

Hobbes's Choice

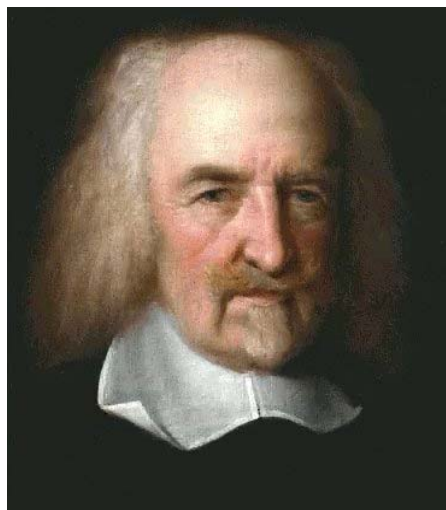
May 8, 2006



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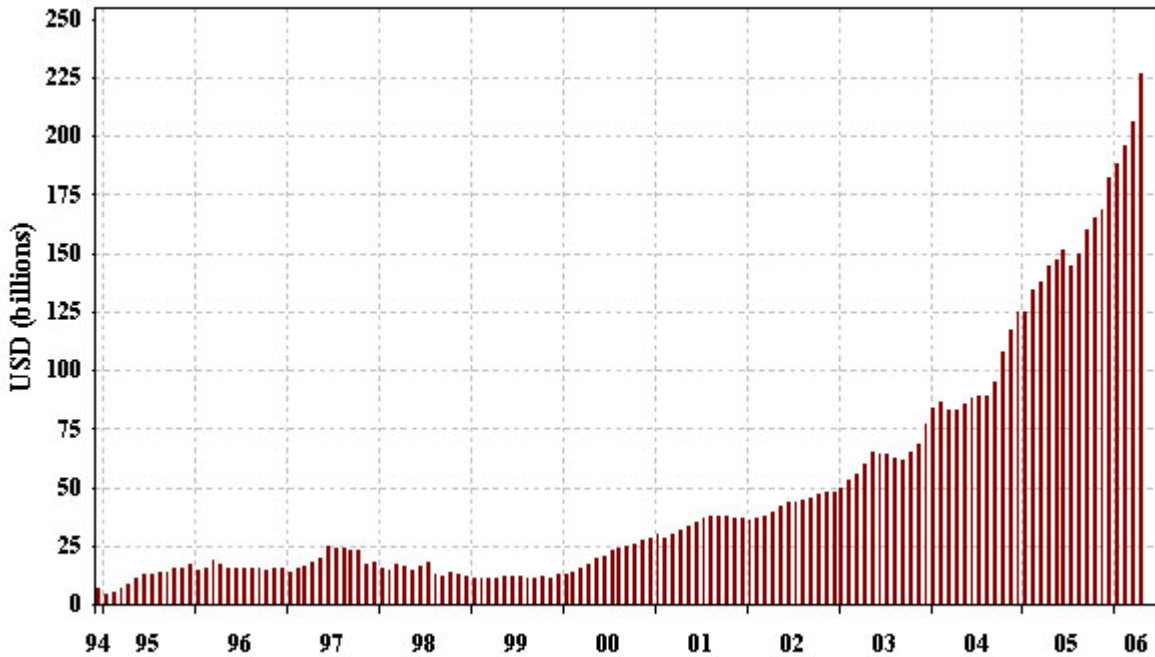
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On April 18 the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation [announced](#) that India, Pakistan, Iran and Mongolia would be accepted as full members. The SCO, said to be interested only in promoting mutual security and economic well being, is, nevertheless, the political horse pulling the cart of military cooperation between China and Russia. With full membership being accorded to the above countries, Russia will have completed something that the czars and Leonid Brezhnev only dreamt of, the creation of an unbroken link from the Arctic in the north to the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean in the south. An Iranian spokesman spoke of creating an "Iranian-Russian gas and oil arc."

The SCO ought, we think, to be seen for what it really is, which is Russia's answer to the new NATO. During the Clinton administration, NATO, once a purely Euro-centric military alliance, unilaterally declared itself to be able to operate "out of area," and it proved it by bombing Kosovo in the first of what appears to be a series of campaigns to plant NATO forces in strategic locations around the world. Notably, this includes Afghanistan, formerly turf thought by Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Iran to be *their* backyard, not Berlin's, not London's, not Washington's, and certainly not part of the King Ranch in south Texas.

Russia: international reserves



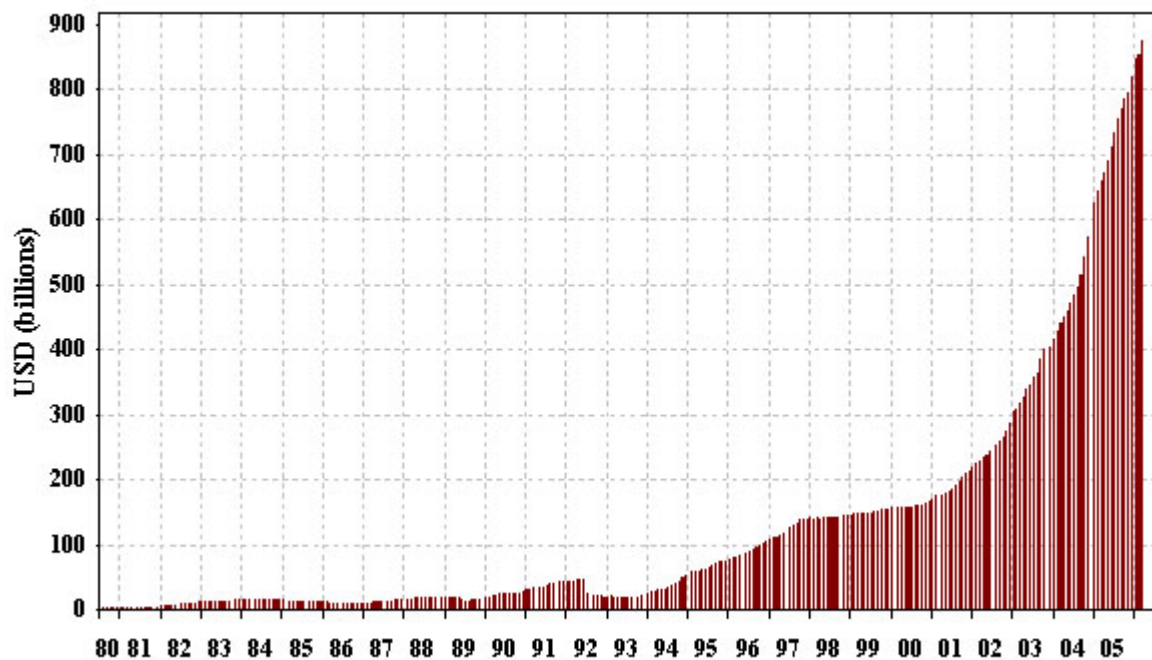
Source: Sanders Research Associates & EcoWin

The Russians and the Chinese are at pains to assure NATO's members that the SCO is not aimed at anyone in particular, especially not at them, while at the same time testing long range transonic nuclear capable cruise missiles, moving elite troops into position to threaten US resupply points in central Asia, staging joint manoeuvres, and blocking Anglo-American attempts to sanction Iran in the UN Security Council. And now of course, they are bringing Iran officially under their wing, supported by the two south Asian powers. The blowhard American representative at the UN, John Bolton, has publicly said that if the UN does not sanction Iran, that the US will act anyway. We don't doubt that he means it, but consider: the world's gold reserves are moving east, not west, and the government that he represents just voted another \$109 billion in "emergency" (read off balance sheet) funding of which some [\\$76 billion](#) is allocated to prolong its slow motion defeat in Iraq. Where will the money come from, Mr. Bolton? Japan? China?

Discipline in the military that Bolton presumably thinks is going to do the acting is disintegrating. At the top the pension-minded generals and admirals (read corporate executives) who lead it are more interested in making money than in doing their job, which is not the one Bolton has in mind, but rather defending the Constitution of the United States. At the bottom, it is reduced to recruiting [gangsta rappers](#), illegal aliens and the like, who couldn't give a damn about Bolton's world, and will bring home in defeat to US streets useful things like competence with infantry weapons and tactics.

Nor does Mr. Bolton's agenda enjoy the support of the people of the United States, [over 60%](#) of whom say they disapprove of the job that the Bush administration is doing. Clearly, the American public understands that the American government of our day is not representing the commons, but rather the particular interests of factions of capital. By contrast, the Russian government enjoys a strong approval rating as it is, correctly we think, perceived by the Russian public to be pursuing Russian interests unlike its predecessor, which was, also correctly we think, perceived as serving Western financial interests. Even a dictatorship requires a minimum of solid public support. We don't think 31% reaches that minimum. Not by a long shot.

China: foreign exchange reserves



Source: Sanders Research Associates & EcoWin

This is a truly alarming configuration of power, because the people who are leading the West evidently really do believe their own propaganda. Not only is that propaganda utterly ridiculous and disconnected from the facts on the ground, but the ruling elite itself is not united, as phenomena as disparate as comedian Stephen Colbert's recent lampoon of President Bush at the National Press Club and the AIPAC treason affair, the Valerie Plame affair, and Tony Blair's Labour party financing troubles show. The slack-jawed faces and nervous laughter that greeted Colbert from the assembled audience of the press was as telling as the unsmiling, tight lipped look on the face of the listening president. Washington is frightened, and it should be.

President Bush said recently that the War on Terror is World War Three. He is wrong. It is not a war on terror, but a war of terror, and target number one is the population of the United States, in the hopes of stampeding it into acceptance of policies that they would never vote for. This is a truly Hobbesian war of every man against every man, in which the state has failed in its basic compact with the people to provide security, and instead is actively creating insecurity. There may be a world war coming alright, but if there is, the real opposition will not be Islamic fundamentalism, Latin American nationalists or avian influenza, rather it is the realists in Moscow who enjoy at least two clear advantages over their Anglo-American opposite numbers.

They have [public support](#), and being realists, not ideologues, clear judgment.

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