

OE WATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



IN THIS ISSUE

IRAN

- 4 Cleric Encourages 'Temporary Marriages' for Students
- 5 Discrimination against Foreign Students in Qom

TURKEY

- 6 Viewpoint: Left Alone and Facing War with Syria

SYRIA

- 8 Hizbullah's UAV Surprise
- 10 Arab Deterrence Force: For Real?

AFRICA

- 12 AFRICOM a Disaster in Mali
- 14 The Controversy of an Alleged Decrease in U.S. Military Aid to Liberia
- 15 Rumors of Impending Al-Qaeda Attack in Mauritania
- 16 China's Push for Peace in Africa: Is There a Price to Be Paid?

SOUTHEAST ASIA

- 18 Philippines: Rumors and Rhetoric on US Pivot to Asia

MEXICO

- 20 Narco Blockades Cause Chaos in Jalisco

CHINA

- 21 China's First Aircraft Carrier: Threat or Not?
- 23 China: Beefing up Its UAV Surveillance and Attack Capability by 2015?

KOREA

- 25 Extending South Korean Defense

CENTRAL ASIA

- 26 New Evidence in the Arkan-Kergen Case?
- 27 Peacekeeping Exercises in Central Asia
- 28 A Change in Russian Strategic Interests in Central Asia?
- 29 Situation Normal in Kyrgyzstan: Civil Unrest and Talk of Revolution

RUSSIA

- 30 Future of Georgia's NATO and EU Aspirations after Parliamentary Elections
- 32 Russian Official Draws Connection between Murder of U.S. Ambassador, Arab Spring, and Democracy Promotion
- 34 Russian Military Manpower
- 37 Russian Military Digital Challenges
- 39 Military Media Matters

SPECIAL ESSAY

- 41 Understanding Turkey's Historic Coup Trial



China's Push for Peace in Africa: Is There a Price to Be Paid?



Cleric Encourages 'Temporary Marriages' for Students

For over 25 years, the Foreign Military Studies Office (FMSO) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, has conducted open source research on foreign perspectives of defense and security issues, emphasizing those topics that are understudied or unconsidered.

FMSO's Operational Environment Watch provides translated selections and analysis from a diverse range of foreign articles and other media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give military and security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

Materials, outside of the original foreign press article, under copyright have not been used. All articles published in the Operational Environment Watch are not provided in full, and were originally published in foreign (non-US) media. For questions or original articles, contact FMSO at usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.fmsoweb@mail.mil. The Operational Environment Watch is archived, and available at <http://fmsoweb.leavenworth.army.mil>.

FMSO has provided some editing, format, and graphics to these articles to conform to organizational standards. Academic conventions, source referencing, and citation style are those of the author.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

OE Watch

**Foreign News & Perspectives of the
Operational Environment**

Volume 2 | Issue 10

October | 2012

Regional Analysts and Expert Contributors

Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa

Robert Feldman, Jason Warner

Middle East

Lucas Winter, Michael Rubin

Turkey

Karen Kaya

China, Korea

Cindy Hurst, Youngjun Kim

India, Southeast Asia

Ivan Welch

Mexico, South America

Brenda Fiegel

Central Asia

Matthew Stein, Chuck Bartles

Russia, Eastern Europe

Anna Borshchevskaya, Ray Finch

Design Editor

Aaron Perez

Editors

Ray Finch, Harry Orenstein, Thomas Wilhelm

FMSO Contact

usarmy.leavenworth.tradoc.mbx.fmsoweb@mail.mil





6 Viewpoint: Left Alone and Facing War with Syria

“Suriye sadece Türkiye’nin sorunu değil, olmamalı (Syria is not just Turkey’s Problem, it shouldn’t be),” Milliyet.com.tr, 10 October 2012

“..Ankara has shown that it is determined to use military force when necessary.”



10 Arab Deterrence Force: For Real?

المرزوقي، سوريا، وقوات الردع العربية

“Marzouki, Syria and the Arab Deterrence Force” (Elaph), 2 October 2012

If nothing else, the proposal of an Arab Deterrence Force for Syria shows that the rhetoric of intervention has gone mainstream; the next logical step – formulating a coherent plan to back such rhetoric – is a challenge of a different order.



12 AFRICOM a Disaster in Mali

“Rhetoric and reality of AFRICOM: Lessons from Mali,” *Pambazuka News* (Nairobi, Kenya), 27 September 2012

“The most vocal opponents of AFRICOM are not African, but rather, United States citizens themselves.”



18 Philippines: Rumors and Rhetoric on US Pivot to Asia

“U.S. marines to set up marine command post facing South China Sea,” Ario Agnote, September 4, 2012

“The plan is to station 50 to 60 American marines in Palawan as an advance command post in the region,”



21 China’s First Aircraft Carrier: Threat or Not?

“中国首艘航母入列：从大国走向强国的必经之路 (China’s First Aircraft Carrier Enters Service: A Necessary Path To Go From Being a Major Country to Becoming a Power),” *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, September 25, 2012

...the Liaoning might not be a game changer, but it is a powerful symbol of Beijing’s intentions.



32 Russian Official Draws Connection between Murder of U.S. Ambassador, Arab Spring, and Democracy Promotion

Mikhail Margelov “Arabskaya Vesna Porodila Novyye Ugrozy. Provokatsionny film –povod, a ne prichina pogromov dipmissiy S.Sh.A.” (Arab Spring Has Created New Threats. Provocative Film—An Excuse, not the Cause of U.S. Mission Pogroms), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Independent Newspaper), 19 September 2011

“Promoting democracy” in North African and the Middle Eastern countries, oddly enough, plays into the hands of fundamentalists and separatists, raises sinister forces from the bottom.

Cleric Encourages 'Temporary Marriages' for Students

27 September 2012

Source:

قرائتی: دانشجویان پسر با زنان بیوه ازدواج کنند

“Qara’ati: Daneshjuyan-e Pesar ba Zanan-e Biveh Azduaj Konand” (Qara’ati: Male Students Should Marry Widows), Fararu.com, 27 September 2012. <http://tinyurl.com/cyqahpq>

OE Watch Commentary: When Sunni Muslims disparage their Shi’ite counterparts, they often criticize the practice of *sighh*, temporary marriage. In its inception, temporary marriage—in which men pay a ‘dowry’ and marry women for a pre-determined period of time, sometimes only hours—was a mechanism for society to provide for war widows. Most Sunnis—and, frankly, many Iranians—see it simply as religiously sanctioned prostitution. The practice received a second wind as a result of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988), which killed several hundred thousand young men, leaving behind a multitude of young widows. It has persisted since. That mosques and mullahs profit from *sighh* arrangements adds cynicism to the discussion of the phenomenon in Iran.

In Iranian cities the age of marriage has steadily been creeping upwards. It is now not uncommon to find both men and women in their mid- and late-twenties who have never been married. The reason for this is largely financial: high inflation and distrust of banks has led wealthier Iranians to invest in real estate, placing home ownership and even apartment rental outside the realm of possibility for younger Iranians.

While premarital sex is more common in Iran than in many neighboring countries, it is still far less frequent than in Europe or the United States. In a culture which discourages dating and, among certain segments of society, the mixing of sexes, this can exacerbate frustration and social tension. Simply put, unable to pursue relationships, same gender groupings will often talk politics.

Against this backdrop, *Hojjat al-Islam Mohsen Qara’ati’s* statement is interesting. A leading Quranic scholar, Qara’ati may simply want to address a renewed gender imbalance inside Iran. The number of widows he cites, however, makes little sense: there is no reason why there should have been such a surge in widows over the last several years. Accordingly, his aim may be twofold. First, he might seek to promote *sighh* to somehow legitimize the breakdown of traditional sexual mores on university campuses. In effect, he is saying, ‘if you can’t beat ‘em, bless ‘em.’ Alternately, he might seek to use temporary marriage/legalized prostitution in order to channel students’ frustration away from political protest.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)



Mohsen Qara’ati by the Institution of Short-term Educational Courses, via <http://en.istes.miu.ac.ir/index.aspx?siteid=7&pageid=22849>

...The country’s chief-of-staff for prayer adduction said: When we say temporary marriage, we don’t mean that female students should be temporary wives in the university. Male students who don’t have the means to marry can engage in [temporary] marriage with young widows. When their education is over they can engage [in permanent] marriage.

Hojjat al-Islam va Musulmin [Honorific Title: Authority on Islam and Muslims] Qara’ati, speaking at a ceremony marking the beginning of the school year at Payame Noor University in Tehran, cited the public prosecutor as saying that over the past several years, 500,000 young women had been widowed. Maybe the number of these women has reached a million people. How can these women avoid sin? Should they all abstain [from sexual activity]? Or should they engage in sin? Should they silently suffer? Temporary marriage is the only solution...

Discrimination against Foreign Students in Qom

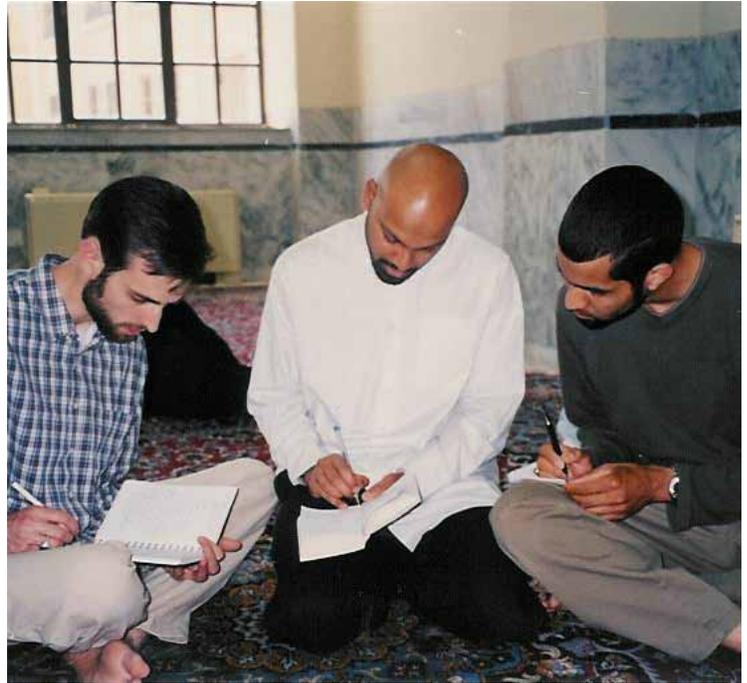
27 September 2012

Source: "Mushkal-e Talab-e Kharaji dar Qom" (The Problem of Foreign Students in Qom)," 598.ir, 27 September 2012. <http://www.598.ir/fa/news/79282/>

OE Watch Commentary: *The competition between the Iranian city of Qom and the Iraqi city of Najaf dates back centuries. Both house prominent Shi'ite seminaries and host thousands of students. Qom has traditionally been the poorer, less prestigious shrine city; Najaf, after all, hosts the tomb of Imam Ali and attracts millions of religious pilgrims annually. Qom underwent a renaissance after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, however, as it became a center for instruction through the lens of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's theological vision. The concurrent rise of Saddam Hussein in Iraq also made it difficult for many Shi'ite seminary students from outside Iraq to study in Najaf. Accordingly, the non-Iranian population in Qom expanded greatly.*

The Islamic Republic prides itself on being a guiding light not only to Shi'ites beyond Iran's borders, but to any Muslims, regardless of sect. Khomeini's speeches were infused with rhetoric of social justice, and Iranian speakers regularly condemn racism as it occurs in the West. Nevertheless, Iranian society is quite xenophobic. Neighbors of Iran often complain that Iranians look down upon them and their cultures. Iranians consider themselves inheritors of a great empire, which, during pre-Islamic days, was the height of civilization at a time before Turks, Arabs, and Pushtuns had consolidated their states.

*This small news item, published in a news summary on the 598.ir news portal, a website affiliated with hardline cleric Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, suggests that the xenophobia of ordinary Iranian landlords is clashing with the Iranian regime's desire to be the center of Shi'ite Islam. When Iranian landlords refuse to rent rooms to non-Iranian students, it is reasonable to assume that many foreign students will leave Iran with a bad taste in their mouths. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***



Students in Qom. Photo by the Islamic International Foundation Cooperation, via <http://www.risaalaat.com/gallery/photo/qom>

...A great number of non-Iranian students, ranging from those of neighboring countries and Europeans and Africans and Americans are engaged in study at Qom seminaries. One of the problems in housing foreign students is that sadly many homeowners refuse to accept non-Iranians or to rent to them because of cultural differences...

Viewpoint: Left Alone and Facing War with Syria

10 October 2012

Source: “Fikret Bila. “Suriye sadece Türkiye’nin sorunu değil, olmamalı (Syria is not just Turkey’s Problem, it shouldn’t be),” Milliyet.com.tr, 10 October 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/suriye-sadece-turkiye-nin-sorunu-degil-olmamali/siyaset/siyasyazardetay/10.10.2012/1609250/default.htm>

OE Watch Commentary:

On 3 October mortar fire from Syria hit the Turkish town of Akçakale, killing five Turkish citizens (two women and three children). The Turkish Armed Forces responded swiftly and sharply, shelling Syrian tanks and armored vehicles, leading to days of exchanged artillery fire. The Turkish Parliament passed a bill authorizing the government to send troops to Syria if necessary.

As the accompanying articles show, the general perception in Turkey is that the rest of the world is standing idly by while Turkey is being pulled into a war it does not want to fight. Despite this reluctance, many claim that Turkey had no choice but to respond militarily, given that now, in addition to a long list of grievances (which includes a flood of refugees, border conflicts, a downed jet, and continuous deadly attacks by an emboldened terrorist organization), its citizens have been killed. Many are expressing disappointment over the lack of international support and lamenting that Turkey is being ‘left alone’ to deal with Syria at a time when it is facing a real risk of war. They claim that, in contrast to the international community’s non-action, Turkey is geographically in a place where it does not have the ‘luxury’ to do nothing about Syria.

While neither the government nor the public wants war with



Map of cross-border violence, October 2012. Town of Akcakale was shelled by Syrian forces, and five civilians were killed. Town of Tal al-Abyad (Tell Abiad) was targeted by Turkish artillery fire in response. Aerial satellite map by Google Earth, inset map by WikiMiniAtlas via Wikipedia.org

“...The world is watching... Syria’s civil war is not just Turkey’s problem. But everyone is acting as if it’s just Turkey’s problem. The United Nations is watching the events, due to the veto of Security Council members Russia and China. The US and the European Union (EU) countries, which appear to be on Turkey’s side, are not doing anything beyond patting Turkey on the back. The US is waiting for its own election. The EU countries are busy with their economic crisis. Only France is saying things that seem to echo Turkey’s requests, but is not doing anything in terms of action.

If the world is just going to watch the events in Syria, this means that Turkey will shoulder the burden. But there is no reason for Turkey to have to shoulder this alone. There are about 100,000 refugees coming into Turkey from Syria, which Turkey is having to deal with all by itself. 14,000 more are waiting at the border. It is becoming harder and harder for Turkey to safely shelter these people. But Turkey’s calls for a safe zone inside Syria that would shelter them along with its calls for a no-fly zone have fallen on deaf ears. The UN is not responding to these requests. With the approaching US elections, Syria has not been high on Washington’s agenda. Not much effort is being made to persuade Russia, China and Iran.”

Source: Aslı Aydıntaşbaş. “Savaş olmaz (There won’t be war),” Milliyet.com.tr, 5 October 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/savas-olmaz/siyaset/siyasyazardetay/05.10.2012/1606836/default.htm>

“...Everyone knows that the US is unwilling to respond to Syria. The US and Europe have not even given a green light for a buffer zone, no-fly zones or humanitarian aid corridors... Foreign policy is not being discussed on the eve of the November elections!

Syria, Turkey's military response to the Akçakale incident is generally viewed as a necessity at this point. Though some claim that Turkey is partially responsible for this situation, having sheltered Syrian rebels, many agree that Turkey had to show Assad that it has the military might to back up its rhetoric and demonstrate that its threats are credible.

*This necessity comes from the fact that in June 2012, following Syria's downing of an unarmed Turkish RF-4 (F-4 Phantom) military jet, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan had declared this a hostile act and announced that Turkey now considered Syria a "clear and present danger." He warned that Turkey would consider any military element that approaches the border from Syria as a threat and treat it as a military target. Thus, the latest incident necessitated following through on these statements. The attached articles from the popular mainstream daily Milliyet (Nationality) demonstrate the views of being 'left alone' and reactions to the Akçakale incident. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)***

On the night of the Akçakale attack, during the debate between Romney and President Obama, everything was discussed except Syria. The issues on the two sides of the Atlantic consist of economic crisis and then Iran. It is unclear whether this ambivalent and unwilling stance will change after the November elections."

Source: Aslı Aydıntaşbaş. "Türkiye'nin başka şansı yoktu (Turkey had no other choice)," Milliyet.com.tr, 4 October 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-nin-baska-sansi-yoktu/siyaset/siyasyazardetay/04.10.2012/1606317/default.htm>

"...The fact is that Turkey did not have the option to stand idle in the face of the mortar fire that killed five of our citizens. Any government would have been forced to do the same. Because staying silent in the face of continuous provocations would have made us into Bashar Assad's toy.

...Doing anything other than this, huffing and puffing at the UN and NATO would nullify all the prestige that Turkey has built in the East and the West, along with its claims and regional goals. Don't underestimate the word prestige here. I'm not talking about an irrational love of charisma or stubbornness. What keeps countries in this region alive is not their per capita incomes, it is their military deterrence and strength. The Middle East has been a region that we've avoided for years. But we have to learn. Because whether we like it or not, we are in this neighborhood.

...Don't forget, you don't get to choose your neighbors or your neighborhood. There is a war in Syria and it is continuing at full-speed. This war is a threat to Turkey in every way. With its refugees, its tragedies, its bombs, shells, the space it has opened up for the PKK, it is penetrating us more and more every day."

Source: Fikret Bila. "TSK'nın caydırıcı etkisi (The deterrent effect of the Turkish Armed Forces)," Milliyet.com.tr, 6 October 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/tsk-nin-caydirici-etkisi/siyaset/siyasyazardetay/06.10.2012/1607366/default.htm>

"...The Turkish Armed Forces' response to the mortars from the Syrian side has had a deterrent effect. The Armed Forces responded to the mortar bomb that killed five of our citizens by destroying three Syrian tanks and two armored vehicles. And, the government obtaining permission from the parliament to conduct cross-border operations into Syria has been effective.

...The Turkish Armed Forces' fierce response and the Parliament's motion was interpreted as Ankara's determination against the Damascus regime.... Ankara has shown that it is determined to use military force when necessary. With Syria's downing of our F-4 jet [on July 22], Ankara had announced that the rules of engagement with Syria have changed. Now, it has proven that it wasn't bluffing when it said that."

Hizbullah's UAV Surprise

8 October 2012

Source:

Jameel Theyabi, "The End of Hizbullah!" (al-Hayat) 8 October 2012 <http://alhayat.com/OpinionsDetails/442342>

نهاية "حزب الله"

OE Watch

Commentary: *The Syrian conflict has given Hizbullah a black eye. The group's unwillingness to condemn a Syrian government that had released its paramilitary thugs on unarmed civilians calling for reforms was a major blow to its carefully crafted image of resistance to oppression. During the first year of the Syrian conflict, Hizbullah seemed happy to keep a low profile. No longer: with Syria's uprising having morphed into a regional proxy war and the regime continuing to suffer losses, Hizbullah will be forced to enter the fray. Whether this is the beginning of the Syrian endgame or the start of a more dangerous and volatile stage is still unclear.*

Hizbullah is fighting for its life, according to the first accompanying article, an op-ed written by the deputy editor of the influential Saudi newspaper al-Hayat. The first week of October was certainly an eventful one for the Lebanese group; it included the deadly explosion at a weapons cache in Nabi Sheet in the Bekaa Valley, the alleged death of a top Hizbullah

... Those who know the party (Hizbullah) believe that it is in disarray and worried, feeling declining popularity and increasing hatred in the Arab countries, even among the Shia'. These people believe that the party will face dark days similar to those faced by the leaders of authoritarian regimes during the Arab uprisings, and that its strength and power will gradually fade due to restrictions on its sources of funding, and the impending fall of its ally the Asad regime, and the expectation of a popular uprising in Iran against the Mullahs in the wake of a faltering economy, the deterioration of the Rial and an increase in the unemployment and emigration rates...

Hizbullah is not Arab but rather Iranian, and its leader Hassan Nasrallah acts under Iranian orders. Tehran considers it its party that operates according to the precepts of "Wilayat al-Faqih." The party's reputation has declined due to its political position, it resembles a novel whose final chapter is coming to an end and whose pages are falling out. The party has lost its popularity due to the popular awakening of the Arab Spring, which has exposed the party's contradictory and sectarian policies and its support for the regime in Damascus, while its leadership called on the Arab people to revolt against the oppressor during the uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain ...

Hizbullah is taking a provocative and unjust stance against the Syrian people, most recently rejecting the deployment of international troops along the Syria-Lebanon border, describing the deployment of such troops as "Zionist." Its leaders support Asad's practices. I believe the party is playing a bloody role in Syria and the Arab people will not forgive it for this position and its contradictory politics. It seems that the party aims to coordinate with the Baath Party in Syria to settle sectarian accounts and partake in enflaming a civil war linked to regional alliances through the Syrian uprising and following Iranian orders that cannot be reconsidered and are aimed at saving the Asad regime until the last drop of blood. Thus has Hizbullah written the beginning to its own end...

Source:

Abdel Bari Atwan, "Sayyid Nasrallah's Airplane" (al-Quds al-Arabi) 11 October 2012 <http://alquds.co.uk/index.asp?fname=data\2012\10\10-11\11qpt999.htm&arc=data\2012\10\10-11\11qpt999.htm>

طائرة السيد نصر الله

... It was a unique operation by any measure, for the first time in nearly sixty years an Arab Muslim aircraft penetrated Israeli airspace and evaded all Israeli radars, and moved around freely before highly advanced Israeli aircraft brought it down...

This aircraft is a pride for Lebanese just as it is a pride for Arabs and Muslims in general, as it shows the ability of these people to be part of the world of military technology and emulate and even surpass Israelis, who are supported by the United States, which provides them with all the necessary advanced secrets of its military industry...

We know of Israel's initial response when this aircraft arrived only a few kilometers from the Dimona nuclear reactor: it activated its Iron Dome missiles near the city of Haifa as a precaution. However, we do not know of the longer term reaction. Will it launch a new aggression in southern

commander in Syria and suspicions – later confirmed – that it was behind the launch of an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) that infiltrated Israeli airspace. On 11 October, to great fanfare, Hizbullah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah took to the airwaves to claim responsibility for the drone, downplay the other two events, and make it clear that Hizbullah will stand by its allies in Damascus and Tehran.

If able to provoke an Israeli response, Hizbullah could open a new front that will make the resolution, or at least the de-escalation, of the Syrian conflict an urgent international priority. However, it is unclear how Israel will respond, as the second accompanying article, an editorial from the pan-Arab al-Quds al-Arabi, notes. Potential Israeli reprisals, though, are causing trepidation and growing tensions within Lebanon, as the third accompanying article shows. The potential for the Syrian conflict to spill across Lebanon's border areas and spread from there grows by the day.

Hassan Nasrallah likes to keep people guessing. He usually refers to his group's military advances, whether operational or technological, as "surprises." The most recent of these was the Iranian-designed, Lebanese-assembled UAV. Hizbullah is entering a delicate phase: the Syrian regime is staving off a determined insurgency with one hand and pushing back on Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council with the other, while the Iranian economy is collapsing under the pressures of international sanctions. If such trends continue, Hizbullah's next surprise may be coming sooner than expected.

**End OE Watch Commentary
(Winter)**

Lebanon? Or will Netanyahu swallow this insult on the pretext of being busy with general parliamentary elections?

The Arab region is changing, and Israel is no longer the sole hegemonic force. If this were the case, it would not have hesitated one moment to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities, as was the case when it bombed Iraq's nuclear site of Osirak in 1981 or when it destroyed Syria's new nuclear reactor near Deir Ezzor...

Source:

قوى «14 آذار» ترفض تبني نصر الله إطلاق

"March 14 Forces Reject Nasrallah's Claim of Responsibility" (al-Sharq al-Awsat) 15 October 2012 <http://aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&issueno=12375&article=699855&feature>

...Future Movement parliamentary member Ammar Hourri said that Nasrallah "Once again confirmed that the defense strategy is linked solely to his point of view without a need for dialogue." He told al-Sharq al-Awsat that "When Nasrallah decides to violate Resolution 1701 on his own, he should expect a reaction that will affect not just him but the country as a whole, dragging Lebanon into a maze that we should not be in."

Former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora believes that "the launching of a UAV by Hizbullah in land occupied by Israel is a violation of Resolution 1701." In a press conference held yesterday, he said "We have a single Israeli enemy, and we are proud of any achievement against this enemy, but for this to be done by Hizbullah and for their Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah to announce it, this implicates Lebanon in military operations and perhaps in an Israeli response against Lebanon. As a result, Lebanese national security has been compromised and Lebanese citizens exposed to real danger." He added that "Hassan Nasrallah gave himself the power to declare war, without asking any Lebanese authority or the Lebanese people," noting also that "none of the justifications provided by Nasrallah in his most recent speech convinced anyone; rather they opened a door that cannot be closed."

For his part, the deputy head of Hizbullah's executive council, Shaykh Nabil Qawuq, said that "the March 14 bloc is implicated in the blood of Syrian people, even after what many have said about Hizbullah. The key difference is that Hizbullah wants a ceasefire and a peaceful and political resolution in Syria, while they want to stoke the flames there, which will mean more blood. They incite and arm in order to prevent any peaceful resolution." He added that "the positions have become clear to Lebanese, Syrians and Arabs and throughout the world. There is now an axis that wants a ceasefire and a peaceful resolution and there is another that rejects the peaceful solution and wants to finish the battle. The March 14 bloc is on the side of those who want to stoke the fire in this country and do not want a ceasefire. Specifically, the Future Party has been implicated from the outset. Some of their MPs are in Turkey, Belgium and Europe, working since the beginning to manage the arming and the media and political incitement and financing the gunmen."

Arab Deterrence Force: For Real?

2 October 2012

Source:

المرزوقي، سوريا، وقوات الردع العربية

Majed al-Barhoumi, "Marzouki, Syria and the Arab Deterrence Force" (Elaph) 2 October 2012 <http://www.elaph.com/Web/opinion/2012/10/765393.html>

OE Watch
Commentary:
Speaking at the UN General Assembly meeting on 25 September, Emir of Qatar Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani proposed the formation and deployment of an "Arab Deterrence Force" in Syria. He invoked the Arab intervention to end the Lebanese Civil War (ironically, led by Syria) in 1975 as a model of prior success. As the first accompanying article notes, this is belied by the facts: by most measures, that intervention was a failure.

Since the start of the Syrian uprising Qatar has played a proactive role, using its media (al-Jazeera) to galvanize popular opinion against the Syrian regime, skillfully presenting itself as the closest thing to an honest broker, and allegedly digging into its deep pockets to help sustain the insurgency. Qatar



NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Mr Fogh Rasmussen discussed ways to deepen cooperation with Qatar at a bilateral meeting with the Emir of Qatar, during the UN General Assembly. Photo by NATO via www.nato.int

...The main lesson we might infer from this Tunisian-Qatari call is that Arabs ignore their history and their past suffering. History shows that one of the main tragedies to befall Lebanon during its civil war, which went on for more than a decade and a half, is the Arab troops that were sent there under the title of an "Arab Deterrence Force." This force was not neutral between the parties but rather engaged in the conflict, becoming one of its main actors and contributing to fanning the sectarian flames. To cover up its failure, its responsibilities were delegated to the Syrian Army, and its withdrawal by the Arab League was not mourned. This goes against the Emir of Qatar's description of the experience as successful by all measures and as the reason the civil war ended, which is completely untrue.

The presumed tasks of the troops that would be deployed, which seem vague, raise many questions, including who the main coordinating party will be, who will lead and which countries will participate. Will these armies join the ongoing conflict by supporting one side at the expense of another and resolving the battle on their behalf? And will they then become a target for the victorious party, with their countries calling for withdrawals following the death of injury of many of their troops? Or will neutrality be required of them, so they remain mere spectators to the massacres committed and become an unnecessary burden, with their failure to stop the fighting leading both parties to call for their withdrawal? The idea of sending an Arab Deterrence Force to Syria is futile and a waste of time, the adoption of a previous experience that was by all measures a failure.

Source:

المستشار السياسي للرئيس: مصر تدعم تدخلًا عسكرياً عربياً «مشروطاً» في سوريا

"The President's Political Advisor: Egypt Supports "Conditional" Arab Military Intervention in Syria" (al-Masry al-Youm) 1 October 2012 <http://today.almasryalyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=355189> (translation via <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/09/egypts-support-for-military-intervention-in-syria-conditional.html>)

...Seif Abdel Fattah, a political adviser to Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, revealed that Egypt is currently studying the Qatari proposal for an Arab military intervention in Syria to end the current crisis. He added that they will soon speak with Doha and Ankara regarding this proposal, stressing that the intervention is conditional on two factors: that the proposal would not be used as a pretext for a foreign intervention, and that the intervention have clear limits and goals.

In a press conference yesterday [September 30], Abdel Fattah said, "It is better that Arab countries intervene, based on their humanitarian, political and military obligations. After that, the UN Security Council has failed to take a firm stance, despite the fact that the violence has reached an unacceptable

punctuated a similar performance in Libya with active participation in NATO's military efforts.

While an Arab Deterrence Force for Syria may seem a pipedream, the very act of proposing it may be more directly aimed at solidifying an Arab alliance in case of regional conflict. One country that Qatar is actively coaxing closer to its side is Egypt. Although its leadership supports regime change in Syria, Egypt does not appear to be in a position, or for that matter have any interest in becoming more deeply involved in Syria. At the same time, the promise of regaining a leadership role in Arab affairs may be enticing, and the Egyptian presidency is reported to be discussing the Qatari proposal, as reported by the second accompanying article.

*Even if this is nothing but politicking, the rhetoric of Arab intervention has its supporters and could well gain steam. As shown in the third accompanying article, taken from a daily Qatari newspaper, a force with a limited mandate could be both possible and realistic, especially if one is willing to overlook the multitude of risks, as well as the political and practical obstacles involved. Yet if nothing else, the proposal of an Arab Deterrence Force for Syria shows that the rhetoric of intervention has gone mainstream; the next logical step – formulating a coherent plan to back such rhetoric – is a challenge of a different order. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

level.”

Commenting on a report by the Anatolia News Agency, Abdel Fattah told Al-Masry Al-Youm: “My statement is clear. Military intervention in Syria is conditional on several factors. Most notably, it must be an Arab intervention with clear objectives.” He continued, “Some media outlets have incorrectly reported the news, in a way that suggests that Egypt’s president seeks to conduct a military intervention in Syria. These media outlets did not mention the conditions the presidency put [on such an intervention].”

Source:

التدخل العربي في سوريا ممكن وواقعي

Nafea Ghadheb al-Dulaimi, “Arab Intervention in Syria is Possible and Realistic” (al-Arab [Qatar]) 7 October 2012 <http://www.alarab.qa/details.php?issueId=1761&artid=210988>

... it must be said that Arab intervention is more than possible in the following ways:

–Introducing anti-armor and anti-aircraft weapons into Syria is possible and realistic in the same fashion and same geographical region where the operation to get Asad’s Prime Minister Riyadh Hijab out took place. Here we must ask a realistic question as to why regime stations and patrols remain along the border which Hijab crossed, even though all other crossings, even those into Iraq, have fallen in the hands of rebels. Unless the reason involves joint efforts with the regime to secure the triangle bordering the Zionist entity.

–Via this same route and the ones used by refugees, Special Forces from Arab countries may enter in order to oversee the use of these advanced weapons. This will allay the fears of these countries and their large allies regarding weapons falling in the hands of “extremists.” These forces may also help raise the effectiveness of Syrian rebels, help secure the stocks of forbidden weapons, and stabilize the situation following the downfall of the regime.

–If Arab countries are, as they claim, capable of protecting their own airspace, perhaps Jordanian, Egyptian, Libyan, Tunisian and even Gulf airplanes could enforce a no-fly zone against the planes of the killer regime that has lost all legitimacy. This would prevent the regime from its genocidal bombing of innocent helpless civilians with cluster bombs and imprecise TNT explosives. We do not believe that honorable Arab military commanders, such as general al-Sisi in Egypt and ben Ammar in Tunisia, would keep silent about this. They will be lionized by Arabs and by history for their honorable stance toward the popular revolutions. The Tunisian president has expressed his clear support for Arab humanitarian intervention, while the Egyptian president is close to this.

–The countries that fear a confrontation with Iran could bear the financial burden for this official joint Arab effort. This will restore the Ummah’s dignity and put an end to foreign interventions.

–In order to bring this official and realistic Arab effort to fruition, coordinated popular mobilization will be required on the “Friday of Saving our Syrian Brethren” in all squares of the capitals and cities of Arab countries. This entails a key role for intellectuals, artists, religious figures, tribal leaders and social figures in mobilizing crowds and putting Iran, its idea of “resistance,” and all of Asad’s allies, in confrontation with the Arab and Muslim public.

AFRICOM a Disaster in Mali

27 September 2012

Source: Abena Ampofoa Asare, "Rhetoric and reality of AFRICOM: Lessons from Mali," *Pambazuka News* (Nairobi, Kenya), 27 September 2012: <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/84373>

OE Watch Commentary:

Since its inception in 2007 AFRICOM has faced various dissenters from both the United States and Africa. Though the public relations push to paint AFRICOM in a more benevolent light seemed to have made some impact, the accompanying article shows that negative perceptions of it are still very much alive.

The author's primary critique of AFRICOM is that it "does not exist for our benefit" and, rather, is a tool for U.S. self interest. The author's piece can be critiqued from many angles. Some points, such as the assertion that "ironically, for over a decade, Mali has been a key AFRICOM partner," are factually incorrect. Others, such as the notion that "in Mali, US money, training and rhetoric created an unbalanced situation where increasingly powerful military men with outsized ambition swagger around in one of the world's poorest nations," are literary hyperbole.

While the author's opinions do, however, parallel some of the opinions held on the continent, the article should be approached in the proper context. The platform on which it was run, Pambazuka News, is an online Africa forum that is explicitly dedicated to social justice issues: frequently on the site, the United States and other Western nations are painted as the primary impediments to African social justice, thus leading this article



Seal of the United States Africa Command by User:JustMyThoughts, United States Federal Government [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

... African governments should think twice about the presence of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) within their borders. AFRICOM bills itself as a force for democracy, humanitarianism and good governance in Africa by claiming that United States interests are safest when African governments are strong. Just last August, General Carter Ham (Commander-AFRICOM) described the security of partner states as one critical measure of AFRICOM's mission. Are governments capable of guarding their own national borders and contributing regionally? Do their militaries adhere to the rule of law and respect the people they serve?

These indicators, he noted, are the benchmarks of AFRICOM's success. Ironically, for over a decade, Mali has been a key AFRICOM partner. To the tune of millions, US forces have provided special operations, drug trafficking and counterterrorism training in the large West African nation. Today's Mali of the shattered democracy and roving rebel groups is a troubling picture of an AFRICOM partner state.

...By its own standard, AFRICOM's mission in Mali has failed. Captain Amadou Sanogo, the coup-maker who bears the greatest immediate responsibility for plunging Mali into political unrest, was extensively trained by AFRICOM, even traveling to the Georgia, Virginia and Texas for Department of Defense additional enrichment. In addition, there has been a parade of social scientists warning that US policies are undermining Mali's security.

On the ground, AFRICOM's arms and support have been found lacking. Where were the border control, communication and intelligence resources when Tuareg fighters, heavily armed and spoiling for a fight, crossed the borders from Libya, to Algeria, to Mali? When the Malian government struggled to hold its own against rebel fighters in the north, where was AFRICOM's equipment and expertise? When the US-trained Captain Sanogo mutinied, the US State Department did not publicly consider its responsibility for a disastrous action taken by soldiers trained to be too big for their britches. For students of African history, the notion that African democracy, stability and good governance will result from more deadly arms and more powerful soldiers is the stuff of satire; and yet this is precisely the grounds on which AFRICOM functions.

to be a somewhat unsurprising find and characteristic of the larger ideological thrust of the site. End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

In Mali, US money, training and rhetoric created an unbalanced situation where increasingly powerful military men with outsized ambition swagger around in one of the world's poorest nations. There is little to suggest that militarization will ease any of Africa's political and social problems. Yet, instead of honestly and transparently looking at these hard lessons, AFRICOM rolls on with its rhetoric, ignoring the wreckage trailing behind it. As recently as 2010, Department of Defense analysts were singing Mali's praises, claiming that its 'balanced approach' to counterterrorism had 'proven effective in maintaining stability, while mitigating extremism.'

The scores of reports trumpeting the good news that in Mali hearts and minds are changed, rule of law strengthened and the army trained to be effective and conscientious, now seem woefully out of date and even perverse. Where else is rhetoric standing in for reality in terms of our understanding of AFRICOM? There are myriad reasons why the US government may have chosen to overlook the demise of a partner nation's democracy. We are not so far away from the Cold War years of realpolitik as we might imagine. But let us be clear. All of these reasons have to do with US self-interest and not with the needs, security, or human rights of the Malian people who are suffering mightily through this painful transition. For Africa, Mali forces us to recognize that AFRICOM does not exist for our benefit. The money, arms, supposed war prevention and capacity-building initiatives — the 'help' that AFRICOM offers — cannot guarantee the stability of African states. Indeed, continually beating the war drum and conflating development with militarism exacerbate the tensions that threaten Africa's progress.



The RED DIAMOND is the Army's leading e-journal highlighting current threats in the Operational Environment.

It is produced by the Threats Intelligence Support Activity (U.S. Army TRADOC G-2) and posted at <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/files/25364306>.

The Controversy of an Alleged Decrease in U.S. Military Aid to Liberia

12 October 2012

Source: "DOWN: From \$ 13 million to \$6.5 Million US Cuts Security Aid to Liberia by Half," African Standard (Liberia), 12 October 2012: http://www.africanstandardnews.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=981%3Astaff-writer-usa&catid=3%3Anewsflash&Itemid=50

OE Watch Commentary: *The United States is in a game of "he said she said" with the Liberian media over a recent story alleging that the U.S. had cut its defense aid to Liberia by half. The accompanying article offers a sketch of how the drama unfolded, in addition to calling the U.S. to task to explain figures on the presumed decrease from \$13 million in 2011 to \$6.5 million in 2012.*

In summary, the Liberian African Standard (the same online newspaper from which the accompanying story is drawn) published a story citing figures from a U.S. spending report showing the aforementioned dramatic reduction in U.S. military aid to the country. Quickly the U.S. embassy in Monrovia released a statement claiming that the report was untrue and that U.S. military assistance to Liberia continued to be "robust." This story, written in response to the embassy's statement, diplomatically insinuates that the U.S. embassy is simply trying to cover up its reduction in spending, though the point remains the same.

*The unfolding of the scenario is particularly fascinating as a point of contrast to the previous article highlighted herein. Whereas the author decrying AFRICOM's presence in Mali would have clearly been in support of decreased U.S. military spending Liberia, the situation in Monrovia is being construed as one of insult: that the U.S. might have reduced its military presence is being portrayed in these conversations as highly lamentable. When compared to the aforementioned article on Mali, the Liberian case may highlight a uniqueness about African opinions on U.S. military aid: notably, that deep and continued funding is welcomed far more than a physical U.S. military presence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***



U.S. Ambassador Deborah R. Malac and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf share a toast at the official credentialing ceremony for the incoming Ambassador September 20. Critics contend that the ambassador "needs to publicly disclose security figures to Liberia over four years." Photo via <http://monrovia.usembassy.gov/events092512.html>

...The United States of America has drastically reduced its security aid to Liberia by half classified aid statistics from the United States Foreign Affairs in the possession of African Standard has indicated.

The statistics indicate that in 2011, the United States provided a total of US\$13 million in security aid to Liberia but for 2012, the figure has been slashed in to half with Liberia receiving US\$6.5 million. In the document, key security figures for Liberia have been declining since 2008 down to the lowest in 2012, indicating a gradual slow down of the US support to Liberia's security sector.

The United States Embassy in Monrovia reacting to an earlier publication by African Standard on the security aid cut failed to state how much the US provided to Liberia in 2011 only indicating that the US is providing US\$ 6.5 million to Liberia in 2012. A comparison of security aid figures for previous years with 2011 and 2012 could serve as the best case showing the trend of US security support to Liberia.

Observers believe that the burden of proof now rests with US Embassy to make public figures of support to the security sector of Liberia for the last few years like it has done with the disclosure of 2012 figure.

Rumors of Impending Al-Qaeda Attack in Mauritania

11 October 2012

Source: Jemal Oumar, "Mauritania: Security Forces Put On Alert," Magharebia (Washington, DC), 11 October 2012: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201210120755.html>

OE Watch Commentary: Citizens in the Mauritanian capital of Nouakchott are taking the beefed up security presence in the country with an ounce of worry. As the accompanying article details, rumors are now circulating suggesting that al-Qaeda is planning an attack there.

Three possible scenarios could actually be at play. One: the Mauritanian state is ramping up security not for fear of terrorist attacks from al-Qaeda, but simply as a precautionary measure, as are many other many other Muslim countries in the wake of the anti-secular protests that killed U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens. Two: in the face of mounting pressure for an international force to intervene in neighboring Mali, Mauritania might be securing its borders so as to prevent the additional influx of any of those in Mali (including Tauregs and members of the radical Ansar Dine Islamist group) preparing to flee. This securing of its borders might also be in response to the residual persons and arms that are now circulating with little restraint throughout the Sahara in the aftermath of the conflict in Libya. Three: it could be the case that there is a genuine threat of an al-Qaeda attack in Mauritania, as citizens now fear.

Indeed, the third scenario is not out of the question. Mauritania seems to be one of the places to watch in West Africa for the emergence of new al-Qaeda cells. The country made news in August when the leader of its AQIM branch, Hama Ould El Hadj, was arrested. The arrest of Ould El Hadj, the founder in 2004 of the Mauritanian branch of AQIM, called "Ançar Allah Al Mourabitoune Vi Bilad Chinguit," could very well have prompted the group to retaliate, or at least threaten retaliation. Further, that the Mauritanian state has so little control over the vast stretches of desert territory within its borders means that it is an ideal spot for al-Qaeda affiliates to turn for refuge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**



Mauritania map by Planiglobe [CC-BY-SA], via <http://www.planiglobe.com>

...Rumors of an impending al-Qaeda attack have Nouakchott residents on edge.

For about a week now, Nouakchott has witnessed intensive security reinforcements at main streets and near embassies, ministries and public departments.

A number of armed soldiers were mobilized at the southern and southeastern border near the areas where armed terrorist groups operate in northern Mali.

Mauritanian police, security and gendarme forces have also stepped up their night patrols in Nouakchott at road intersections and public markets using trained dogs, checking the identity of passengers and inspecting cars.

Although there has been no official explanation for the stepped-up security, Essirage.net reported October 9th that the alert was due to "the likelihood of al-Qaeda militants on Mauritanian soil".

For his part, al-Moukhtar al-Salem, an analyst and expert on terrorism, said he did not "rule out that this security deployment is only a precautionary measure in the atmosphere of preparing for military intervention in northern Mali".

He added that by his own reading of the current condition of terrorist groups in northern Mali shows that they are now on the defensive.

"For the time being, the terrorist groups are avoiding any blackmail of regional countries lest this should be a justification for any country to militarily intervene and a prelude for a military confrontation with these groups," al-Salem noted.

China's Push for Peace in Africa: Is There a Price to Be Paid?

13 October 2012

Source: "Blain Biset, "China Wants Peace in Africa," Inter Press Service, 13 Oct 2012, <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/10/china-wants-peace-in-africa/>.

OE Watch Commentary: *The good news is that China is pushing for peace in Africa. The bad news is that with peace China can implement economic programs such as trade and acquisition of resources, which on some past occasions have been economically, environmentally, and/or morally unsavory.*

The accompanying article, "China Wants Peace in Africa," makes the compelling case that China does want peace in Africa and is willing to work for it. After all, it is in China's self-interest to have stable and secure African countries from which it can make investments, sell goods, and purchase resources. Unstable countries such as Somalia present untold headaches, ranging from which entities to negotiate with for drilling rights to the question of how profits can be withdrawn when the banking system and currency are weak. There is probably little doubt that should Somalia's latest attempt at fashioning a functioning government be successful enough to create a modicum of stability, China will increase its investments there.

Thus, while altruism may play a part, it is economic and political reasons that many ascribe to China's quest for African peace. Perhaps it is a perceptual problem related to "the eye of the beholder," but China's seemingly goodwill gestures are often seen as having ulterior motives: money to the African Union to increase its influence on that important body; paved roads in Ethiopia to enhance its trade; construction of large projects such as airport terminals, often with Chinese workers to the near exclusion of locals; and the list goes on. Be that as it may, the



Chinese workers in front of five star 90-million-dollar hotel in Malawi. Credit: Claire Ngozo/IPS, via <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/10/china-wants-peace-in-africa/>

...China could soon expand its involvement in peace and security issues in Africa, according to government officials, researchers and academics from both the Asian giant and resource-rich continent who met at the second China-Africa Think Tanks Forum in Ethiopia from Oct. 12 to 13...

..."Our non-interference policy in Africa does not mean we have an indifferent attitude towards African issues. We oppose some countries that in the excuse of care for another, interfere with African internal affairs," Director-General Lu Shaye from the Department of African Affairs at the Chinese Foreign Ministry told IPS...

...Until now, China's role in Africa has mostly focused on economic development. Last year, China-Africa trade amounted to 166 billion dollars, according to statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Commerce...

...China's approach of non-interference has provided Africa with much needed funding without the strings that some western powers attach to loans for Africa, and has resulted in the fast construction of large infrastructure projects, according to experts...

...While China is Africa's biggest trade partner, it already is the largest contributor of peacekeepers to Africa among permanent members of the United Nations Security Council...

...But the role of China in Africa is often seen as a controversial one. China's funding of the new AU building headquarters in Addis Ababa has sparked debate among non-African critics about whether the new economic world power was buying its way into the continent...

end result is China's push for peace in Africa, perhaps altruistic but probably mostly for economic and political reasons, is still a push for peace on a continent with ongoing strife.

Unfortunately, with this peace comes China's sometimes questionable tactics. Many African nations are pushing back at the low-priced Chinese imports which undercut local manufacturing. They refer to "Chinese neo-imperialism," a term the Chinese are quick to disavow, stating something along the lines of not wanting to dominate African countries but rather engage them in trade.

There are also environmental and health concerns associated with the increasing Chinese presence, with an excellent example of these in the accompanying article "Ghana: Abortion, HIV Aids Cases Increase At Chinese Mining Sites." Chinese miners, often illegally present, have money and are chasing after "small small girls." The result is a very high teen pregnancy rate, a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and a large number of abortions. Additionally, silicosis from dust, malaria from stagnant waters left by the miners (which serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes), and numerous other problems are associated with the illegal miners. End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

...Western countries have warned on frequent occasions that China's participation in Africa has colonial tendencies. Or that the Asian country supports oppressive regimes and is trying to take advantage of Africa's natural resources...

...While China's improved role in peace and security in Africa could be beneficial for the continent, it could also be rewarding for China...

Source: "Simmons Yussif Kewura, "Ghana: Abortion, HIV Aids Cases Increase At Chinese Mining Sites," *The Chronicle (Ghana)*, 10 October 2012, <http://ghanaian-chronicle.com/abortion-hiv-aids-cases-increase-at-chinese-mining-sites/>

...Following the influx of illegal Chinese miners into the country, abortion cases in these mining areas are said to be on the increase, with its attendant deaths...

...Dr. Dominic Dobbin, revealed that from January to June, this year, various health facilities in the area have recorded about three hundred teenage pregnancies...

...Dr. Dobbin said the high number of teenage pregnancy has also led to high abortion cases while HIV/AIDS in the area is on the high side. He said: "All these are happening because of the influx of the galamsey [Ghanaian parlance for artisanal or illegal mining] operators who mine in the area. Because they have the money, they go about chasing the "small small girls"..."

...The District Health Director disclosed that quite apart from the abortion issues, the operations of the galamseyers were also creating other health hazards for the people of the area; such as malaria, tuberculosis and silicosis, as some of the diseases emanating from the illegal miners operations...



Tim Thomas's *The Dragon's Quantum Leap* peels back the transformation process and uncovers the digital-age impacts of new modes of Chinese military thinking.

***The Dragon's Quantum Leap* expands the scope of Tim Thomas's two previous works on Chinese information warfare concepts. As with his previous work, Tim Thomas primarily uses all-Chinese source material**

Philippines: Rumors and Rhetoric on US Pivot to Asia

4 September 2012

Source: Kyodo News (English), "U.S. marines to set up marine command post facing South China Sea," Ario Agnote, September 4, 2012, http://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2012/09/180311.html?searchType=site&req_type=article&phrase=+advance+command+post

OE Watch Commentary: *A continual stream of highly crafted state-sponsored rhetoric pervades the Chinese media in regards to the claims and concerns swirling in the South China Sea. News bureaus in Japan and the Philippines are adding their own reporting, editorializing, and seeming speculation to the expanding conversation. Central to this debate is the current activity of US military forces in the region and their potential future role in the expression of US policy.*

The first article of interest is a recent piece published by the Japanese Kyodo News agency (English version). The reporter quoted an unnamed senior Philippine military officer, stating that the US planned to establish a forward operational element of its Marine Corps on the island of Palawan. This report was picked up widely in the Philippine press, with denials and rebuttals following. The Philippine Star published the official denial of the Department of National Defense in the next article. However, the Philippine government has acknowledged "ongoing efforts of the military to shift from internal to territorial defense." (<http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=817351&publicationSubCategoryId=63>)

The routine joint exercises with US and Philippine forces that are held annually have seen significant expansion in international forces participation, scope of operations, and number of forces involved. In the article from the Global Nation Inquirer, officials on both sides are quick to downplay any connection with current Chinese actions



The forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) is moored pierside in Subic Bay as amphibious dock landing ship USS Tortuga (LSD 46) is moored in the distance. Bonhomme Richard and Tortuga are in Subic Bay to begin Amphibious Landing Exercise. PHIBLEX is an annual bilateral exercise held in conjunction with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and is designed to improve interoperability, increase readiness and develop professional and personal relationships between U.S. and Philippine forces. Bonhomme Richard is the lead ship of the only forward-deployed amphibious ready group and is operating in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility. DOD photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Russel, via <http://www.dvidshub.net/image/678233/amphibious-landing-exercise#.UIWquYY4KkM>

...The U.S. Marines plan to set up an "advance command post" on the western Philippine island of Palawan that faces the South China Sea, a senior Philippine marine officer told Kyodo News Tuesday.

"The plan is to station 50 to 60 American marines in Palawan as an advance command post in the region," said the officer privy to the plan.

Palawan is an island province closest to the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea being claimed in whole or in part by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei.

Palawan is just one of the areas identified both by Manila and Washington where U.S. Marines will train in a rotating deployment, the officer said.

He said that several military facilities in the Philippine main island of Luzon and Mindanao island in southern Philippines have also been "opened for access: for U.S. troops....The officer said the airstrip in Balabac, the southernmost island in the Palawan archipelago that was used by U.S. forces during World War II, will also be restored and improved.

Diplomatic and military sources said the United States specifically wants more access to Philippine airfields and ports for "servicing and maintenance" including refueling and repair of U.S. aircraft and ships.

...Philippine and U.S. officials are mum about the plan to increase the American presence in the Philippines, a long-time U.S. ally which 20 years ago kicked the U.S. forces out from their huge naval and air bases in the country....

or concerns. Yet the expanded use of the former US naval base at Subic Bay and expanding agreements for use of Philippine resources continue to fuel the focus on the future role of the US military in the region.

Internal forces in the Philippines also continue to call into question the presence and activities of US military forces. (<http://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2012/05/05/philippines-zamboanga-protest-vs-balikatan-troops-shows-mounting-anti-us-sentiment/>) The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) maintains that the ongoing efforts of the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) - Philippines are a de-facto permanent basing of US troops. The CPP also considers the docking of US naval vessels in Subic Bay as a violation of national sovereignty. These radical voices are often left out of the mainstream media, yet the Manila Standard Today has picked up the current pronouncements of the CCP. The government of the Philippines continues to openly support the longstanding cooperative relationship between the nations' militaries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)**

Source: The Philippine Star, "DND denies plan for US command post in Palawan," Alexis Romero, September 6, 2012, <http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?articleId=845778&publicationSubCategoryId=63>

...The Department of National Defense denied yesterday reports that the United States is planning to establish an advance Marine command post in Palawan facing the West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) amid a territorial dispute in the area...

Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin denied the report.

"No, this was never discussed in our meetings," Gazmin told The STAR in a text message.

Asked if the US would post troops in Palawan together with Philippine forces, Gazmin replied, "Only during training and exercise."

...Kyodo also reported that aside from Samariniana, the US military is also looking at developing joint "operational bases" in other parts of Palawan, including Oyster Bay, Ulugan Bay, Macarasca town, Puerto Princesa City, Tarumpitao Point in Rizal and San Vicente town.

According to the source, Palawan was just one of the areas identified by Manila and Washington "where US Marines will train in rotating deployment."

...Philippine security officials said a Philippine Marine brigade headquarters may be put up in Palawan.

Lt. Col. Neil Estrella, spokesman for the Palawan-based Armed Forces Western Command, said they are realigning their troops to support those involved in internal and territorial defense operations. ...

Source: Global Nation Inquirer, "Joint war games with US not about China, says Philippines," Robert Gonzaga, October 9, 2012, <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/52296/joint-war-games-with-us-not-about-china-says-philippines>

...SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—The joint military exercises between the Philippines and the United States started in this former American naval base on Monday, but a top Philippine military official said the war games had nothing to do with the country's conflict with China over disputed territories in the West Philippine (South China) Sea.

Officials from the Philippine and US armed forces held the opening ceremony for the 10-day Philippines-US Amphibious Landing Exercise (Phiblex) 2013 on the US helicopter carrier, USS Bonhomme Richard, which is docked here.

The ship, which is anchored next to the submarine USS Olympia, is joining Phiblex alongside other vessels from both countries...

....Asked whether the territorial disputes with China over the Panatag (Scarborough) Shoal and the Spratly Islands would figure in Phiblex, Pama said: "This will make us more prepared and enable both countries to work together, but scenarios like that were not included in the [planning or execution of the] joint exercises."

Pama said Phiblex was an annual event and was not a direct response to the looming threat of China in the Asia-Pacific.

Narco Blockades Cause Chaos in Jalisco

27 August 2012

Source: http://www.blogdelnarco.com/2012/08/detienen-a-nemesio-oceguera-cervantes-el-mencho-y-causa-22-narcobloqueos/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+EIBlogdelNarco+%28BlogdelNarco.com%29

OE Watch Commentary: *Narco blockades in Mexico involve gunmen stopping multiple large vehicles at gunpoint, shooting out the tires, taking the keys, and possibly setting the vehicles on fire. Vehicles utilized are then set up in a fashion that completely blocks roadways and shuts down all oncoming traffic.*

The three principal purposes of narco blockades are to slow pursuit by authorities, distract them, and make them appear incompetent in the sense citizens sitting on the roadway may be there for hours waiting for the situation to resolve while chaos abounds before them.

Setting up a narco blockade only takes a few minutes and involves little risk to organized crime operators. However, narco blockades represent a nightmare for authorities. First, it is humanly impossible for them to protect all roadways at all times. Second, organized crime operators nearly always have the element of surprise. Third, narco blockades can have devastating effects in a city or an entire region, as evidenced by the 26 August 2012 events in Jalisco as discussed below.

The first narco blockades in Mexico were set up by Los Zetas in 2010 in Nuevo Leon. Since that time criminal groups, including Los Caballeros Templarios, the New Generation Cartel of Jalisco, and La Familia Michoacan, have begun setting them up in Tamaulipas, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Michoacan, and Colima.

In response to the increased use of narco blockades in Monterrey, authorities created anti-narco-blockade forces. The result? These groups have been very successful, given that not one narco blockade has been reported there since February 2012. The role of anti-narco-blockade forces is not to completely eradicate them, but instead to improve response time by having large tow trucks on hand that can quickly clear roadways. Faster response times are critical, as normal narco blockades cause chaos for hours while authorities attempt to decongest roadways. By clearing the blockades quickly, sometimes in as little as 15 minutes to an hour, authorities remove the element of chaos. This has caused criminal operators in Monterrey to rethink implementing blockades.

*The success of anti-narco-blockade forces in Monterrey should serve as a lesson learned to police forces in Mexico. However, it must be taken into account that the use of anti-narco-blockade forces will not completely eradicate narco blockades. Their formation will simply modify success margins of criminal operators and may force them to think twice about possible benefits derived from setting up narco blockades. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)***



Mexican Federal Police at Narco blockade in Jalisco, via blogdelnarco.com

...On 26 August 2012, federal police conducted an operation that nearly led to the arrest of Nemesio OCEGUERA Cervantes, aka El Mencho in Tonaya, Jalisco. El Mencho is the current New Generation Cartel of Jalisco leader. To aid in Ocegüera's escape from authorities, organized crime operators implemented 28 narco blockades in Jalisco and Colima. As part of these blockades, at least 15 vehicles and 11 semis were set on fire in municipalities including Guadalajara, Tonalá, Tlajomulco, Zapopan, Puerto Vallarta, La Barca, Capilla de Guadalupe, San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Ciudad Guzmán, Jamay, Tizapan El Alto, and Tuxcueca.

Affected highways/roadways included the Colima-Manzanillo highway, the Armeria-Cuyutlan highway, the Guadalajara highway, the Colima-Pihuamo highway, Cerro de Ortega in Tecoman, the Guadalajara-Chapala highway, the Atotonilco-Ayotlan highway, the Morelia-Guadalajara highway, the Tototlan-Atotonilco highway, the Guadalajara-Ocotlan highway, and the Jamay-La Barca highway.

Because police access became difficult following the implementation of narco blockades, five Black Hawks were used in an attempt to pursue organized crime operators.

China's First Aircraft Carrier: Threat or Not?

25 September 2012

Source: Tao Shelan, “中国首艘航母入列：从大国走向强国的必经之路 (China's First Aircraft Carrier Enters Service: A Necessary Path To Go From Being a Major Country to Becoming a Power),” Zhongguo Xinwen She, September 25, 2012, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2012/0708/c1024-18466738.html>

OE Watch Commentary:

China's first aircraft carrier, the "Liaoning," recently entered service. This has been met with a variety of analytical reports from within the Asian region. Following are three such reports from three different sources.

The first report, from a Chinese-based source, downplays any potential threat, instead approaching the news from a national pride point of view. The article refers to the aircraft carrier as an "epoch-making event," and a "natural development" as China continues to build up its "economic might." It also explains that the carrier will be used for scientific research and training purposes. While the article points out that the carrier gives China a broader spectrum of capability and that the country's military might is growing, it also reiterates China's firm stance on peaceful development, stating that it "will not constitute a threat to any country, and furthermore there is no need for a threat, either."

Other foreign reports have emerged equating the commissioning of the Liaoning to a recent tussle between China and Japan over the Senkaku/Daiyu islands. The second article highlighted below is one such example. In this Indian-sourced opinion piece the author maintains a skeptical stance on China's new aircraft carrier, stating that "the Liaoning bears an unmistakable message: we are



The CV-16 Liaoning Aircraft Carrier renovated from an old aircraft carrier (Varyag) that China bought from Ukraine in 1998. Photo by cufteftster, via <http://www.flickr.com/photos/china-defense/8021713438>

....Analysts pointed out that, as far as the Chinese Navy and even the Chinese military in general is concerned; the entering into service by the aircraft carrier is an epoch-making event. It is not just that the Chinese military has added a new category of ships, rather it is a symbol of the noticeable rise in the power of the state and the military, a road that China must take in going from being a major country to a power.

In an interview with Zhongguo Xinwen She [China News Service], naval military expert Li Jie expressed the belief that, having entered service, the aircraft carrier would be used mainly for scientific research, tests, and military training, cultivating the ability and skills of the officers and men to operate it. As far as the Chinese military is concerned, the greatest significance of the entering of service by the aircraft carrier is the enormous improvement in the overall intermediate and distant-sea integrated and three-dimensional operational capabilities that it brings about... And the entering of service by the aircraft carrier will enable the Navy to move toward more distant waters, undertake more operational tasks and non-war military tasks, and it will also have an even more important impact on the world.

Along with China's economic development and the improvement in the might of its military, countries in the region have some doubts, and that is understandable. No matter what, however, China's peaceful development will not constitute a threat to any country, and furthermore there is no need for a threat, either."

As a weapons platform, an aircraft carrier can not only be used offensively, it can also be used for defense, and it can even be used to uphold world peace and carry out disaster relief operations, etc. Just as stated by Geng Yansheng, the spokesman for China's Ministry of National Defense, China firmly pursues a defensive national defense policy, and that will never change because of the development of advanced weapons....

big and we'll ensure that what we claim becomes ours." The original commentary goes on to quote various Chinese officers holding tougher stances than China's media. The author also warns China to consider Japan's "formidable military power," as well as Japan's "allies in the US Seventh Fleet." The author's bottom line, however, is that the Liaoning might not be a game changer, but it is a powerful symbol of Beijing's intentions.

While the third article highlighted below is not directly about the Liaoning, the Taipei-based Want China Times is interesting in that it cites Alexander Khranchikhin, Deputy Director of Russia's Institute for Political and Military Analysis, as believing that the People's Liberation Army will have the power to defeat both Japan and the United States in the Asia-Pacific region by the year 2020. Khranchikhin, according to the article, attributes his beliefs to China having a higher capacity to manufacture military aircraft than Japan and, while "China has yet to establish a carrier battle group under its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, Japan has no carrier-based fighters at all."

*It appears by all the press coverage that China's neighbors, often skeptical of the country's intentions, are keeping a vigilant watch as China takes each step that advances its technological progress. While many of these reports are quick to point out China's deficiencies, such as the Liaoning not being equipped with aircraft, readers can still read into these reports a sense of unease as the country presses forward. **End FMSO Commentary (Hurst)***

Source: Nayan Chanda, "China Starts a New Gambit in East Asia," The Times of India Online, September 29, 2012, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-09-29/edit-page/34149083_1_aircraft-carrier-inherent-territory-diaoyu-islands

...The tussle over sovereignty in the East Asian waterways took a new turn this week with the formal commissioning of the Liaoning, China's first aircraft carrier. The fact that the 55,000-ton ship does not yet have even one airplane on its deck provides little comfort to China's regional neighbours. More than its potential power projection capabilities, the Liaoning bears an unmistakable message: we are big and we'll ensure that what we claim becomes ours.

While China's defence ministry blandly claimed that the aircraft carrier would help to "effectively protect national sovereignty, security and development interests", others were more specific about its immediate operational value. A Chinese navy officer quoted in the official People's Daily said that the carrier would play "an important role in China's settlement of islands disputes" - meaning both Senkaku/Diaoyu and the South China Sea.

The admiral (commander of the Chinese naval operation that snatched one of the islands from Vietnam in 1988) said, "If China's aircraft carrier enters service relatively soon, and training is well-established, this will solve a major problem. We will seize air superiority; Vietnamese aircraft will not dare to take off."

China hopes that by demonstrating its aircraft carrier - something that Japan does not have (and cannot have under its peace constitution) - it will dissuade Japan from resisting China militarily.

The Chinese navy will now have to learn the complexities of operating such a gigantic system. It will also have to focus on how to protect it from the increasingly capable anti-ship weapons being acquired by neighbours such as Vietnam.

At the end of the day, Liaoning may not be the game changer Chinese media make it out to be. But as a powerful symbol of Beijing's intentions it is a new worry floating on the horizon....

Source: "Eventual Dominance for China in Asia-Pacific: Russian Analyst," Want China Times, September 28, 2012, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20120928000054>

...(Alexander) Khranchikhin said Japan has better American-built aircraft than the Chinese air force, though the decommissioning of its F-4EJ and RF-4EJ fighters will greatly reduce the size of its fighter fleet. Khranchikhin also pointed out that 12 of Japan's F-2 fighters were put out of commission after the March 11 earthquake last year. The analyst said that China has greater capacity for manufacturing military aircraft than Japan. With China possessing the numerical superiority, it has also introduced more advanced fighters such as the J-11, J-10, JH-7 and J-15. Though China has yet to establish a carrier battle group under its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, Japan has no carrier-based fighters at all.

New surface ships and stealth fighters like the J-20 are currently under development in China, leading Khranchikhin to predict that by 2020, China will have the power to defeat both Japan and the United States in the Asia-Pacific....

China: Beefing up Its UAV Surveillance and Attack Capability by 2015?

23 September 2012

Source: China to Promote Drones for Marine Surveillance,” Xinhua, September 23, 2012, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2012/0708/c1024-18466738.html>

OE Watch Commentary: Chinese press reports have indicated a growing interest in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). The following highlights three such articles. In the first article the author cites the Chinese State Oceanic Administration as saying China will promote the use of UAVs to strengthen the nation’s maritime surveillance. This article is of interest because it clearly indicates China’s push to build up its UAV capability and network in an area already filled with tension over territorial disputes — the South and East China Seas.

China’s move to further expand its military capabilities into the maritime regions could spark concern. The second report is taken from a recent white paper released by the Japanese Ministry of Defense. The paper points out that, among other activities observed in waters near Japan, “...a fleet of the record number of 11 Chinese naval vessels passed between the main island of Okinawa and the Miyako Island, headed to the Pacific Ocean in June 2011, and conducted what appeared to be training exercises including an unmanned aerial vehicle’s flight. It seems they [China] are trying to improve their deployment capabilities in the open ocean.” The paper later discusses China’s perceived objectives when conducting activities in the waters near Japan. These objectives include intercepting naval operations by enemies; developing capabilities to deter Taiwan from seeking independence; acquiring, maintaining, and protecting maritime rights and interests; and defending sea lanes of communications.



A concept model of China’s unmanned aerial combat vehicle named “Anjian” (Dark Sword) displayed at the 47th International Paris Air Show, held from June 18th to June 24th 2007. Photo via http://english.people.com.cn/200705/30/eng20070530_379205.html

...China will promote the use of drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), to strengthen the nation’s maritime surveillance, the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) said on Sunday...

...With the experience learned from the pilot program, the SOA would try to form a managerial system and technical regulations in a bid to set up UAV surveillance and monitoring bases in provinces along China’s coastline by 2015, Yu Qingsong, a division chief of the administration said.

In addition, the SOA would step up efforts to enhance its surveillance of the islands and islets including the Diaoyu Islands and Huangyan Island.

Source: “Eventual Dominance for China in Asia-Pacific: Russian Analyst,” Want China Times, September 28, 2012, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20120928000054>

...Taking into general consideration such factors as China’s geographical location and economic globalization as well as the fact that China explicitly states in its laws and other documents that its Navy assumes the role of safeguarding maritime rights and interests and protecting maritime safety, the Chinese Navy and other organizations are considered to have the following objectives in their maritime activities.

The first one is to intercept naval operations by enemies in waters as far as possible from China in order to defend its territory and territorial waters. Behind this objective is an increase in effectiveness of long-range attacks due to recent progress in science and technology.

The second one is to develop military capabilities to deter and prevent Taiwan’s independence. For example, China maintains that it will not allow any foreign

Building up its UAV capabilities and creating a network of UAVs could indeed play a role in strengthening China's maritime surveillance capabilities, as well as build up the country's defense.

*The potential for Chinese indigenous UAVs to carry weapons is talked about in the third article. Of most interest is the 200W UAV, considered an antiterrorism UAV, and known to have the capacity to carry missiles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)***

intervention in solving the Taiwan issue and realizing the unification of China. In order for China to try to prevent by force foreign intervention into Taiwan, which is surrounded by the sea, it needs to enhance its military operational capabilities at sea.

The third one is to acquire, maintain, and protect its maritime rights and interests...

The fourth one is to defend its sea lanes of communications. In this background is the fact that its sea lanes of communications, including its crude oil transportation routes from the Middle East, are extremely important for the globalizing Chinese economy. What part of its sea lanes of communication the Chinese Navy thinks it should defend depends on such factors as international situations, but given the recent modernization of the Chinese Navy and Air Force, the areas which they can defend is believed to get larger beyond waters near China.

Given these objectives and recent trends in China's maritime activities, it is believed that China plans to expand sphere of its maritime activities, and carry out its operations as an ordinary routine practice in waters surrounding Japan, including the East China Sea and the Pacific Ocean as well as the South China Sea. Therefore, attention needs to be paid to such activities as operations of naval vessels and various surveillance operations near.

Source: Feng Zhiyuan, "中国无人机发展的一次峰会 (Summit For the Development of Chinese Unmanned Aerial Vehicles,)" Dangdai Haijun, June 8, 2012. (NO LINK AVAILABLE)

...On 9 June 2010, the "Vanguard of the Wing – The Third Chinese Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Conference and Exhibition" ... displayed more than 30 models of UAVs that were indigenously produced...

...During this exhibition, the "Blue Hawk" (sometimes possibly referred to as Blue Eagle) 200W foreign trade-type anti-terrorism UAV could be considered the most popular one...As for airborne weapons, this UAV can carry many types of weapons, so its performance is great. Four missiles can attach under its wings, of which two are "Tianjian" micro missiles and two are "Leiming" micro missiles respectively. The "Tianjian" missile weighs three kilograms. Its maximum firing range is 3.2 kilometers, and it adopts a television guidance means. The "Leiming" missile weighs five kilograms. Its maximum firing range is 4.2 kilometers, and it adopts television guidance or semi-active laser guidance means. An optical tracking pod is installed under the nose. It can choose a visible-light or infrared imaging video camera system...

Extending South Korean Defense

8 October 2012

Source: Chosun Ilbo Online, 8 October 2012

OE Watch Commentary: South Korean leaders remain genuinely concerned with the defense capabilities of their country, particularly against the North Korean threat. After the sinking of the Cheonan and the bombardment of Yeonpyeong in 2010 and recent revelations of improved North Korean missile capabilities, leaders in Seoul lobbied hard for new missile and air reconnaissance countermeasures. The excerpted article describes their successful negotiations with Washington.

In terms of South Korean political geography, there have been very few issues that have led to unanimous agreement between left-wing and right-wing political parties. This missile issue unites all parties. Although there has been criticism among some progressives regarding increased military capability, including building a new naval base on Jeju Island and an increase of US forces in Korea, memories of past humiliation remain stronger. Conservative Koreans see this enhanced missile range as a strong defensive response against the North Korean threat. Extending the country's missile range is not only a defensive measure against North Korea, but also a symbol of South Korea's pride.

End OE Watch Commentary (Kim)



Debut of North Korea's New Road-Mobile KN-08 missile During April 15, 2012 Parade in Pyongyang Photo by Chinanews.com

...The U.S. has agreed to let South Korea extend the range of its missiles from 300 km to 800 km and the payload of drones from 500 kg to up to 2.5 tons, Cheong Wa Dae [ROK Office of the President] said Sunday.

Seoul sought the revisions "to deal with the North Korean missile threat," president secretary Chun Young-woo said.

That ends marathon talks that saw Seoul try to wear down stiff resistance from Washington to increasing its independent missile capacity. The restrictions were last revised in 2001.

South Korea is capable of developing a missile with an 800-km range in just a year that would be able to hit any target inside North Korea. Seoul will also be able to build a drone similar to the Global Hawk currently being used by the U.S. in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

But the new permitted range of South Korea's missiles still pales compared to China and Russia, which have intercontinental ballistic missiles that can hit targets more than 10,000 km away, and even lags behind North Korea, which has deployed missiles with ranges between 3,000 and 4,000 km. Japan has solid-fuel rockets that could be converted into ICBMs.

Even at the end of negotiations, the weight of warheads of South Korean missiles remains at 500 kg, and Seoul was unable to lift a prohibition on developing civilian solid-fueled rockets. Critics of the latest revisions cite these remaining restrictions as proof that South Korea is still being prevented from obtaining the capability to defend itself effectively against a North Korean attack....

New Evidence in the Arkan-Kergen Case?

11 September 2012

Source: Akhmatova, Zarina. "Гольный пистолет (The Naked Gun)," Vremya (Time), 11 September 2012. <http://www.time.kz/index.php?module=news&newsid=29283>

OE Watch Commentary: *The details surrounding the case of the border troops that were found murdered at the Arkan-Kergen border post in southeastern Kazakhstan continue to be unclear, especially the new evidence mentioned in the two accompanying articles. To summarize what happened, the bodies of 14 Kazakh border troops and one park ranger were found murdered on 30 May 2012 after the commander of the border post failed to check in. The only survivor of Arkan-Kergen, Vladislav Chelakh, was found a few days later not far from the site.*

*As one of the articles mentions, Chelakh initially confessed to killing everyone at the border post but later retracted his statement. The discovery of new evidence would seem to be significant, but it did not receive much attention in the media in Kazakhstan outside of these articles. Although the new evidence has not been confirmed, the Kazakh authorities have moved ahead with the case against Chelakh; on 1 October the government charged Chelakh with the murders, among several other crimes. The trial will reportedly start sometime in the fall. While the articles may not have attracted much attention at the time (a lot of media coverage in Kazakhstan on the case has focused on the victims' families and whether or not Chelakh is sane), they do show that there are many unanswered questions about the incident; uncertainty will likely continue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***



Vladislav Chelakh (in the top row to the right) photo by RIA Novosti via <http://en.ria.ru/world/20120607/173895145.html>

...In the case of Vladislav Chelakh there is a new twist...the agency claimed that the cartridges found at the site of the slaughter were not 5.45mm (like those of a Kalashnikov, which are the weapons of our border guards and army), but 5.56mm – the NATO standard. Officially, this information was not confirmed...recall that in the days after the murder of the border guards, President Nursultan Nazarbayev called it a terrorist attack...

A lawyer for Chelakh told us during the reexamination of Arkan-Kergen there were other cartridge cases found. "After the criminal investigation is completed, we will know more information. Then it will be possible to say if the weapon belongs to the border guards or not."

...Twenty days ago old rusted cartridges from other weapons were removed from the (crime) scene. An examination is being carried out on them. It could be because of hunting in the area. Until we have the results of the examination, we cannot dispute anything. In short, there are more questions than answers in the case...

Source: "Оружие Челаха" в базе КНБ не числится? (The "Weapon of Chelakh" Is Not Listed in the Database of the KNB?), Respublika, 10 September 2012. <http://respublika-kz.info/news/society/25181/>

...A source close to the investigation also claims that... "Chelakh fired 5.45mm (cartridges) through the wall from outside? We know that a weapon with this caliber would be stopped by most obstacles."

Initially, the young man admitted his guilt. He recounted that he shot his colleagues with a weapon taken from his commander. At that time he could not give specific reasons for the massacre...Later he retracted his confession, saying that he gave testimony under pressure; actually it is unknown who attacked the border post...According to results of a psychiatric examination, Chelakh was declared sane...

Last week the defense (lawyers) of Chelakh were getting ready to apply to the general prosecutor's office, demanding that a member of the Alakol police (the area where the incident took place) be held accountable; this is who Chelakh identified had forced him to confess...We know that those (present at the interrogation) were representatives of the military police, border guards, and local police.

Peacekeeping Exercises in Central Asia

9 October 2012

Source: Mustafina, Mira. “И залпы тысячи орудий (The Barrage of a Thousand Guns),” Liter, 9 October 2012. http://www.liter.kz/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11345&Itemid=2

OE Watch Commentary: *There have been questions among members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in recent years, particularly about the organization’s purpose and capabilities. These questions were raised in June 2010 when the government of Kyrgyzstan appealed to the CSTO to send peacekeepers to stop the violence that had been taking place in the country’s southern regions. The CSTO leadership denied Kyrgyzstan’s request on the grounds that the organization does not intervene in a member state’s domestic affairs. However, the incident did lead to changes in the organization’s charter that opened possibilities for the CSTO to intervene or deploy peacekeepers in similar conflicts in the future. Even before June 2010 the CSTO’s charter allowed the organization to conduct peacekeeping missions under a UN mandate.*

The accompanying articles cover the first ever joint peacekeeping exercise of CSTO members. There is a noticeable difference between the two articles; the first article is from a government-backed newspaper (Liter) and mainly provides a summary, while the second is from an independent source (Megapolis) and ridicules the exercise. While the second article might be considered too harsh (the author wrote a similar article about Steppe Eagle 2012, a peacekeeping exercise which took place in September of this year), the author makes an interesting point, if unintentionally. Past exercises of the CSTO involved a scenario of combating extremist groups that had infiltrated a member state, which was similar to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan’s (IMU) incursions in the Fergana Valley in 1999 and 2000. The author mentions an “imaginary” country where disorder took place, referencing Kyrgyzstan in June 2010.

In spite of the criticism, the CSTO appears to be preparing for a situation where its forces may need to deploy as peacekeepers, like the example in southern Kyrgyzstan, instead of continually rehearsing an IMU incursion. It will be worth watching what benefit or impact this will have on security in this region. End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)

...The large-scale military exercise near Almaty is taking place with the goal of strengthening capabilities in peacekeeping units. Alongside soldiers from Kazakhstan, units from Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated.

They are headed to the Ili, Shoshkaly, and Bereg ranges, in conditions that are close to combat. Here, the Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Brigade (the only one in the Central Asian region and the first unit made up of contract soldiers), the 38th (note: the author probably meant the 37th brigade) air assault brigade, “fights.”

Additionally, the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) invited representatives of the UN, the International Organization for Migration, and the International Committee of the Red Cross to the active phase of the peacekeeping exercise...

Source: Severniy, Vladimir. “Театр есть театр (Theatre is Theatre),” Megapolis, 8 October 2012. http://megapolis.kz/art/Teatr_est_teatr

...For ten days the participants will train for collective peacekeeping missions in the same imaginary country of the Central Asian region, where there was massive disorder...Before proceeding to the so-called decisive phase, the participants in all elements of the exercise thoroughly worked out the steps...Soldiers know exactly from where there will be “aimed fire”, which ambushes they will meet on their way to victory, and where their lunch will be brought. Again, they are learning like always, that “ours” must defeat “not ours”, forcing the latter to raise their hands and give up. Managers in theatre love these kinds of performances...

According to Vladimir Zaynetdinova, “Inviolable Brotherhood-2012” will strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between CSTO member states in areas of peacekeeping, to work out interaction of CSTO peacekeeping forces, and to train commanders and staff in massive disorder (situations)...

How much money will be spent on other international exercises is still unknown. It is too early to talk about any benefits of it. Rehearsal – is not a live show, where every second is a powder keg...

A Change in Russian Strategic Interests in Central Asia?

25 September 2012

Source: Aktalov, Askar. “Авиабазы ОДКБ в Канте сможет принимать российские бомбардировщики (The Airbase of the CSTO in Kant Could Handle Russian Bombers),” Kloop, 25 September 2012. <http://kloop.kg/blog/2012/09/25/aviabaza-odkb-v-kante-smozhet-primimat-rossijskie-bombardirovshiki/>

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past several years there have been countless discussions in the media about a New Great Game in Central Asia, where the United States, Russia, and, to an extent, China are vying for strategic influence. This discussion takes place in media in the United States or Russia more often than it does in Central Asian sources. The accompanying article comes from a news blog in Kyrgyzstan that is not reluctant to offer criticism, especially about something like the New Great Game. The topic of the article itself is newsworthy, but perhaps even more important is the reaction and tone of the article.

The news that Russia might extend the runway and utilize the Kant Airbase for strategic aircraft could be interpreted as another step in a fight for influence. However, nothing in the article indicates any alarm that Russia's involvement is outside of the usual partnership between the two governments (Russia continues to be the most important security partner for Kyrgyzstan). If anything, the article offers a logical reason why Russia would not utilize Kant for strategic bombers. While news sources outside Central Asia write about a strategic competition in the region, those inside the region do not appear to share the same concerns. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Kant air base location. Map by planiglobe [CC-BY-SA-3.0], via www.planiglobe.com

...The runway at the CSTO airbase in Kant will be extended – it could handle “strategic aircraft,” said the Minister of Defense of Russia... “Technically, we could complete the reconstruction of the runway at Kant in six months. In theory, in six months the airbase would handle our strategic aircraft, but any actual landing is a process that needs to be carefully thought through.” – said Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov...

Strategic aircraft in the Russian Air Force are long-range bombers like the Tu-95, Tu-160, and the Tu-22M, which can carry nuclear warheads... The head of the press service of the Defense Ministry of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Namazliyev is not aware of Russian plans to use the airbase for bombers. “But this is certain to be agreed with us.” – he said...

“To place these aircraft in Kant permanently is not beneficial, because it is necessary to deliver equipment and fuel (there).” – said a regional security expert... he added that it does not appear Moscow's wish to strengthen its military presence in the region. Russia, if necessary, could send aircraft from its territory in “two or three hours”... The number of aircraft at Kant is five Su-25, two Mi-8, and a number of trainer L-39...

Situation Normal in Kyrgyzstan: Civil Unrest and Talk of Revolution

3 October 2012

Source: "Rioters attack government buildings in Kyrgyzstan," Kiev Post, October 3, 2012, <http://www.kyivpost.com/content/russia-and-former-soviet-union/rioters-attack-government-buildings-in-kyrgyzstan-313835.html>

OE Watch Commentary: More than two years after the infamous Osh riots and revolution, Kyrgyzstan is again rife with civil unrest and talk of revolution. The accompanying article discusses a riot that occurred outside the Kyrgyz "White House," allegedly instigated by two politicians protesting the vastly unpopular Canadian-owned Kumtor gold mine, which they believe should be nationalized. Video of the rioting has been posted on the website YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ernu5hNri68&feature=youtu.be>

Pundits have been quick to point out that the Kumtor gold mine issue was not the real impetus for the rioting, but was instead instigated to cause the arrest and imprisonment of Sapar Zhaparov and Kamchibek Tashiyev, the ultra-nationalist politicians sponsoring the event. This is due to an interesting aspect of Kyrgyz politics, in which Kyrgyz politicians gain notable street credibility for being imprisoned for "revolutionary crimes," as the British Broadcasting Corporation recently reported: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/tff/tff_20121013-0530a.mp3

One significant difference between this unrest and the events of 2010 is the advent of the "Arab Spring" revolutions, which have been frequently discussed in the Kyrgyz media. The "Arab Spring" revolutions have often been compared to Kyrgyzstan's 2010 revolution, with one (fortunate) caveat that Kyrgyzstan has not had the civil-war or near civil-war experiences that many "Arab Spring" countries have suffered. Although Kyrgyzstan has had a history of revolution and ethnic violence, the general public opinion is that the Kyrgyz neither have the desire nor the stomach for the type of civil war now underway in some of the "Arab Spring" countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Supporters of presidential candidate Kamchybek Tashiev say they want a revote. Photo by Nicolas Tanner, via <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64420>

...Protesters clashed with police and tried to break into a building housing the parliament and government offices in Kyrgyzstan's capital Wednesday, during a rally to demand the resignation of the prime minister and other top officials.

Police officers protecting the government building, known as the White House, used dogs and smoke bombs to disperse a group of young men who attempted to scale the gates.

The Health Ministry said 10 people are being treated for injuries, three of them for gunshot wounds. Officials said no police were injured.

Around 1,000 people gathered in the center of the city for a rally, organized by nationalist politicians Sapar Zhaparov and Kamchibek Tashiyev, ostensibly to demand the nationalization of the gold mine in the east of the Central Asian nation...

Zhaparov and Tashiyev are members of a virulently nationalist opposition party, Ata-Zhurt, which draws the bulk of its support from the south of the country, which was the scene of deadly ethnic clashes in June 2010.

Ata-Zhurt is the largest party in the turbulent ex-Soviet republic's parliament although it is not in the governing coalition.

Prosecutors said last month that they are pursuing criminal charges against Zhaparov on suspicion of fraud. Zhaparov denies he has been involved in any financial wrongdoing and says the investigations are politically motivated...

Future of Georgia's NATO and EU Aspirations after Parliamentary Elections

4 October 2012

Source: “Москва и Тбилиси готовы к переговорам. Цена нормализации российско-грузинских отношений” (Moscow and Tbilisi are Ready for Negotiations. The cost of normalization of Russian-Georgian relations), Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper), 4 October 2012. http://www.ng.ru/editorial/2012-10-04/2_red.html

OE Watch Commentary: *On 1 October, to the surprise of most Georgia watchers, Georgian billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili's six-party opposition coalition Georgian Dream won a majority in Georgia's parliamentary election, defeating Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement. Ivanishvili, whose business is known for connections to Russia, where he made billions of dollars, can now become Georgia's prime minister. While Saakashvili, who has a year left in his presidency, quickly conceded to Georgian Dream's victory, Ivanishvili called for Saakashvili to resign. Western analysts see Ivanishvili's victory as a reversal of Georgia's pro-Western orientation under Saakashvili since the 2003 Rose Revolution.*

Ivanishvili, whose business income is reportedly more than Georgia's entire national budget (see <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/election-in-georgia-pits-saakashvili-against-billionaire-led-opposition-a-858533.html>), officially stated that Georgia will continue its pro-NATO and EU aspirations, but will also work to improve relations with Russia.

The following are three reactions from Russia's media in the immediate aftermath of the election, focusing on this policy. Together, they paint a mixed picture from the Russian perspective.

Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper), a major, privately-owned and traditionally pro-Russian opposition daily, editorializes that Moscow

....Moscow, by and large, wants one thing from Tbilisi: for Georgia to not get in the way of Russian influence in its zone of traditional geopolitical interests - in the Caucasus. Simply put: no NATO, foreign military bases; forget entirely about support for separatist movements in the North Caucasus; overall - do not contribute to the West's strengthening in the region, including with regard to large economic projects.

Moscow, as the stronger side in the negotiations, should nonetheless realize that Tbilisi is unable to make a rapid geopolitical reversal. If only because of the huge foreign debt which, according to some reports, is above the 10 billion dollar mark. At first, the Russian side can be satisfied with a radical change in Tbilisi's rhetoric towards Moscow. A departure from the logic of hostility and the probable change of the prevailing sentiment in the Georgian society - is already not little, for with the talent and diligence of the now- outgoing in the opposition “National Movement” party, Russia for the last 10 years, is associated with Tolkien's Mordor among the [Georgian] people, particularly the young people.

Comparison of wishes of those preparing to enter into negotiations reveals opposite interests. But at closer inspection it is no longer an insurmountable gap, for example, the idea of joining NATO is not as popular in Georgia as recently, and the U.S. not seen as an ideal above criticism. This comes down to a price: who can make what concession to whom and in return for what. Only after successfully overcoming (if that works out) “easy” obstacles, Tbilisi and Moscow may think about the problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia which, despite the status of “partially recognized”, still remains in limbo.

Source: Aleksandr Aleksandrov, “Мечты и реальность” (Moscow and Tbilisi are Ready for Negotiations. The prices of normalization of Russian-Georgian relations), Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), 3 October 2012. <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/newspaper/item/5024-mechty-i-realnost>

....Georgia still wants to join NATO and does not give up aspirations to join the European Union, along the way hoping to restore relations with Russia....

Although the changes to the constitution, according to which Georgia becomes a parliamentary republic, only take effect in 2013, the leader of the “Georgian Dream” coalition that won the election has already developed an active propaganda for upcoming steps. Bidzina Ivanishvili said that “the only correct next step by Saakashvili's resignation will and to call early presidential elections.” When asked whether the “Georgian Dream” to initiate impeachment Saakashvili, Ivanishvili said he did not rule out such an option.

...[Ivanishvili]... underscored that “in the new government there will not be a single

primarily wants Tbilisi to stop interfering in the Caucasus, which the Kremlin continues to see as its traditional sphere of influence; Moscow also wants to keep the West from increasing influence in that region. After this election, Russia's and Georgia's interests seem less divergent than under Saakashvili, because as the article asserts, the Georgian people are less pro-NATO than in the recent past, and no longer view the United States "above criticism."

Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star), the Russian Defense Ministry's paper of record, underscores that although Saakashvili conceded his party's loss, the struggle for power is not over. Moreover, a large portion of Georgia's budget comes from foreign, particularly U.S., aid, which, according to the article, will mean that Saakashvili will continue to control Georgia's politics and will not allow new cabinet members to interfere. Experts are skeptical that relations with Russia will improve, given Ivanishvili's statement that Georgia will continue its pro-NATO and EU aspirations.

RIA Novosti (RIA news), a major government-owned news agency, reports that the European People's Party Wilfried Martens thinks it is impossible for Georgia to simultaneously pursue both Western integration and closer ties with Russia—the two policies are incompatible, and while relations with Russia will be a road to the past, Georgia's future lies with the West.

*Perhaps equally important is what these articles did not mention: under Saakashvili's presidency, this election was the first constitutional transfer of power in Georgia since the fall of the Soviet Union in what Europe and Washington deemed, by and large, a free and fair election. At best, the articles gloss over Saakashvili's compliance with the law and conceding defeat, seeking, rather, to stress other ways he can continue to influence politics. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

member of the current Ministers cabinet." ...President Saakashvili, however, is in no hurry to give up, declaring intention to establish a constructive dialogue with the future government....

According to most experts, the political struggle is not over. Given the heterogeneity of the coalition of "Georgian Dream", which brings together six parties ...it is unlikely that the opposition parliament will be able to work quietly and seek the parliamentary unity and majority on all issues. It should also be noted that Georgia's budget is formed largely by foreign aid, especially from the U.S. Therefore, for the next year, all economic and power levers will be in the hands of the acting president, who is unlikely to allow the future cabinet to come near them.

No less carefully Russian experts estimate the chances of radical changes in relations between Russia and Georgia. This is evidenced by the recent statement of the opposition leader. According to Bidzina Ivanishvili, who has already begun to receive the first congratulations from abroad, Georgia will not change its aspirations to join the EU and NATO, but is ready to improve relations with Russia. "Georgia's strategy does not change, and Georgia is again on that path which the Georgian people chose, and Georgia's main aspiration will be the European Union, and in terms of security - NATO, but relations with Russia should get better," -said after the elections "Georgian Dream" leader. According to him, he is well aware that such a policy is not easy, but he is confident that Georgia will eventually be able to convince Russia that NATO will not be a danger to Moscow.

Source: Мартенс: вступление Грузии в НАТО при сотрудничестве с РФ невозможно (Martens: Georgia's NATO Entry Impossible with Cooperation with Russia), RIA Novosti, 7 October 2012. <http://www.ria.ru/world/20121007/768118154.html>

...President of the European People's Party Wilfried Martens said in a statement of the leader of the winning parliamentary elections in Georgia Coalition "Georgian Dream" Ivanishvili's intention to join NATO and the European Union and at the same time develop a close relationship with Russia, is impossible.... Georgian Dream believes it can combine the NATO integration and cooperation with Russia; the question arises – to which extend is this possible? I'm afraid that Georgia cannot become a member of NATO and the EU, if they have a close relationship with Russia; for Georgia, this relationship will a road to the past, not the future, "said Martens ..."I think the only right way to for a clear future for Georgia - is affirmation of integration and cooperation with NATO on defense and security," said Martens.

Russian Official Draws Connection between Murder of U.S. Ambassador, Arab Spring, and Democracy Promotion

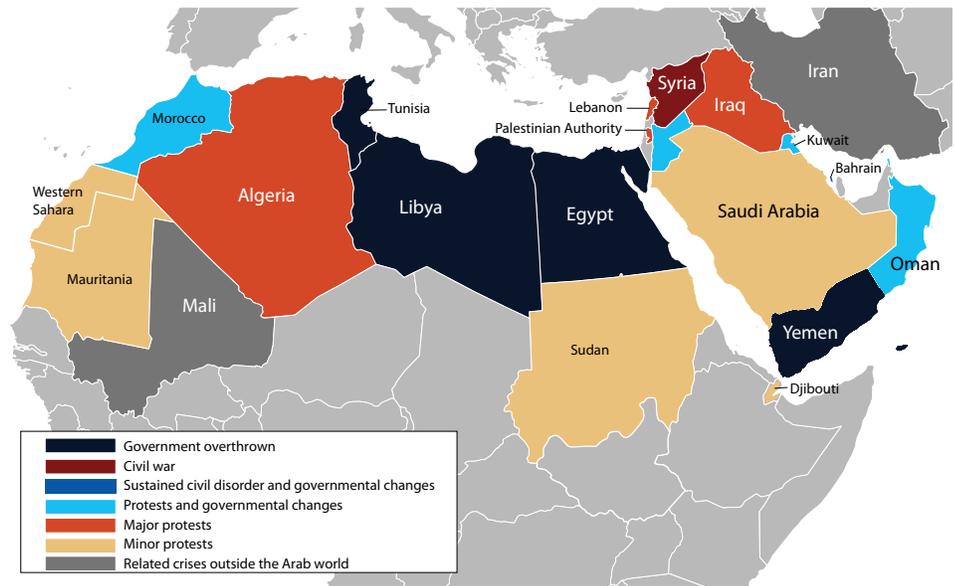
19 September 2012

Source: “Mikhail Margelov “Arabskaya Vesna Porodila Novyye Ugrozy. Provokatsionny film –povod, a ne prichina pogromov dipmissiy S.Sh.A.” (Arab Spring Has Created New Threats. Provocative Film—An Excuse, not the Cause of U.S. Mission Pogroms),” Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper), 19 September 2012. http://www.ng.ru/world/2012-09-19/8_spring.html

OE Watch Commentary: On 19 September Mikhail Margelov, Russia’s special envoy on cooperation with African states, penned an op-ed in Nezavisimaya Gazeta, arguing that U.S. Ambassador to Libya Chris Stevens’ murder in Benghazi on 11 September 2012 is the latest result of the Arab Spring.

Margelov is also the current Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Russia’s Federation Council (upper house of parliament) and is a member of President Vladimir Putin’s United Russia Party. Margelov is fluent in Arabic and a serious Middle East expert, and has written numerous articles over several years in a variety of Russian publications. Nezavisimaya Gazeta is a major, privately-owned Russian daily, and traditionally pro-opposition. Margelov writes here that Western “democracy-promotion” in North Africa and the Middle East is responsible for the Arab Spring in the first place, and the Arab Spring is now backfiring on the West, raising “sinister forces” from the “depths” of these societies, and playing right into the hands of Islamist extremists.

These themes resonate among Russian readers. Russian sensitivity toward the Arab Spring runs deeper than reaction to current events. The Kremlin is terrified that something akin to the Arab Spring will target Putin. By making a number of important points—for example, that the film *Innocence of Muslims* was only an excuse for violence (after all, many Benghazi protestors had not even seen the film)—Margelov skillfully and subtly plays on traditional Russian fears of Islamism,



Arab Spring map, via http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring

...Pogroms of U.S. embassies and missions in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt - are both a direct consequence, and continuation of the Arab Spring. In other Islamic countries the disposition of a mob is heated up with the domino effect and solidarity of local extremists with their kindred spirits in these three countries. And Islamic extremists exist not only in North Africa and the Middle East - they are in the U.S. and in Europe, and in South-East Asia, and so forth. But the refrain from the popular in the Soviet era song, “the revolution has a beginning, but the revolution has no end,” is particularly applicable to the events in Libya and Egypt.

“Promoting democracy” in North African and the Middle Eastern countries, oddly enough, plays into the hands of fundamentalists and separatists, raises sinister forces from the bottom. The West “promotes” democracy here, which doesn’t go beyond elections for objective for Islamic countries reasons, and stubbornly evades fighting the chaos. And the outcome of the elections, as a rule, is predictable – Islamists of varying radicalism degrees are winning directly or indirectly. The victorious in Egypt “Muslim Brotherhood” is far from a secular movement, according to the U.S. intelligence community. “Muslim Brotherhood’s” attitude towards the liberals, Copts, and leftists is far from tolerant.

And the election campaign of these “moderate” and openly “immoderate” Islamists in Egypt, according to some, were funded from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar. Nonetheless, the current Egyptian authorities are not going to, if only for economic reasons, break off relations with the West, which gives the radicals an excuse to “continue the revolution” in one form or

bold steps (as opposed to cautious reform, which both Putin and Syrian president Bashar Assad traditionally advocate), and suspicion of the West to warn that changing the status quo brings dangerous instability and extremism. Margelov says nothing of what role decades of corrupt authoritarian leadership in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as both Western and Russian support of these regimes, played in sparking an extremist backlash. He also offers an important critique that Western democracy promotion is only focused on elections, but not the broader underpinnings of democracy. His article offers an important window into official Russian thinking, how they perceive Western involvement in the Middle East and the Arab Spring, and how they explain it to the Russian people and use it in domestic politics. End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)

another. And the blasphemous to extreme Islamists' minds pagan Egyptian pyramids still adorn the landscape. Even more frustrating to the extremists is the policy of "An-Nahda" - a party that won in Tunisia, which defends the right of Islamic, not Islamist values. Hence the fury during the storming of the U.S. embassy in the capital.

The situation in Libya, where the first pogrom of a diplomatic mission with a fatal outcome for the U.S. ambassador took place, is the most difficult one. First, during these known events, among the rebels-anti-Qaddafists fought insurgents from "al-Qaeda" and other terrorist groups. But elections were won by a liberal, by Libyan standards, alliance, and these fighters and their supporters feel wronged by these results. Secondly, it's unlikely that the elections reflect the balance of power and aspirations in this country. In the east, where the Islamists' positions are strong, the people voted reluctantly and it's unlikely they are happy about the victory of the liberals. After all, eastern clans - are a minority population in Libya, and democracy - is the majority's opinion. But it is in the minority's territory that Libya's main oil reserves are concentrated. It seems that the goal of the Benghazi clans that rebelled against Qaddafi was not met - at the time, among other things, the issue was about the center's unfair treatment of the country's east. And a democratic resolution of the situation through numbers of voices in this case is unlikely. It is no coincidence this incident began with a massacre of the American consulate in Benghazi, and not for example, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli. And this incident in Libya is multi-layered - "The Innocence of Muslims" is only a good excuse, while the reasons are more substantial and are not only in the sphere, so to speak, of the spirit, but in the material one, in oil. Revolutions take to eliminate the accumulated contradictions. Arab Spring, not having had to deal with this problem, has generated new ones.

Today, in the form of Islamist pogroms, the essence, so to speak, of what is happening in the African continent and the Middle East was revealed. A "green arc" of instability is forming in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, heating from the south the situation in the Arab countries of North Africa. For example, in Nigeria, there are extremist militant sects "Boko Haram," which means "Western education is evil." These extremists are linked to "Al Qaeda" in the Islamic Maghreb and Somali terrorists, "al-Shabaab." In Mali, the "Ansar al-Din" group cooperating with "Al-Qaeda" contributed to the separation aspirations of the Tuareg tribes. The African Union peacekeeping force, along with Kenyan units, are at war with Islamists of "Al-Shabab" who commit terrorist acts. Extremists operate in the Sinai Peninsula, etc.

So the provocation of values - the idiotic film made in the U.S., "The Innocence of Muslims" - is an excuse, and not the cause of violence, which has also in this a region traditionally anti-American and anti-Western orientation.

Russian Military Manpower

5 October 2012

Source: “Призванных уже меньше, чем беглецов (There Are Now Fewer Draftees Than Dodgers),” *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye Online*, 5 October 2012

OE Watch Commentary:

The Russian military continues to experience problems in conscripting sufficient numbers of young men to serve in their armed forces. Despite all of the patriotic rhetoric over the past decade, draft evasion remains at high levels. Since prosecuting these draft dodgers is both timely and costly, Russian political and military authorities are considering other incentives to induce Russian men to serve in the military.

The excerpt from the first article (Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye) details the current personnel shortfall among conscripts, and how this deficit is weakening the ‘permanent readiness’ concept of the newly formed Army brigades. The article describes the traditional repressive measures for combatting draft evasion, and how even with stronger penalties, avoiding military service remains prevalent. The article goes on to suggest that, rather than relying upon penalties, defense leaders should “purposefully seek some kind of incentives to attract young people into military service.” Why not make a



Russian Soldiers by Kremlin.ru [CCBY-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

...The latest draft of young people into the Armed Forces and other troops began in Russia on 1 October. The draft campaign will continue until 31 December. “This fall we are planning to draft 140,140 citizens into military service,” Colonel General Vasily Smirnov, deputy chief of the General Staff and chief of the Main Organizational and Mobilizational Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, announced before the start of the campaign. The current plan target is 15,000 fewer than the spring recruitment. Which, according to the estimates of experts, will inevitably bring the personnel shortage in the troops close to the 30% threshold.

Let us make the calculations fairly... If you add together the 155,570 people drafted in the spring and the planned 140,140 new recruits of the fall, you get 295,710 service personnel on compulsory service, as they used to call it. Meanwhile the number of contract personnel, according to official General Staff figures, will not change in the current year and will, as before, total about 186,000 service personnel. So together with the 220,000 officers, in total there will be just over 701,000 people in the Armed Forces. So how does that correlate to the official strength of the Army and Navy, 1 million service personnel, as established in legislation? This figure is considered, in general, to be critical in assessing the level of combat readiness of the Armed Forces.

It is no secret that such a monstrous shortfall is not only determined by the demographic problem that has been mentioned so frequently for several years. According to the military department’s figures, for two years in succession the number of young people being drafted into military service is planned at a lower level than the number of young people who are evading their constitutional duty. Smirnov announced, for instance, that in the spring of 2012, 166,100 people evaded the draft. That includes more than 135,000 who received summonses, while the others changed their place of residence without informing the military commissariat. We are dealing with a fixed negative attitude toward its own Army by a society in which service in the Army is considered extremely undesirable.

Efforts are being made to change this attitude by various means. Including strengthening the repressive measures used against evaders who get caught. Major General of Justice Aleksandr Nikitin, chief of an administration at the Main Military Prosecutor’s Office, for his part, announced

career in the government contingent upon first fulfilling the military obligation?

The excerpt from the second article (Rossiyskaya Gazeta) describes the reasoning behind the proposed legislation which would make military service a prerequisite for a government career and other possible positive post-military inducements (e.g., educational opportunities) for today's conscript. The legislation's proponents argue that if a young Russian is truly concerned with building a strong state, then he ought to be willing to spend one year defending the motherland. Making military service an essential ticket-punch to a government career would be a strong incentive. Over the past decade, as salaries and prestige have increased among state jobs, a career as a government employee has become a much more attractive career choice.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum are proposals to contract out Russia's defense needs to private companies. Today Russia is awash with private security firms that provide protection for individuals and the domestic market. Staffed with ex-military and security personnel, these companies certainly have plenty of expertise and could theoretically carry out state-level objectives.

that in the past year criminal proceedings were instituted against 1,200 people for evading the draft... However, a toughening of accountability for evaders and the "long arm" of the military prosecutor's office, as we can see, have not produced any marked improvement in the situation.

No doubt it is for this reason that in "defense circles" creative thinking is increasingly purposefully seeking some kind of incentives to attract young people into military service. Frants Klintsevich, deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee on Defense, has proposed a reverse approach: to permit admission to the state service only for those men who have performed military service, while those who were found to have evaded it would simply be banned from working in state structures. Vice Premier Dmitriy Rogozin supported this initiative enthusiastically....

Source: Yuriy Gavrilov, "Уклонистов не будут принимать на госслужбу (Draft Evaders Will Not Be Accepted into State Service)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 10 October 2012.

...The government has submitted a draft law to the State Duma which will probably give serious pause for thought to young men who are dreaming of a career as a state official but do not want to spend a year wearing a soldier's uniform.

The document talks about an official ban on the recruitment of draft evaders to state officials' posts.

The authors of the legislative initiative are expecting at least two results from it. First, this decision will make it possible to reduce the army of barrack deserters. According to the General Staff's figures, they number around 160,000 across the whole of Russia today. A little over 7,000 draftees fled after receiving their draft notice from the military commissariat this spring. The rest have spent years, in a direct sense of the word, avoiding both the summons to the commissariat and compulsory military service.

Nevertheless, all these citizens are forming their life plans and for many of them, really ambitious young men, the career restrictions that are being introduced must outweigh the potential severity of daily life in a barracks.

Another idea in the draft law is linked to the enhancement of the prestige of both military service itself and of the status of the young men who have honestly done their duty to the motherland. An informational footnote placed on the government's site says that advantages will be introduced for entry into state service for draftees who have been through army schooling. And they will also be candidates for inclusion in the reserve of management cadres....

Source: Vera Kozubova, "Private Business — Dmitriy Rogozin Is Ready To Let Non-State Companies Into the Military Sector," *Vzglyad Online*, 9 September 2012

...Private military companies may be created in Russia, Dmitriy Rogozin said on Wednesday. "We are looking at the issue of forming an interdepartmental working group under the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK) on the problem of creating private military companies in Russia," he said at an offsite session of the VPK in Tula.

According to him, the goal of the working group will be to draw up an initiative with a monitoring report on private business in the spheres of defense and security, the state of the main trends in the world market of private services, and ideas on the expediency of creating private military companies in Russia.

As the excerpt from the third article (Vzglyad Online) suggests, this proposal has high-level support among some Kremlin officials. However, as one Russian expert points out, “before creating private military companies, a thorough, expert study is essential. In addition, state control over the private companies should be preserved.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

Russia has large economic interests beyond its national borders; there are large states and private companies that operate in countries with difficult conditions, the vice premier added.

“We are thinking about whether our money will leak to funding foreign private military security companies, and we will look at the expediency of creating such enterprises within Russia itself,” RIA Novosti quoted Dmitriy Rogozin.

Vladimir Putin, when he was still premier, supported the idea of creating a system of private military companies in Russia that could provide services in guarding facilities and training foreign military abroad.

There are more than a hundred large, private military (ChVK) and security companies in the world (ChOK), primarily in the United States, Great Britain, and France. They are involved in guarding facilities, training army and police subunits, providing consulting services in the field of security, as well as supplying and supporting troops.

Such companies work on contract with governments and defense ministries as well as with large transnational corporations. Several dozen such companies are now operating in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Large, private companies perform work in Afghanistan and Iraq that the governmental organizations of these countries cannot do. For many countries, such companies make it possible to reduce military losses to a minimum. But for Russia, the creation of new military companies is a relatively new trend, because here serious, expert analysis is needed,” the director of the World Arms Trade Analysis Center, Igor Korotchenko, noted.

In the expert’s opinion, it is very important in this case to prevent a conflict of interest between the state and business. “The interests of private companies often do not coincide with the government’s interests. Military companies have more than once announced their interest in selling military equipment. I believe that only state organizations should be involved in these exports,” Igor Korotchenko is certain.

An expert from the Political Research Center of Russia, Vadim Kozyulin, holds a similar position on the issue of the creation of private military companies.

“Private companies are more competitive, creative, and mobile. But in the Russian military sector, abrupt movements lead to the loss of old practices. Therefore, before creating private military companies, a thorough, expert study is essential. In addition, state control over the private companies should be preserved,” he said to the newspaper Vzglyad....

Russian Military Digital Challenges

7 September 2012

Source: Sergey Frolov, "The Russian Military has its own Internet," *Trud Online*, 7 September 2012. http://www.trud.ru/article/07-09-2012/1281550_u_rossijsk_ix_voennyx_pojavilsja_svoj_internet.html

OE Watch

Commentary: *Improving overall command and control (C2) is a key element in Russia's current military reform. As keen observers of recent military operations (in particular, their 5-day war with Georgia in August 2008), Russian military leaders understand the importance of timely and secure communications. They have analyzed how advances in digital communication have revolutionized all aspects of C2, to include identifying, engaging, and, if necessary, destroying enemy targets. As the first excerpted article points out (Trud Online), the Russian military is now in the process of developing its own 'intranet.' According to this source, this digital military communications will contain robust firewalls to provide a "high degree of protection against external actions."*

For a variety of reasons, however, Russia has lagged behind in the realm of digital communications. Rather than purchasing outdated information technology (IT) equipment from

...The military electronic network has unified communications and military commands from Kaliningrad to Nizhny Novgorod and from Severomorsk to Voronezh.

It seems that serious conclusions were drawn from the "five day war" of 2008.

At the last training of the communication forces of the Western Military District (ZVO), testing of a new systems of communication, which observers have already christened the "military Internet", took place. The military electronic network unified communications and military commands from Kaliningrad to Nizhny Novgorod and from Severomorsk to Voronezh.

The "military Internet" includes both traditional communication channels and modern specialized communication networks, which make it possible to command troops in real time, instantly transmit various text documents and also multimedia files of any size.

This network also makes it possible to conduct video conferences with commanders and generals located at any point within the military district, including on ships in the middle of the ocean.

A serious lag was discovered with respect to communication and command in our forces as far back as during the Chechen campaigns, and even during the successful "five-day war" of 2008, and communication remained the biggest problem for the military. All things considered over the last 4 years corrective actions been taken.

The main asset of the "military web" is the high degree of protection against external actions. During the training at ZVO, the radio-electronic warfare subunits purposely initiated hacker attacks and created interference in the control radio network. The "military Internet" passed all of the tests with flying colors....

Source: Sergey Ptichkin, "Совершенно не секретно. Правда ли, что в армию поступают ноутбуки-шпионы? (Really Not Secret — Is It True That Spy Notebooks Are Going to the Army?)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 5 October 2012

...The Russian Army is changing over to computer technologies. Mobile computing systems are going to the troops in a mass quantity. The goal has been set to provide every commander with a personal notebook computer with access to the overall troop command-and-control system. But scandalous reports have unexpectedly appeared on the Internet that these systems are packed with malicious imported software and are capable of independently connecting to base servers located abroad.

An advanced user even reported that he disassembled a standard military computer and found out that all of the notebook's hardware came from Taiwan, and the software was imported with a large amount of malicious code. Externally, the computing system looks like a solid notebook that is protected from shock, dust, and dirt and is even waterproof. It has, as befits the Army, a protective dark green color, and on it are stickers with the name of a domestic-manufacturing company and a note about its special inspection as if guaranteeing that there is no spyware in it.

However, upon turning on the computer, the screen lights up with the name of the true manufacturer in English — an IT company in Taiwan. Does it turn out that the Russian company that calls itself a developer and manufacturer of computers for the Army did not even bother to change the startup

domestic firms, many Russian defense (and civil) manufacturers have relied upon foreign companies for their digital needs. As the second excerpted article warns (Rossiyskaya Gazeta), there are now concerns that these foreign IT products may be infected with hidden viruses. To illustrate this danger this article refers to a breakdown of sensitive communications (purchased from a Western firm) during the recent conflict in Chechnya. One Russian IT expert suggests that this may have been a pre-planned interruption.

*Russian defense officials thus find themselves in something of a quandary. They recognize the need for high-tech digital equipment, but lack the state-of-the-art facilities and expertise to manufacture this technology. In the second article, Vice Premier Rogozin describes the proper solution to this dilemma, i.e., creating an organic capability to produce this equipment, but this answer presupposes considerable investment within all areas of the country's infrastructure, and not just defense. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

screen in the operating system to its own? After investigating a military notebook that ended up in his hands, the author of this article established that the computer has the ability to connect with base servers located abroad independently of the will of the user and send them data with the precise coordinates of a specific notebook.

We have learned that the Defense Ministry is treating this Internet article seriously. And although the ministry itself and the General Staff have no computers of the indicated brand, they may very well have been supplied to the troops, since the active computerization of the Armed Forces is now in progress. Most likely, a massive inspection of computer equipment held by the troops will soon begin.

One of the leading developers of automated troop command-and-control systems, a corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Missile and Artillery Sciences, Robert Nikolayev, confirmed to RG that various malicious and sometimes true espionage programs have more than once been found in IT products that Russia is today importing from abroad, including for the OPK [defense-industrial complex] and the Armed Forces. And modern devices have direct Internet communications with the technical services of the CIA and NSA. Because of this, scandals have already arisen in the West, which were provoked by freedom-loving citizens who are dissatisfied with the fact that their personal Internet space is not protected from the eyes of others. In Nikolayev's opinion, IT security issues are becoming vitally important as the Armed Forces are changed over to net-centric command and control.

Personal notebook computers, which will become mandatory for commanders, including sergeants, will be the first cell in the net-centric system, and a simplified tablet PC will be a part of the equipment of every ordinary soldier. There is a great risk with foreign software that all commanders and troop subunits may actually be constantly monitored by others. How probable is this danger?

One can answer right off that it is more than probable; it has existed for a long time. Incidentally, Vice Premier Dmitriy Rogozin has talked about this more than once. According to him, the time has come to refrain from the practice of buying components, including computer microcircuits, abroad. It is necessary to urgently create our own world-class micro-instrument-making capability. Already 29 basic technologies are being developed for the manufacture of our own electronic-component base to be used in military equipment. A council of chief designers in the field of microelectronics has been created under the Ministry of Industry and Trade. All of this should allow our country to free itself from its imported IT dependency. And this only confirms that the danger of "computer aggression" exists, and the highest state authorities recognize it.

An expert in the field of scientific-technical counterintelligence, Major General (retired) Nikolay Sham, told RG's correspondent that during the second Chechen campaign, a completely secure government electro-optical communications system went out of operation exactly at the time that the situation worsened in the North Caucasus, when the Kremlin required stable communications with the region. The electro-optical control systems were supplied and installed by a very large Western company. Its representatives said that the communications disruptions took place randomly because they were in a test mode. But the computer support of the strategically-important communications channel that was protected from eavesdropping hung up "on time" too suspiciously...

Military Media Matters

18 September 2012

Source: Arina Borodina and Ivan Safronov, "No 'Star' on the Horizon for Public Television. New Channel Will Begin Broadcasting From Zero," *Kommersant Online*, 18 September 2012.

OE Watch Commentary: *While never crystal clear, the line between private and public property has become even more blurred in Russia today. This hazy division is especially apparent within Russian media, particularly TV. Once under quasi-private ownership, the three major Russian television stations (RTR, ORT and NTV) are now back under state control. In the televised marketplace of ideas, most Russians still consume Kremlin-friendly messages.*

Recognizing the need for a more objective information forum, a year ago, in one of his last initiatives as Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev directed the creation of a truly Russian public television station. While partially funded by the government, this new station would mirror the BBC or PBS in its apolitical stance, providing a platform where all disparate voices could be heard.

Rather than start from scratch, it was initially proposed that this new station would use the resources and infrastructure of the Zvezda TV network (<http://tvzvezda.ru/tv/>). Sponsored by the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Zvezda was created in 2005 to help instill patriotism and a pro-military message. It has since grown into a powerful (and profitable) media tool, broadcasting to nearly every region within Russia.

Given the strength and influence of the Zvezda media network, it was not surprising that the MoD put up a vigorous defense to protect this asset and keep the station under its control. As the first excerpted article points out (Kommersant Online), defense officials



Russian TV channel Zvezda logo, via http://www.ria.ru/defense_safety/20121017/903394525.html

...Kommersant has learned that the decision that Zvezda will no longer be regarded as the channel for the start of work by Public Television (OT) was made last week. Yesterday this was confirmed, in effect, by Deputy Defense Minister State Secretary Nikolay Pankov. "The TV channel Zvezda will continue to exist despite the creation of Public Television in Russia," he told journalists, refusing to comment in more detail.

It should be recalled that in accordance with Dmitriy Medvedev's presidential edict on the creation of OT, signed in April, Zvezda was regarded as the platform for the new television channel. But the Defense Ministry did not want to give up its main media resource. Kommersant has already reported that Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov even sent a letter to the government talking about the inexpediency of handing over Zvezda's frequencies to OT.

However, a source in the government told Kommersant: "The battle for Zvezda's frequencies turned out to be a false target." According to Kommersant's information, after studying in detail the possibility of disseminating Zvezda to the country's territories and the technical condition of the frequencies (the vast majority of them, according to Kommersant's information, do not belong to the Defense Ministry but carry out broadcasting through partners in the regions), a decision was made in the government to abandon this format of broadcasting for OT....

Source: Некоторые российские СМИ нагнетают у военнослужащих тревоги за свой завтрашний день, заявляют Минобороны РФ (Some of the Russian Media Are Whipping Up Service Personnel's Worries About Their Future, Russian Defense Ministry Says), *Interfax-AVN Online*, 5 October 2012

...The Russian Defense Ministry has described as not in accordance with reality a report published in one Russian newspaper about alleged plans for a reduction by a factor of three in the numerical strength of the Northern Fleet command by the end of the current year.

successfully lobbied to retain control of the Zvezda TV frequency. Some analysts have suggested that the decision to force the new public TV channel to develop its own platform is a sign of President Putin's priorities. While Medvedev may have encouraged open debate, his successor appears less willing to foster critical discussion.

The second excerpted article illustrates that the government and the military regard the media as a powerful tool of influence (Interfax-AVN Online). To counter possible negative press coverage demands more than official statements from the proper authorities. To compete in today's information domain and calm anxiety among military personnel requires a complete media arsenal under state and MoD control. End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

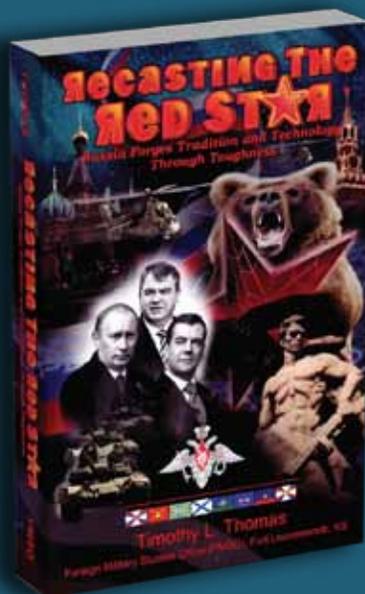
Such reports, “which seek to be sensational and claim to display their authors’ ‘depth of information’ on questions relating to military organizational development, not only mislead the readership of the publication.” “But also, apart from anything else, idle conjectures that are disseminated from the pages of printed publications can hinder the organization of planned vital activity by the troops, since they whip up out of nowhere, among service personnel and their family members, a sense of uncertainty and anxiety about their future,” it says in a press release from the Russian Federation Defense Ministry Press Service and Information Directorate.

That was the comment here on a report in one Russian newspaper, which wrote on Wednesday that the head of the Russian Federation Defense Ministry has instructed that the Northern Fleet command be reduced from nearly 200 officers to 70 by the end of the year. And if that experiment is a success then staffing levels will also supposedly be reduced in the commands of the other three Russian fleets — the Baltic, Pacific, and Black Sea Fleets.

The Defense Ministry described this 3 October report as “not in accordance with reality.”

“At the present time,” the department notes, “organizational and staffing measures with regard to the joint strategic command of the Western Military District, the command of the Northern Fleet, and the formations and military units listed in the article are not taking place and are not planned in the foreseeable future.”

It is emphasized that the Western Military District, which was formed in September 2010 on the basis of the Moscow and Leningrad Military Districts, absorbed the Baltic and Northern Fleets and the command of the Air and Air Defense Forces. As well as a number of formations and military units that, under the former structure of the Russian Federation Armed Forces, were directly subordinate to the central organs of military command and control....



Tim Thomas's *Recasting the Red Star* describes Russia's culture of military thought through its modernization effort. Adding to his robust library of work on the subject, Tim Thomas illuminates Russia's Defense Ministry reform efforts, the Russian national security strategy take on the operational environment, and a relevant review of the Russian military doctrine.

Understanding Turkey's Historic Coup Trial

On 5-7 March 2003, 162 members of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) sat down for a military seminar at the 1st Army headquarters in Istanbul, in what they called a wargame, similar to those conducted in all other NATO countries. The hypothetical threat scenario included rising tensions with Greece in the Aegean and Turkey entering Iraq; compounded by domestic disturbances including an internal Kurdish uprising and Islamic uprisings in two large cities.

Nine and a half years later, on 21 September 2012, following a unique and historic trial, a Turkish court convicted 326 military members based on this three-day meeting, deciding that it was not a wargame, but rather the rehearsal of a coup plan to overthrow the government. The officers received prison sentences ranging from 13 to 20 years for complicity in the alleged plan, code named 'Sledgehammer' ('Balyoz' in Turkish).

In most NATO countries the allegation of the military plotting to overthrow the government might sound like an absurd proposition. This is not the case for Turkey: the military has overthrown governments in 1960, 1971, 1980 by staging coups, forced the government to resign in 1997 (in what has been called a 'soft-coup'), and threatened action in an on-line statement in 2007 (in what has been called an 'e-coup').

What *is* (or was) unthinkable for Turkey is for military officers to be tried. They have never been tried for plotting a coup before, much less for actually conducting one, because each of their former attempts had been successful.

So what really happened during that meeting in March 2003?

Many press organs in the West have featured numerous articles presenting the case to Western readers, who, unfortunately, have no chance to access foreign language resources, as a simple conflict between the 'Islamic government' and the 'secular military'.¹ However, there are many nuances to this controversial case that should be examined from Turkish-based perspectives. This essay aims to do so by presenting viewpoints from Turkish military members, opinion-leaders, military analysts and government officials. When considered together, it becomes clear that this is not such a black-and-white case.

The controversial nature of the case is evident from the widely diverse views of its followers: some view it as a historic reckoning with coup plotters, where the military has finally been "pushed behind the barracks," where it should have been all along. They see this as the achievement of civilian control over the military – a positive step for Turkey's democratization process. Some have even called it "Turkey's Nuremberg trial."² On the other end of the spectrum there are those who claim that the entire case was based on false documents and that the governing party is trying to crush the military based on flimsy evidence. They claim that the government used the judicial system to prosecute and imprison its military critics.³ As prominent opinion leader Mustafa Akyol sums up in his column in the mass-daily *Star*, "Should we be glad that 'our democracy is stronger, the era of coups is over,' or should we be sad that justice was sacrificed to politics?"⁴

A correct evaluation of the case has particular importance for the rest of the world. The fact that the trial even took place is the outcome of a decade-long transformation of civil-military relations in Turkey. Insight into this transformation is necessary to understand how to adjust future modes of interaction with Turkey, whose army is the second largest in NATO, on defense matters. Insight into civil-military power structures in Turkey is also critical in determining the proper interlocutors in a key ally regarding U.S. grand strategy, military strategy, and tactical and operational objectives.

This requires first understanding the context in which the event, be it a wargame or coup plot, took place.

The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and Its Traditional Role

Since the Turkish Republic's founding 89 years ago, the military has been a powerful institution and the unquestioned guardian of the secular republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.⁵ Starting in 1960, the military conducted coups d'état almost every decade, removing

1. Dani Rodrik, "Turkey's miscarriage of justice," *The Washington Post*, 21 September 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/turkeys-miscarriage-of-justice/2012/09/21/e2125276-033d-11e2-8102-ebee9c66e190_story.html
2. Cengiz Çandar, "Balyoz Davası: Türkiye'nin Nürnberg'i (The Sledgehammer Case: Turkey's Nuremberg)," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 23 September 2012, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/21534531.asp>
3. Henri Barkey, "Turkey's 'Sledgehammer' Verdicts Take the Military Down a Peg," *Al Monitor*, 26 September 2012, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2012/al-monitor/turkish-generals-lose-a-court-ca.html>
4. Mustafa Akyol, "Balyoz'un ardından (After Sledgehammer)," *Stargazete.com*, 23 September 2012, <http://haber.stargazete.com/yazar/balyozun-ardindan/yazi-691381>
5. Janine Zacharia, "In Turkey, Military's Power over Democracy Slips," *The Washington Post*, 11 April 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/10/AR2010041002860.html>

administrations that it deemed a threat to the secular nature of Turkey or deviated from its constitution.⁶ All the coups resulted in a change of government. Regardless of the political party in power, the TAF maintained its control over the state system and its authority to have the last word.⁷ In 1982 the military drafted the country's constitution, giving itself wide room for maneuver to shape both the domestic and foreign policy of the country. Though this constitution has seen many amendments, it still remains in force today. However, the current government is planning to revise it.

This military-drafted constitution gave the military the ability to define and deal with internal threats. In particular, the military defined these internal threats as fundamental Islamic tendencies, and those that threatened the unity of the nation state, including Kurds, Muslim activists, religious minorities and Marxists. The 1982 constitution also made the military accountable to the prime minister and not to the secretary of defense, an organizational structure that is still the case today. In fact, Turkey is the only NATO member whose chief of the General Staff is answerable to the prime minister and not the defense minister (Figure 1).⁸

The AKP and Changing Civil-Military Relations

The 3 November 2002 elections brought the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP by its Turkish initials) to power with a clear majority. The AKP made it clear that the military was subservient to the government and not the other way around, significantly reducing the military's powers. Since then the AKP has become more powerful, with its re-election in 2007 and again in 2011.

The AKP redefined Turkey's positions on issues that the military had previously dictated. The TAF perceived the Islamic-rooted AKP as a threat to secularism. Its views differed from those of the AKP government on what constitutes an internal threat and what its role should be.⁹

It is in this context that we can start to analyze the Sledgehammer case.

The Seminar

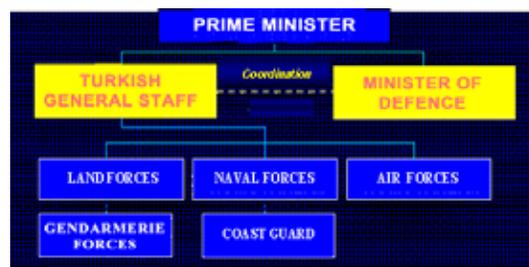
The three-day military seminar was conducted at the 1st Army Headquarters in Istanbul, under the auspices of the then-Commander of the 1st Army, General Çetin Doğan. General Doğan ordered that the seminar be audio-recorded. According to reports in the Turkish media, the recordings reveal no utterance of the word "coup" or "Sledgehammer." However, the generals talk about Turkish realities, using real names of government officials, not fictitious characters that wargames typically use. These include the name of the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who is apparently mentioned among the "domestic enemies" with whom the military would have to deal. They also reveal talk of replacing certain mayors, who are listed by name. This aspect of the meeting has become one of the most problematic issues for the officers. Nevertheless, many have questioned whether this is enough to allege that the meeting was a coup plot.

A prominent columnist from the mass-daily *Hürriyet (Independence)*, Sedat Ergin writes:

...There are many things wrong with 'Sledgehammer', including the fact that an 'internal threat' was discussed in the seminar, and officers expressed their opinions on domestic policy matters. Another problematic aspect of the seminar is that the scenario was acted out using the real names of some government officials. But despite all these... was the plan seminar a coup rehearsal?¹⁰

On the other hand, Yavuz Baydar, a journalist who followed the case, writes, "Evidence of the plans is strong, particularly the 'tapes' of the session which, from a legal point of view, constitute uncrackable proof of what the officers were trying to achieve."¹¹

Figure 1. Turkish General Staff Organization



Source: [The Turkish General Staff Website](http://www.tsk.tr/eng/genel_konular/savunmaorganizasyonu.htm)

6. 25 Parties have been banned on the basis that they are too "Islamic," too "Kurdish," or too "leftist."

7. Orhan Kemal Cengiz, *Ergenekon is our Reality* (Istanbul, Turkey: Young Civilians and the Human Rights Agenda Association, 2010).

8. "The Turkish General Staff Defense Organization," The website of the Turkish Armed Forces, Undated, http://www.tsk.tr/eng/genel_konular/savunmaorganizasyonu.htm

9. The Turkish General Staff, "Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Basın Açıklaması (Turkish General Staff Press Release)," 27 April 2007, <http://www.tsk.mil.tr/bashalk/basac/2007/a08.htm>; Gencer Özkan, "The Changing Role of Turkey's Military in Foreign Policy Making," UNISCI Discussion Papers, May 2010, 32, http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/117255/ichaptersection_singledocument/e491fdd1-3e17-4de1-95c2-6d351599796a/en/Chapt.+2.pdf

10. Sedat Ergin, "Balyoz Davası asıl şimdi başlıyor (The Sledgehammer case is just starting now)," *Hurriyet.com.tr*, 22 September 2012, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/21528241.asp>

11. Yavuz Baydar, "Turkey's Sledgehammer Case: A Severe Blow to Militarism Within," *Huffingtonpost.com*, 1 October 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yavuz-baydar/turkeys-sledgehammer-case_b_1922062.html

The Allegation

On 20 January 2010, reporter Mehmet Baransu reported in the daily newspaper, *Taraf (Side)*, that an anonymous member of the military had provided him with a suitcase full of documents. He wrote that the documents contained details of a planned coup, which had been discussed at a seminar at the Turkish First Army Headquarters in Istanbul on 5-7 March 2003.¹²

Over the weeks and months that followed, numerous military members, including active duty generals, admirals and former commanders of the Turkish Navy and Air Force, were arrested on charges of attempting to remove the government. The charge was that the military planned to unseat the AKP government by fomenting chaos in society through acts of violence and laying the groundwork for a coup. These acts included attacking civilian and religious targets, including bomb attacks on two mosques in Istanbul, downing a Turkish military plane, and arresting journalists and politicians.

The Trial

A total of 365 military members were accused of the plot, members, many of whom had been in pre-trial detention long before the trial. They included General (retired) Çetin Doğan, then-Commander of the 1st Army, along with former Air Force commander Ibrahim Firtına and a former Naval Forces commander, Admiral Özden Örnek.¹³

The Turkish media reported problems with the trial and evidence, stating that the documents that raised the allegation contained many anachronisms and inconsistencies. These were catalogued in detail by Harvard Professor Dani Rodrik, who also happens to be the son-in-law of General Doğan and a close follower of the case, albeit a partial one.¹⁴ Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, a columnist, writes in the mass-daily *Milliyet (Nationality)*:

...some of the documents contain anachronisms (timing errors, companies and non-governmental organizations that didn't exist at the time, license plates that hadn't been issued etc.) and have been proven both logically and technically to have been produced after 2007.¹⁵

These reports led to a perception that the documents were fabricated in an attempt to make it look like they were part of a coup plot discussed during the seminar. However, these were not accepted as evidence in court, raising criticism that it was not a fair trial. One commentator writes:

...certain question marks loom. The judges may have made a major mistake by disallowing the presentation of some crucial evidence, a key part of universal court procedures. The serious accusations of forgery of some documents in the trial must also be investigated further and brought to a fair conclusion.¹⁶

Another issue was that some officers included in the charges were not present at the seminar, and their only link to the case was that their names were mentioned in some of the documents. Aydıntaşbaş writes:

Of the 365 officers tried, only 50 of them were actually present at the seminar. The others were punished simply because their names appeared on unsigned, undated, documents in a suitcase. The court has not paid any attention to whether these documents were real. It is unacceptable for an officer to be given an 18 year sentence simply because his name was mentioned in an unsigned document.¹⁷

On the day the verdict was read over 200 of the 365 defendants were still on active duty.

The former commanders of the Air Force, Navy, and the 1st Army in Istanbul were sentenced to life imprisonment. The punishment was then reduced to 20 years due to unaccomplished attempt.

12. "Balyoz Davasının Mimarı Konuştu (The Architect of the Sledgehammer case speaks)," Haberler.com, 21 September 2012, <http://www.haberler.com/balyoz-davasinin-mimari-konustu-3957094-haberi/>

13. Noticeably missing from those called to testify in the case were then-Chief of the General Staff Hilmi Özkök and then-Land Forces Commander Aytaç Yalman, (who were not present at the seminar) an issue that has caused confusion and wonder among followers of the case. Fikret Bila, "Özkök ve Yalman'ın tanıklıkları (The issue of Özkök and Yalman as witnesses)," *Milliyet.com.tr*, 25 September 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/ozkok-un-ve-yalman-in-tanikliklari/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/25.09.2012/1601618/default.htm>

14. "Balyoz Davası ve Gerçekler (The Sledgehammer Case and Realities)," Dani Rodrik's blog, <http://balyozdavasivegercekler.com/>

15. Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "Balyoz neden demokrasinin zaferi değil (Why Sledgehammer is not a victory for democracy)," *Milliyet.com.tr*, 24 September 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/balyoz-neden-demokrasinin-zaferi-degil-/siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/24.09.2012/1601062/default.htm>.

16. Yavuz Baydar, "Turkey's Sledgehammer Case: A Severe Blow to Militarism Within," *Ibid*.

17. Aslı Aydıntaşbaş, "Balyoz neden demokrasinin zaferi değil (Why Sledgehammer is not a victory for democracy)," *Ibid*.

Military Responses to the Verdict

Then-Chief of the General Staff Hilmi Özkök said after the verdict:

I am not a legal expert. But I thought the sentencing would be proportional to the ranks of officers. A military career is different than any other career, because it is based on following orders. Those being given orders do not have the option not to carry them out. We teach them to obey orders. How else can you send people to kill and be killed? So, when someone receives an order, they do not question whether it is legal or not... they just obey it. That's how they are trained. The accountabilities of the ranks are different. In this case, there are captains, majors, lieutenant colonels, colonels, and lower ranking officers. Those giving the orders have a different level of responsibility. Those in the lower ranks are under orders. So I thought it would be a more proportional verdict.¹⁸

Following the sentencing, a group of officers sent a letter to prominent military expert Fikret Bila, who published excerpts of the letter in his column in *Milliyet*:

Our message is simple: We did not take part in any coup preparation. We did not commit the crimes that we are accused of. We did not receive any such orders. We never saw the digitals that the court placed in front of us, prior to that day. We did not receive a fair trial... We respectfully announce this to our beloved nation - the only authority to whom we feel accountable and our only correspondent.¹⁹

Government Response to the Verdict

Most government officials have refrained from making any final comments, pointing out that the case will now go to the High Court of Appeals.²⁰ Prime Minister Erdoğan whose name was mentioned in the tapes, said:

I'm listening to the CDs now and I'm just shocked. If I hadn't listened to them, I would never believe it. I keep thinking, 'How is this possible?' ...The fact that this is the first time that such a process has taken place in a civilian court is very important for Turkey's democracy...There are some who are pursuing a campaign to dispute the case- a weak campaign if you ask me- because there is a case here. It is important that Turkey does not get to certain points through coups, and for there to be a victory for the public, the nation and democracy.²¹ (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan comments on the case.



Source: Haberler.com

Some Claim Victory for Democracy

Some have hailed the verdict as a victory for democracy. Here are some comments by opinion leaders that summarize this perspective:

"...Sledgehammer may well be labeled the 'Nuremberg of Turkey.' We now have a solid reason to think that the time of military coups and military interventions is over."²²

"The verdict is historic for democracy."²³

"The outcome of the case will help the Turkish army- a vital element of security in a sensitive, turbulent geography, crucial for NATO- to give up acting with a culture of immunity and stop blocking all efforts to update its structures and make it more efficient and professional.

18. "Özkök'ten Balyoz kararı yorumu (Özkök comments on the Sledgehammer verdict)," *Economisturk.com*, 23 September 2012, <http://www.ekonomisturk.com/haber/gundem/ozkokten-balyoz-karari-yorumu/16530.html>

19. Fikret Bila, "Tutuklu albaylar: Başbakan, Özkök ve Yalman neden susuyorlar? (Arrested colonels: Why are the Prime Minister, Özkök and Yalman silent?)" *Milliyet.com.tr*, 28 September 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/tutuklu-albaylar-basbakan-ozkok-ve-yalman-neden-susuyorlar-siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/28.09.2012/1603317/default.htm>

20. "Hükümetten Balyoz Yorumu (Government Comment on Sledgehammer)," *Ulusalkanal.com.tr*, 21 September 2012, <http://www.ulusalkanal.com.tr/gundem/hukumetten-balyoz-yorumu-yargitay-asamasini-beklemek-lazim-h5565.html>

21. "Başbakan Erdoğan'dan Balyoz yorumu (Prime Minister Erdoğan comments on Sledgehammer)," *Haberler.com*, 27 September 2012, <http://www.haberler.com/basbakan-erdogan-dan-balyoz-yorumu-cd-leri-3972117-haberi/>

22. Cengiz Çandar, "Balyoz Davası: Türkiye'nin Nürnberg'i (The Sledgehammer Case: Turkey's Nuremberg)," *Ibid.*

23. Derya Sazak, "Balyoz Kararı (The Sledgehammer Verdict)," *Milliyet.com.tr*, 23 September 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/balyoz-karari-siyaset/siyasetyazardetay/23.09.2012/1600746/default.htm>

SPECIAL ESSAY

45

The views expressed are those of the author and do not represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

It teaches a bitter lesson, too, to focus solely on its duties to defend national territory rather than brutally engineer domestic and national security politics.”²⁴

Going Forward

Controversy surrounding the case continues in Turkey. Mustafa Akyol sums up the general dilemma in his column in *Hurriyet Daily News*: “... I have mixed feelings about the case. On the one hand, it is a heavy and welcome blow to an overbearing military establishment. On the other, it is a case that does not seem to have fulfilled some of the basic criteria for a fair trial.”²⁵

Many have also pointed out that the verdict might hurt soldiers’ morale at a time when Turkey is threatened with instability from Syria and attacks by the PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party), considered a terrorist group by the U.S., Turkey and the European Union. As a Turkish analyst comments, “This decision seriously hurts the Turkish Armed Forces’ morale to fight. From now on, no one will sacrifice their lives for Turkey, why should they bother?”²⁶

The main outcome, however, is that the verdict is likely to serve as a deterrent to any military personnel who might contemplate a coup in the future.

A long appeals process is expected to begin, one that will take the case to the High Court of Appeals, the Constitutional Court, and maybe even to the European Court of Human Rights. Regardless of what the outcome of those trials may be, the controversial case is a turning point in civil-military relations in Turkey.

FURTHER READING

Changing Civil Military Relations in Turkey

Ms. Karen Kaya

Contractor for the Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027

April 2011

Synopsis: This article explores the Turkish military’s changing and decreasing role in Turkey’s security and foreign policy-making process. It discusses the domestic role of NATO’s second largest force, and one of the Middle East’s largest forces. As such, it informs the civilian and military branches of the Defense Department on how to adjust future modes of interaction with Turkey on defense matters by taking into account the internal Turkish civil-military power structures. The article provides insight which will aid in determining the proper interlocutors in a key ally regarding U.S. grand strategy, military strategy, and tactical and operational objectives.

The views expressed in FMSO publications and reports are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

1

Changing Civil Military Relations in Turkey

Karen Kaya’s Monograph on civil-military relations in Turkey

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Civil-Military-Relations-in-Turkey.pdf>

24. Yavuz Baydar, “Turkey’s Sledgehammer Case: A Severe Blow to Militarism Within,” *Ibid*.
25. Mustafa Akyol, “What to make of Turkey’s first coup trial,” *Hurriyet Daily News*, 26 September 2012, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/what-to-make-of-turkeys-first-coup-trial.aspx?pageID=238&nid=31007>
26. Emre Paker, “Hundreds Convicted in Turkish Coup Trial,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 September 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390444032404578010383839076610.html>