at that time opted to place priority on construction of the Pacific route recommended by the Japanese. Entering

2005, however, the mood switched to placing more priority on export of oil to its China neighbor, where high demand for energy is forecast, and a long-term energy cooperation agreement was signed at a Sino-Russian summit meeting in July 2005.

In the area of weapons exports, Vladimir Mikhailov, commander-in-chief of the Russian Air Force, announced in early-2005 Russia's intentions to sell Tu-22M3 and Tu-95MS bombers to China, and to include these bombers in the joint military exercise as a performance demonstration for the Chinese side. In the past, Russia has been worried enough about the future rise of China's military strength to refrain from supplying that country with its latest attack weaponry. In 2005, however, that stance was reversed toward boosting weapons exports to China. The background for this shift probably includes such elements as: (1) the desire of the Putin Administration, which has set military modernization as a national goal, to restore military confidence along with its restoration of national power; (2) European Union (EU) moves toward lifting the ban on weapons exports to China have forced Russia to rethink its own weapons exports to China, currently the largest customer for Russian-made weapons; and (3) Russia will likely become a permanent energy supplier for China, and is coming to the conclusion that future Sino-Russian relations can be controlled to some extent.

Another element is China's policy of trying to put restraints on the United States, a stance that Russia is beginning to fall into line with. In 1996, Russia and China announced the Strategic Partnership, followed in 2001 by the signing of the Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness, Friendship and Cooperation between China and Russia. All border issues between the two countries were settled in 2004. Furthermore, in the Sino-Russian Joint Declaration on the World Order in the 21st Century adopted in July 2005, the two countries agreed to place emphasis on the United Nations and strengthen their opposition to unilateralism, while the Declaration by the Heads of the SCO, also adopted in July 2005, called for clarification of a deadline for withdrawal of US forces stationed in Central Asia, and added India, Pakistan, and Iran to the SCO in an observer status. The background to this stronger Russian stance of putting restraints on the United States includes: (1) NATO membership for the three Baltic countries, the long-term presence of US forces in Central Asia, and the distancing of Central Asian countries from Russia in the course of a series of democratic revolutions is resulting in a major deterioration of Russia's strategic environment; and (2) differences of opinion in regards to Russia's retreat from its own democratization is causing a cooling of US-Russia cooperation efforts that had been built up since the events of September 11, 2001.

Both China and Russia see stronger military cooperation as a way to expand their influence on surrounding regions. Joint military exercises will continue in 2006, such as a three-way military exercise including India, called Indra 2005, which was implemented in October 2005.

Meanwhile, this trend toward closer relations between China and Russia is starting to have a negative effect on the Japanese-Russian relationship. At the end of July 2005, for example, the Minister of Defense toured the Northern Territories to boost the morale of troops stationed there, marking the first time that a sitting minister of defense had visited the region, even dating back to Soviet times. Moreover, while Russia at one time expressed an understanding for the proposal to make Japan a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the country has now changed its position to agree with China's opposition stance.

3. Russia's Four Simultaneous Military Exercises

The Russian government budget for fiscal 2006 approved on August 18, 2005 called for an increase in income of about 1.5 times and a rise in expenditures of about 40%, with a forecast that defense expenditures in 2006 will rise by about 20%, about 2.7% of GDP (compared with 2.6% in fiscal 2005). With this increase in defense expenditures, Russia appears to be planning an expansion of its military exercises. The four military exercises listed below, which include the 2005 Sino-Russian joint military exercise, were conducted simultaneously:

Russia's Four Simultaneous Military Exercises

Name of military exercise (with dates)	Main participants	Location	Participating forces	Content
Northern Fleet Exercise (8/16, 17)	Russian Northern Fleet	Barents Sea	Cruisers, other ships, nuclear-powered submarines, Su-25 and Su-33 fighters, Ka-27 helicopters	Firing of SLBM, warship tactics drill, cruising drill
Air Force Strategic Exercise (8/16, 17)	22nd Heavy Bomber Division, Russian Air Force	Komi Republic in Russia's northwest	14 Tu-160s bombers, 32 Tu-95MS bombers, X-555 cruise missile	Firing of cruise missile from strategic bomber
Caspian Anti-terrorism 2005 (8/16 to 19)	Special forces of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus	Caspian Sea Coast in Kazakhstan	Special diving troops, helicopters, Coast Guard ships	Neutralization of a terrorist group that has occupied an oil exploitation base
Peace Mission 2005 (8/18 to 25)	Russian Armed Forces, Chinese People's Liberation Army	Vladivostok, Shandong Peninsula, Yellow Sea	1,800 Russian troops, 7,000 Chinese troops, 140 naval vessels and support ships, 30 aircraft	Table-top exercise, marine blockade, landing operation, annihilation of enemy troops

(Chart taken from table found in August 17 edition of the Russian nationwide newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, with revisions)

On August 16, President Putin attended the opening ceremonies of the Moscow international aerospace show “MAKS-2005,” and then took a ride in the Tu-160, Russia’s latest supersonic strategic bomber, from which he watched a mid-air test firing of a cruise missile. On the next day, the 17th, he observed the Northern Fleet Exercises conducted in the Barents Sea, and then witnessed a test launching of an SLBM (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile) aimed at the Kamchatka Peninsula. The privately held Russian newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* reported that Russia simultaneously conducted four military exercises in order to verify the contents of *The Priority Tasks for the Development of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation* (published in October 2003 by the Russian Ministry of Defense), which calls for Russian forces to be able to simultaneously handle one major war and two local wars, and added that the Sino-Russian joint military exercise was conducted as part of an effort to modernize the Russian armed forces, not just because of a Russian desire to move closer to China.

Russia is currently engaged in a review of *The National Security Concept*, which lays down the country’s medium to long-term national security strategy. When that is complete, Russia will then embark on a review of *Military Doctrine*, a guideline for defense strategy. How Russia will position this trend toward closer Sino-Russian relations within Russia’s new national security strategy and defense strategy is something that will bear careful watching in the future.

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Planning and Coordination Office, The National Institute for Defense Studies
Telephone: 03-3713-5912
Fax: 03-3713-6149
E-mail: nidsnews@nids.go.jp
Website: <http://www.nids.go.jp>