

## Preface

The following collection of papers is published as a limited edition of "An Emerging New Eurasian Order: Russia, China and Its Interactions toward its Neighbors," a project funded by the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, from April 2006 through March 2010. The current publication is entitled "Toward a New Dialogue on Eurasia: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Its Partners."

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is gradually increasing its presence in the international arena. Its members include Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, while Mongolia, India, Pakistan, and Iran are observer countries. Recently, US officials and researchers have tended to view the SCO as an "anti-western organization" or as a kind of "rouge state union." This was especially the case following a demand by the SCO at the 2005 summit that the US withdrawal its forces from Central Asia, and the Iranian president's participation in the 2006 summit.

On the other hand, some EU researchers have begun to see the SCO as a new multilateral mechanism that has the potential to contribute to regional stability and development. Many of these researchers now recommend that the EU make a more positive commitment toward the SCO in 2007 and onward. The time is now ripe for Japan to reconsider its foreign policy toward Eurasia, and discuss the SCO's role in the region and how Japan could get more involved.

The Slavic Research Center of Hokkaido University and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation co-hosted a symposium in Tokyo on July 18, 2007, to discuss the implications of the SCO in current international relations and the feasibility of establishing a dialogue between the SCO and other influential players such as the US, EU, and Japan. Under the moderation of NAKAI Yoshifumi (Gakushuin University), Oksana ANTONENKO (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, UK) and Mark N. KATZ (George Mason University, US) and I each presented a paper individually on the relations of the EU, US or Japan with the SCO. TANAKA Akihiko (University of Tokyo) and SHIMIZU Manabu (Sophia University) were invited to make comments. Approximately a hundred participants eagerly listened to and joined the discussion on the SCO. It illustrates the topic is now popular in Japan. The publication includes three papers in English and Japanese as well as a part of the discussion.

The presenters and commentators have almost unanimously agreed that the EU, US and Japan should proceed toward a dialogue with the SCO in their own but constructive way. The rightness of this conclusion is attested by current positive reactions since the Bishkek summit in August, 2007. In September, Evan Fei-

genbaum, in charge of the SCO under the Department of the State, welcomed the SCO initiatives that complemented the affirmative agenda though the US did not seek membership or observer status of the SCO.

After the recent SCO summit, the Foreign Minister of Kyrgyzstan, Ednan Karabaev, emphasized the importance of the SCO showing its transparency toward the world and the importance of maintaining a dialogue among SCO members and other organizations.

Japan has a responsibility as an allied country with the US to promote dialogue between the SCO and the West. Japan has two big opportunities in 2008. First, Japan will host the Hokkaido-Lake Toya G8 summit next July, and China plans to join as an observer along with Russia participating as a full-member of the G-8. If Japan invites Central Asian leaders to the summit as guests, developing an on-going framework of the "Central Asia plus Japan," Japan's initiative will be undoubtedly recorded as an initiator of a historic dialogue. The Hokkaido summit will receive much global attention as the world awaits an EU-US-Japan political breakthrough with the SCO as well as an initiative for overcoming environmental problems.

The second opportunity is the coming SCO summit planned in Dushanbe in 2008. The heads or foreign leaders of the West may join the summit as guests. The SCO should issue the invitation and show its goodwill to develop dialogue to a reliable level. Such a dialogue should avoid unilateralism. A process of mutual visitations and confidence building measures are necessary. Looking back, the SCO is a byproduct of the "Shanghai process," and was strengthened by the mutual confidence building measures taken by the concerned countries to resolve border disputes throughout the 1990s. Again, the time has come for the SCO to write another brilliant page in its history.

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