

# Eurasian 'Strategic Triangle' Meets at UN

by Mary Burdman

At the moment when the George W. Bush Administration is trying to drive the world toward war, leaders of the three greatest Eurasian nations—Russia, China, and India—have opened up a new chapter in relations. On Sept. 14, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, and Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha held the first-ever high-level “triangular” meeting on the sidelines of the 57th United Nations General Assembly in New York City. While the meeting was informal, the three have agreed to hold “official meetings” in the future.

While low key in comparison to the historic developments on the Korean Peninsula (see our lead article in this section), the meeting was a crucial, and decidedly public, step in the concerted effort to re-launch cooperation among the nations of the vast Eurasian land-mass, which has been hindered by the U.S.-led war drive set off after Sept. 11, 2001.

Ever since then-Russian Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov first proposed, in New Delhi in December 1998, a “strategic triangle” for cooperation among Russia, China, and India, the potential for these nations to pursue their “joint aspirations of establishing peace and security in the world,” as Primakov then said, has posed a potential challenge to the utopian policy currently dominating the United States. Internal “geopolitical” tendencies “left over from history” in the three nations, and external machinations from the “Clash of Civilizations” crowd, have held up substantial progress so far.

Times, however, are changing.

The Russian side had proposed, and hosted, the nearly two-hour informal meeting on Sept. 14. Afterward, Foreign Minister Ivanov announced that “we had agreed to hold this kind of meeting in New York long ago. We will be meeting in the future also. We exchanged views on current subjects in the UN General Assembly. We have common positions on principal matters, in the first place related to strengthening the UN’s role and formation of a world order based on the superiority of the UN Charter and international law.”

The three sides discussed “current international problems, given the coordinating role of the UN,” Ivanov said. Asked if the future meetings on this level would be annual or biannual, Ivanov told the press that this “depends on the occasion.” Other meetings, at different levels, are also being planned.

Indian External Affairs Minister Sinha also met separately with his Iranian counterpart, Kamal Kharrazi, on Sept. 15, and the two agreed on the importance of the “Dialogue of Civilizations” urged by the government of Iran. The two sides suggested that the dialogue could take place among India, Iran, China, and Greece—the great cultures of Eurasia since ancient times.

## Against the War Drive

The “strategic triangle” has been on the agenda this year, although at a relatively quiet level. In April, Primakov himself visited Beijing on the invitation of the highest-level military policy institute in China, and met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin. At that time, a number of strategic analyses were published in India and Kazakhstan, on the importance of the “strategic triangle” and “New Silk Road” for Eurasia. In June, there were separate meetings between Jiang Zemin, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, at the first summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building, held in Kazakhstan.

All three of these nations have opposed Washington’s drive for war against Iraq, being aware of the horrific consequences such a war will have throughout Eurasia. The U.S.-led forces are floundering in an ever-deeper quagmire in Afghanistan; this is exacerbating the drug- and weapons-running “warlord” conflicts in a huge region, which directly affects India via Pakistan, as well as Russia and China, via Central Asia.

Promises made of the benefits to be gained from the U.S.-led “war on terrorism,” have hardly been fulfilled. Tensions between India and Pakistan, the latter a primary U.S. base for its “anti-terror” war in South Asia, remain sharp; some 1 million troops remain mobilized on the Indian-Pakistani border. Leaders in China are quite aware that, not too far down the line, their nation is the final target of the U.S. “axis of evil” crowd. Russia has been increasingly pursuing its vital interests with its neighbors in the Koreas, China, India, Iran, and Japan.

## State Visits

Chinese Foreign Minister Tang announced on Sept. 15 from the United Nations, that Russian President Putin will be making a state visit to China Dec. 1-3. Putin will also visit India in December.

Tang Jiaxuan told Ivanov, that Putin’s visit will be the most important event in Sino-Russian relations this year. Putin will also meet Chinese President Jiang at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) summit in Mexico in October, before Jiang’s scheduled visit to the United States.

Ivanov referred to the highly successful visit of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov to China on Aug. 22-23. Kasyanov was in Shanghai and Beijing for the seventh Regular Meeting with his Chinese counterpart, and signed a joint

communiqué with Prime Minister Zhu Rongji on expanding cooperation. The communiqué also called for a new concept of security, based on international law, mutual trust, equality, and cooperation. The leaders denounced “selfish” unilateral policies and said that attacks on terrorism should be based on international law and cooperation—a dig at Washington.

“Common development” and peace must be the basic principles of strategic coordination, they said, noting the important role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which was founded by China, Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

The two sides also called for economic and trade cooperation, in rail, road, and water transportation, energy—including nuclear—aerospace, “science parks,” and “high technologies.” The Sino-Russian Siberian oil pipeline project, which could, notably, also be extended to the Korean Peninsula, is critical, as is the “strategic value” of cooperation on China’s west-east gas pipeline.

China-India relations have also been developing steadily this year, following Zhu Rongji’s visit to India in January and that of then-External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh to China in March-April.

Also of note, is the highest-level visit in 20 years of representatives of the Tibetan Dalai Lama to both Beijing and Lhasa, during mid-September. Although the visits of Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen, the Dalai Lama’s representatives in the United States and Europe, are being described in China as “personal,” their official positions indicate that something more is going on. Tibet has been a strategic bone of contention between China and India over many decades; moves to resolve differences could do much to promote regional relations. China is making serious progress on its railroad to Lhasa, the first-ever into Tibet, which could be of real economic benefit for India.

In August, it was reported that India had decided to upgrade its effort to gain membership in the SCO. This is already supported by Moscow and the Central Asian nations; final agreement has to come from Beijing.

On cue, the lunatic fringe in Washington, which has been trying to cultivate India, stepped in. Neo-conservative fanatic and China-hater Frank Gaffney, head of the Center for Security Policy, on Sept. 18 said that “one of the most exciting areas for future U.S.-Indian cooperation could be missile defense. . . . Pakistan’s nuclear and missile capabilities are dependent on China for nuclear weapon and solid fuel technology and on North Korea for liquid fuel missile technology,” Gaffney alleged. “Helping democratic India to defend itself against these missiles is a way to stand up to Communist China’s nuclear and missile proliferation, and to help India defend itself from China’s growing nuclear missile arsenal,” he claimed.

New Delhi had earlier endorsed the Bush Administration’s National Missile Defense policy, but has been silent on the issue lately.

## New Mossad Chief Signals ‘Dirty Ops’

by Dean Andromidas

The appointment by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Gen. Meir Dagan as the new Mossad chief, signals his intention to use the spy agency for provocative operations. Sharon has now placed his flunkies in every significant position in Israel’s security-military and intelligence command. The appointment coheres with his announcement that Israel will have all its security, military, and civil defense plans in place by Nov. 1, in expectation of a U.S. attack on Iraq. Senior military commentator Amir Oren wrote in the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz* on Sept. 11, that the naming of Dagan “is the security appointment of national significance that Sharon alone has made. It reflects his wish, on the eve of an expected American campaign against Iraq, and as Iran and other Arab states build up stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, for a combative team at the head of the military-intelligence establishment.”

Dagan’s appointment was made within weeks after Sharon named Gen. Moshe Ya’alon as Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). In an interview published in *Ha’aretz* on Aug. 29, Ya’alon expressed precisely the same hard-line positions as Sharon, comparing the Palestinians to a “cancerous” threat, and saying that Israel will have to wait “generations” for the possibility of enjoying peace with its Arab neighbors.

It was Ya’alon, according to an Israeli intelligence source, who in 1996 drafted the IDF’s current operational plan, “Field of Thorns,” whose aim is to crush Palestinian resistance. Almost all phases of the plan have now been accomplished, including reoccupation of the entire West Bank, economic blockade, and closure of Palestinian areas. Only two steps remain to be carried out: The first is the final destruction of the Palestinian National Authority, with the arrest or death of the entire Palestinian political leadership. This has already been partially implemented. The second is the deportation of Palestinians from “sensitive areas,” which means the entire West Bank. The plan was denounced by Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat in a speech on May 15, 2002.

The “Field of Thorns” plan received the endorsement of Anthony Cordesman of the U.S.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, in a CSIS report published on Nov. 9, 2000. Among Cordesman’s colleagues at CSIS are leading ideologues of the Clash of Civilizations policy, including Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Dagan not only shares Ya’alon’s views, but has cooperated operationally with him in the past. Oren wrote: “Dagan