

Russia Seeks Development As Solution to Conflicts

March 7—As the geopolitical confrontation from the West has escalated over the past years, the Russian leadership has taken a two-pronged approach in response. On the one hand, it has embarked on a much-needed program of modernization of its military defenses, while putting forth a clear statement of its inviolable commitment to national sovereignty, and a number of diplomatic initiatives to avoid conflict—as in the Ukraine situation. On the other hand, Russia has intensified its efforts to negotiate agreements of economic cooperation and development, as the pathway to building a lasting peace.

These efforts include not only bilateral economic deals with countries ranging from Argentina to Egypt, and especially with the Eurasian giants China and India, but also, initiatives in the framework of multinational institutions, such as the new Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Russia holds the presidency of the SCO and BRICS, and will chair the annual meeting of both organizations, due to be held in Ufa, Russia in July.

President Putin has simultaneously emphasized that integration with Russia's neighbors to the east, a long-term Russian priority, is not intended to replace economic relations with Europe, still its largest trading partner, but that institutions such as the EEU are intended to become "a bridge between the integration structures of Europe and the Asia-Pacific Region."

Target: The Drug Trade

An area in which there is a Russian proposal for a program of economic development that is expressly a war-avoidance policy, because it addresses political in-

stability and crisis, is Central Asia, especially Afghanistan. Russia's Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) Director Victor Ivanov has repeatedly stressed that Russia sees the enormous narcotics business in Afghanistan as a threat not only to Russia's own population and economy (which he has described as being hit by a "heroin war"), but also to global security and peace. In recent months, Ivanov has charged that Afghan drug money is financing terrorist groups, including ISIS.

Thus, during the annual meeting of the Counternarcotics Group of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in November 2014, Ivanov said that the July Ufa summit will address the elimination of Afghan drug production as a priority. He then noted that the policy papers of the Spring 2014 Moscow anti-drug conference already exist as an action plan for ending Afghanistan dope production.

What we present below is a selection of excerpts from those policy papers, which was published in *EIR*'s "The New Silk Road Becomes the World Land-Bridge" [Special Report](#) of December 2014.

As you will see, the development policies outlined here go far beyond what is traditionally seen as an "anti-drug" policy, to present a picture of how Central Asia as a whole can be upgraded with 21st Century infrastructure and industry, and integrated with its huge industrial neighbors—Russia, India, and China.

As such, this program could be seen as a case-study for the kinds of broad regional economic development programs envisioned by the SCO and the BRICS, in implicit contradiction to the approach of the current bankrupt international financial institutions.