

OE WATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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New Expectations for Action on Syria



Russian TV Media and the Removal of the Russian Defense Minister

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“By locating the Kyrgyz Border Troops headquarters near the governmental leadership, they can more effectively negotiate for sparse government resources.”



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“While not wholly subservient, the major Russian TV media today understand well who is ordering the music and respond by producing the appropriate music.”

Assessing a Decade of AKP Rule

3 November 2012

Source: Sedat Yurtdaş. “AK Parti’nin 10.yılında Türkiye: Kürt sorunu (Turkey at the 10th year of the AKP: The Kurdish problem),” Radikal.com.tr, 3 November 2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1106408&CategoryID=78>

OE Watch Commentary:
On 3 November the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) completed a decade in power in Turkey. Since its first election in 2002 it has been re-elected twice—in 2007 and in 2011, increasing its votes each time. As it enters its second decade in power, opinion leaders in Turkey have been debating the AKP’s record through a series of articles discussing the party’s successes and failures and the direction in which it has taken Turkey.

There is almost unanimous agreement that the AKP has done a good job with the economy (Turkey is now the 16th largest economy in the world) and its establishment of civilian control over the historically powerful military. However, one issue stands out as a common concern. The accompanying excerpts from four articles are examples of the widespread impression that, particularly after the AKP’s third election in 2011, the party and especially its leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, have acquired almost absolute control and become less focused on improving democracy.

“...The AKP’s increasing vote, and particularly its success in the last election, led to the Prime Minister becoming overly confident.”

...The AKP’s increasing vote, and particularly its success in the last election, led to the Prime Minister becoming overly confident. In this state of mind, he came to believe that what he thought and said were the absolute truths. This misperception continues today...

Source: Sedat Yurtdaş. “AK Parti’nin 10.yılında Türkiye: Kürt sorunu (Turkey at the 10th year of the AKP: The Kurdish problem),” Radikal.com.tr, 3 November 2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1106408&CategoryID=78>



Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, via <http://world.time.com>

“...the moment that the Prime Minister Erdoğan thought that he had absolute control over the system, in other words, from the moment that he established his own status quo, he started to pay less attention to transparency. He used arguments such as “national security”, “continuity of the state”, “protecting the security forces” to do this.”

Source: Ruşen Çakır. “AKP ile 10 yıl-3: Şeffaf devlet Uludere Roboski’de durdu (10 Years with the AKP-3: Transparent government stopped at Uludere Roboski),” Rusencakir.com, 8 November 2011, <http://www.rusencakir.com/seffaf-devlet-uludere-roboskide-durdu/1863>

“...Unfortunately, there are increasing signs that, since the last elections, the AKP is moving away from the old AKP; and Erdoğan is not the old Erdoğan. One of the most notable developments of this past week was his rhetoric about bringing back the death penalty...”

Source: Şahin Alpay. “10. yılında AKP iktidarı (AKP rule at its 10th year),” Zaman.com.tr, 13 November 2012, <http://www.zaman.com/10-yilinda-akp-iktidari/2014896.html>

Continued: Assessing a Decade of AKP Rule

3 November 2012

Erdoğan is now the longest-serving prime minister in the history of Turkey, and he is planning to run for President in 2014. He had initially promised to advance democracy in Turkey by expanding rights for Kurds, improving freedom of the press, and working to bring Turkey into the European Union. With regard to these issues, many are claiming that the promised and necessary changes have not taken place.
End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)



Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan at the AKP's 10-Year Celebration, via <http://www.Haberinadresi.org>

“There are two problems with the way the AKP and Erdoğan view democracy: 1) They have adopted a “majority rule” understanding of it, instead of a “pluralistic rule”. 2) They have equated democracy with the end of military coups and the end of military control... Part of the reason for the AKP’s rough behavior on the issue of democracy, its replacement of freedom with prohibitions, closings instead of openings, is the lack of a strong opposition which asks the right questions and makes accurate criticisms.”

Source: Ruşen Çakır. “AKP ile 10 yıl-1: Erdoğan: Demokrasi tramvayında ihtiraslı bir yolcu (10 Years with the AKP-1: Erdoğan: A passionate passenger on the democracy train),” Rusencakir.com, 6 November 2012, <http://www.rusencakir.com/AKP-ILE-10-YIL---1/1861>

The Kazakhstan-Russia Axis: Shaping CSTO Transformation

By Roger N. McDermott

Senior International Fellow,
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United Kingdom



“Viewed from Kazakhstan’s perspective, the need to transcend the symbolism of the CSTO’s collective defense theme and promote ways in which it might meet real transnational and emerging security challenges is both real and urgent..”

<http://FMSO.leavenworth.army.mil/International.html>

New Expectations for Action on Syria

13 November 2012

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey is becoming increasingly concerned about developments on its Syrian border, which keep bringing it closer and closer to the brink of war with Syria. On 12 November Syrian warplanes hit opposition targets less than a quarter mile from the Turkish border, prompting Turkish F-16s to be dispatched to the area on a reconnaissance and patrol mission. The planes were armed and the pilots were instructed to hit Syrian planes if there was any border violation. This follows a border violation incident in October that killed several Turkish citizens and led to six days of mutual shelling on the border. The first accompanying article expresses Turkey's concern regarding this situation.

Turkey has been calling for support from the international community and NATO due to such border violation incidents and the 100,000-plus Syrian refugees that it now hosts. However, many Turks have expressed disappointment and claimed that Turkey is being left alone to deal with Syria. The second and third articles summarize the Turkish perspective on why this has been the case. They point to a reluctance on the part of the U.S. to make any decision on Syria before the U.S. election, and the international community's belief that there was no cohesive and representative opposition to support in Syria.

As the articles point out, in the last few weeks, both of these "hurdles" have been overcome. The U.S. elections have taken place, and in Doha, Qatar's capital, a new, more inclusive Syrian opposition group has been created that is being viewed as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people and a potential transitional government

“With the re-election of Obama, the U.S.’s most important reason for [keeping a low profile on the Syria crisis] has been eliminated.”



Leading Syrian dissident Riad Seif (L) and former Syrian Prime Minister Riad Hijab, who defected from the Assad regime, during the Syrian opposition unity meeting in Doha, November 11, 2012., via <http://www.todayszaman.com>

“Fighting in Syria continues along areas very close to our border... With Syria violating Turkey’s new rules of engagement, F-16 and F-4 planes departing from Adana-Incirlik have been ordered to hit Syrian planes and helicopters in the event of a border violation...”

...Syria is playing with fire by conducting air strikes and mortar fire against towns along the Turkish border, which are now controlled by the opposition. The mortars and bomb pieces, which end up on the Turkish side and cause death and injury, have brought the relations to the brink of conflict. The Damascus regime is pushing Ankara’s limits, despite all the warnings.”

Source: Fikret Bila. “Jetler ‘vur emriyle’ uçuyor (The jets are flying with orders to hit),” Milliyet.com.tr, 13 November 2012, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/jetler-vur-emriyle-ucuyor/siyaset/siyasyazardetay/13.11.2012/1626053/default.htm>

“[The Turkish Foreign Minister] Ahmet Davutoğlu said, “Following the establishment of the newly created opposition, the international community has no excuse left. Now the responsibility is on the international community. Qatar and Turkey have expressed that we recognize this new structure.

Davutoğlu, who pointed out that the Assad regime has been bombing residential areas (Ras al-Ain), without any ethical basis, said that the international community has to give clear messages to Syria, “These attacks demonstrate the situation that we are facing. This is a picture that the international community must see.”

Minister Davutoğlu said about the developments in [the Turkish town] Ceylanpınar and the area across the border Ras al-Ain, “We gave a clear and open diplomatic note

for Syria. Turkey now hopes that this will lead to more funding and increased military aid from the international community to this group, which they hope could potentially accelerate the fall of the Syrian regime. Given these developments, many in Turkey are now arguing that there is no excuse left for inaction on Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



“The world is running out of excuses for standing idle in the face of the massacre in Syria that has been going on for 20 months now...”

to the Syrian regime. We reported the situation to the United Nations Security Council and NATO. The silence of the international community is bothering our consciousness. The first people who are responsible for the situation are the Assad regime. The second factor, however, is the inaction of the UN. As long as this inaction continues, the Syrian regime will continue to justify its provocations.”

Source: “Davutoğlu: Suriye için uluslararası toplumun artık bir mazareti kalmadı (Davutoğlu: The international community has no excuse left for Syria),” Zaman.com.tr, 13 November 2012, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/dis-haberler/davutoglu-suriye-icin-uluslararasi-toplumun-artik-bir-mazereti-kalmadi/2014996.html>

“The world is running out of excuses for standing idle in the face of the massacre in Syria that has been going on for 20 months now... Two developments are important. One of the reasons for the extended crisis was the U.S. elections...Obama, who should have acted in a more decisive manner, had been under the stress of the upcoming elections for a year. Obama, who came to office with the promise to end the wars from the Bush era, thought that he would lose the election if he got the U.S. involved in another war, particularly at a time when the issue of the economy was sensitive...With the re-election of Obama, the U.S.’s most important reason for [keeping a low profile on the Syria crisis] has been eliminated.

The second reason that prevented the international community from an active response to the situation in Syria was the structure of the opposition against the Baas regime...Syria’s division along religious, ethnic and sectarian lines made it hard to form an effective opposition. The Syrian National Council (SNC), made up of people who escaped the regime and who gathered in Turkey, had tried to make its voice heard to the world. But they were unable to get the world to be more active against Baas, and to convince the Syrian people that the post-Baas era would be better.

Following a week of discussions at Doha, the entire opposition has come together under an umbrella organization called “Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces,” and this has eliminated the second excuse as well...”

Source: Abdülhamit Bilici. “İki Mazeretin Sonu! (The End of Two Excuses),” Zaman.com.tr, 11 November 2012, <http://www.zaman.com.tr/iki-mazeretin-sonu/2014912.html>

Airline Tickets Going Sky High?

7 November 2012

Source: “Bilit-e Havapayma 65 dar sad goran shod” (Airplane Tickets Get 65% More Expensive),” Abrar, 7 November 2012. <http://www.abranews.com/politic/1391/910817/html/eghtesad.htm>

OE Watch Commentary: *Iran is a large country—well over twice the size of Texas and almost four times the size of California. While there are larger countries in the Middle East—Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Libya, for example—population dispersal within Iran sets it apart. Throughout the rest of the Middle East, the largest cities formed along coasts or on major rivers, leading to narrow, densely populated strips in North Africa, along the Arabian peninsula (with Riyadh being the exception to prove the rule), and Mesopotamia. Iran’s population profile is different: Iranian civilization grew up within a plateau surrounded by large mountains and inhospitable badlands. Rivers never became pre-modern highways: Iran boasts only one navigable river—the Karun—and even then, it is small and peripheral. Rather than concentrate on the coast, Iranian towns and cities formed in interior plains, where they were protected from outside invaders by either mountain ranges or malarial swamps, and separated from each other often by hundreds of miles.*



Tehran Imam Khomeini International Airport, via <http://http://www.skyscraperlife.com>

“As fares increase, the ripple effect might begin to undercut small business and internal Iranian commerce.”

Fast forward to the present: Iran’s largest city is Tehran. Because it was the only city outside the range of Iraqi missiles during the Iran-Iraq War, Mashhad—over 550 miles away from the capital—grew rapidly through the 1980s and is now Iran’s second largest city, but about 10-12 hours away by bus or train from Tehran. To travel from Tehran to Isfahan can take eight hours by bus, and to move onward to Shiraz another eight hours. To drive from Kerman or Zahedan, the two most important cities in southeastern Iran, to Tehran can take more than a day. Poor roads and the necessity to bifurcate high mountain passes and traverse hostile desert with temperature fluctuations that can buckle even well-engineered highways compound the problem.

Throughout recent history, however, Iranians have been able to take advantage of extremely low fares on internal flights to avoid the hassle of overland travel. In the late 1990s, an airline ticket between two Iranian cities might be only twice the bus fare, if even that much. While the price has increased marginally over the past decade, a flight between Tehran and Mashhad now only costs \$45. To fly from Tehran to Zahedan—800 miles away by road—costs only \$60, the most expensive flight inside Iran. In a country where average per capita income is still above \$13,000 per year, such fares put air travel into the realm of the possible, even for the poor, who live on less than one-tenth that amount. As fares increase, the ripple effect might begin to undercut small business and internal

Airplane Tickets Get 65% More Expensive

...The head of the Civil Aviation Authority [Hamid Reza Pahlavi] approved an average 65 percent increase in the price of domestic plane tickets... A full list of ticket prices for domestic flights will be published soon on the civil aviation website... There has not yet been a decision on foreign flights. The Deputy Minister of Roads and Urban Planning said, “Until today we have resisted raising the price of domestic tickets and so long as this did not impair the internal airline industry, this resistance would continue. Pahlavi added, “At the heart of the issue, the increase in ticket prices is right for the airline industry... and we will take steps to improve the aviation industry...”

Continued: Airline Tickets Going Sky High?

7 November 2012

Iranian commerce. If past patterns of subsidy reform are any indication, once the government removes the barrier to price increases, subsequent price hikes follow rapidly.

While Iranian leaders have responded to international sanctions with defiance, the effective end of the popular internal airfare subsidy shows the bite which sanctions and poor economic management are now taking. There is a huge difference between increasing fares along with inflation, and jacking up prices by two-thirds. Indeed, on the same day as the announcement of the airfare increase, the Central Bank announced that average inflation over the previous year had increased to 24.9 percent, but in the past month it was even larger, at 32.0 percent.¹

*The excerpted story illustrates other aspects of Iranian strategy and diplomacy. In the West, attention to internal Iranian air travel often revolves around the safety of Iranian airliners. Iranian authorities often ask for sanctions waivers in order to purchase spare parts to maintain the safety of the fleet. Such waivers are seldom effective in improving civilian fleet safety, however, as the Iranian government tends to cannibalize the new parts for military aircraft, leaving the civilian fleet in consistently poor condition. That the internal Iranian discussion regarding the airline industry focuses more on fares than on safety also highlights the discrepancy between Iranian rhetoric as directed toward Western diplomats versus toward its own internal audience. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

¹ “Sima-ye Rasmi Tavarram Mah-e Mehr,” (Broadcasting Official Exchange Rate for the Month of Mehr [22 September – 21 October] Donya-ye Eghtesad, November 8, 2012. http://www.donya-e-eghtesad.com/Default_view.asp?@=327468

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Is Belarus the Weak Link in Iran Sanctions?

31 October 2012

Source: “Hayat-e 26 Nefareh az Tijareh-e Irane Varud Belarus Shod” (26 Member Delegation of Iranian Businessmen Enter Belarus),” Afkar News, 31 October 2012. <http://www.afkarnews.ir/vdchmznzx23n-kd.tft2.html>

“...the revolving door visits of Iranian delegations to Belarus might raise questions about whether Minsk has become a surrogate for Moscow for certain aspects of the Russian-Iranian relationship...”

OE Watch Commentary: Over the last six years the international community has imposed an increasing number of sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran over its nuclear program. These sanctions have targeted not only Iran’s nuclear program, but also its military industry. The European Union and the United States have supplemented these sanctions with a variety of additional unilateral measures. The result has been a mixture of defiance and lament inside Iran. Many regime officials declare repeatedly that the regime will resist sanctions, but, amidst the currency crash and increasing economic discord, top officials no longer say that sanctions are without impact.

26 Member Delegation of Iranian Businessmen Enter Belarus

...This afternoon, an Iranian trade delegation headed by Yahya Ale Eshagh, the chairman of Tehran’s Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, arrived in Minsk, the capital of Belarus. Accompanying the chairman were 26 Iranian businessmen in different fields of economic and investment and so a number of meetings were arranged for the Iranian entrepreneurs and their Belarusian counterparts on topics ranging from banking and insurance to free trade zones and customs...

Against the backdrop of Iranian defiance, both the United States and European Union have sought to convince Russia and China to tighten sanctions on Iran and reduce even licit arms and technology shipments to the Islamic Republic. Tehran and Moscow have inked a contract for the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system, but the Russian Federation has repeatedly delayed delivery.

It against the context of Western pressure on Russia to abide by Iran sanctions that the Iran-Belarus economic relationship—the latest manifestation of which is described in the accompanying excerpt—is interesting. Belarus has consistently supported Iran in the face of international suspicion, commending it, for example, for adhering to its international commitments despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and condemning the imposition of European Union sanctions on Iran.

For a relatively small country, Belarus is the destination of many Iranian trade and defense delegations. The most recent delegation was led by Yahya Al-e Eshagh, currently leader of Tehran’s Chamber of Commerce, but during former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani’s second term (1993-1997) the Minister of Commerce. Eshagh is often the point man on Iranian efforts to convince emerging markets and developing countries to bypass sanctions.



Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka, via <http://www.rferl.org>

Continued: Is Belarus the Weak Link in Iran Sanctions? 31 October 2012

In Belarus he will find fertile ground. Three years ago, Belarus' state oil company signed a \$500 million deal to develop an Iranian oil field, initially weathering American sanctions to do so (some reports suggest that Belarus has suspended work pending a payment dispute). Earlier this year Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi traveled to Minsk to cement further cooperation. The Iranian government claims annual bilateral trade exceeds \$100 million. Sanctioned Iranian banks continue to operate in Belarus.

Because Belarus is not only among Russia's closest allies, but also a major importer of Russian defense equipment, the revolving door visits of Iranian delegations to Belarus should raise questions about why Belarus has become such a frequent destination for Iranian officials and delegations. Normally, Iranian officials' travel and diplomatic outreach outside its immediate neighborhood falls into one of two categories: The first target of Iranian outreach is to those countries which sit on the United Nations Security Council or the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) Board of Governors, that is, countries for which the Islamic Republic can receive a quid pro quo for any trade or assistance. The second category is military and nuclear trade partners, such as North Korea, Pakistan, and perhaps Venezuela.

Belarus is neither a member of the Security Council nor does it have a vote at the IAEA. This raises the likelihood that Tehran's outreach to Minsk is motivated by other concerns. Belarusian arms dealing to the Syrian regime suggests Minsk's willingness to act as a surrogate for Russia in the Middle East. If Belarus helps Russia bypass arms embargoes on one Middle Eastern country, it is possible that it might also do so for Iran. In 2010, a story briefly appeared in Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency describing Iranian military purchases from Belarus, before Iranian authorities ordered the story removed. If Minsk has become a middleman between Moscow and Tehran, Russia might claim that it abides strictly by promises made to American and European diplomats while it can also ensure the Iranian regime can bypass at least some sanctions. Should Belarus help Iran bypass restrictions on arms imports, for example, by shipping Tehran the S-300 system outright or, more likely, providing technology to enable Iran's indigenous arms industry to replicate the system, it might accelerate Iran's capabilities or, conversely, hasten an international response to preempt deployment of advanced systems.

*Certainly, such a relationship remains in the realm of supposition; the Russian, Belarusian, and Iranian press are not paradigms of freedom and cannot be expected to discuss sanction avoidance openly. Nevertheless, not all relationships are innocent; the Islamic Republic's developing ties to Belarus certainly bear watching. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

¹ "Statement On The Islamic Republic Of Iran's Nuclear Issue, 15th Ministerial Conference Of The Non-Aligned Movement, Tehran, July 27-30, 2008;

² "Iranian Central Bank Helps Fund Belarusneft Oil Exploration" Middle East Business Intelligence, May 21, 2009; "Tahrim-e Sharkat-e Naft-e Belarus Baraye Hamkare ba Iran," ("Sanctions on Belarus Oil Company for Iran Cooperation,") Petronaft.ir, March 30, 2011; "Bozorgtaren Qaradad Nafti Europa dar Iran Ta'liq Shod," ("Biggest European Oil Contract in Iran Suspended,") Alef.ir, August 16, 2011.

³ "Peyam-e keh Salehi baraye Lukeshenko barad," ("The Message from Salehi to Lukeshenko,") Tabnak.ir, March 5, 2012.

⁴ "Iran, Belarus Agree to Increase Economic Cooperation," Fars News Agency, November 2, 2012.

⁵ "Non-proliferation Designations; Iranian Financial Sanctions Regulations Identifications," Office of Foreign Assets Control, U.S. Department of Treasury, January 23, 2012. <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20120123.aspx>

⁶ "Belarus-Russia defense cooperation 'a standard for other CSTO states,'" Belarusian Telegraph Agency, October 23, 2012. <http://news.belta.by/en/news/society?id=696843>; "Belarus to Boost Air Defense with New Russian Warplanes," RIANovosti, September 22, 2012, http://en.rian.ru/military_news/20120922/176155134.html

⁷ "Treasury Designates Syrian Entity, Others Involved in Arms and Communications Procurement Networks and Identifies Blocked Iranian Aircraft," Press Center, U.S. Department of Treasury, September 19, 2012. <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1714.aspx>

⁸ Sahar Namazikhah, "Tehran Defiant After Failed Russian Missile Deal," Institute for War & Peace Reporting, October 8, 2010. <http://iwpr.net/report-news/tehran-defiant-after-failed-russian-missile-deal>

Iran's Push into Egyptian Film?

7 November 2012

Source: "Amani: Misr niz Hamnand Iran Mitavanad dar Arseh-e Cinema Mavafegh Shavad" (Egypt can like Iran be Successful in Cinema)," Fars News Agency, 7 November 2012. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13910817001127>

“The Islamic Republic wants to extend its outreach to Egypt, not only through traditional diplomacy, but also through influencing Egypt’s formidable film industry.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Islamic Revolution in Iran ushered in a period of enmity between Iran and Egypt. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran’s revolutionary leader, made enmity toward and a firm belief in the illegitimacy of Israel a pillar of the new regime’s ideology. He put Egypt—the only Arab country to recognize Israel—in Iran’s sites. Relations deteriorated further after the 1981 assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat: rather than condemn Sadat’s murder, the Iranian leadership celebrated it, even naming a Tehran street after Khalid Islambouli, Sadat’s assassin. Over the next three decades Iranian leaders regularly belittled Sadat’s successor, Hosni Mubarak, as a “pharaoh,” castigating both his dictatorial ways (Iranian regime rhetoric regularly depicts the Islamic Republic as a democracy) and implying that he belonged to the pre-Islamic world of the jahaliyya, the age of ignorance. Efforts at rapprochement between Iran and the largest Arab country repeatedly fell flat as Iranian hardliners castigated their reformist counterparts’ calls for improved relations with Egypt as a betrayal of both basic Islamic principles and Khomeini’s vision. Mubarak’s fall, however, coupled with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, led to hopes—at least in Tehran—for a renaissance in relations, if not a new Tehran-Cairo axis.*

Egypt can like Iran be Successful in Cinema

According to a report from a foreign political correspondent from the Fars News Agency, Mojtaba Amani, head of the Iranian Interests Section in Cairo, said on Tuesday at the opening ceremony of the Cairo Film Festival held on the shores of the Nile... He noted that after ten years, Iran was participating in the festival. He said that he hoped that cinema could play a role in creating a more peaceful world, one which moves away from war. The head of the Iran Interests Section in Cairo, stated that Egypt after the revolution, shouldn’t be concerned about cinema, and noted, “Just as Iran after the Islamic Revolution was able to change its cinema, and make progress with a new form, even winning the Oscar, so too can Egypt be successful...”

It is against this backdrop that this short excerpt from the semi-official, hardline Fars News Agency, is interesting. While Tehran and Cairo have yet to re-establish full diplomatic relations—probably because of objections from Riyadh and Doha, both of whom are major donors to the faltering Egyptian economy—the Iranian Interests Section in Cairo is becoming increasingly more active and taking a far higher profile.

The Iranian encouragement to the Egyptian film industry is important. Cairo is the Hollywood of the Arab world. From Tangiers to the Tigris, Arabs watch Egyptian soap operas and full-length comedies. It is the Egyptian dominance of film that has led to the Egyptian dialect of Arabic becoming the most widely understood, perhaps even more so than the stodgy and formal “Modern Standard” dialect taught at most universities and in diplomatic parlors. Throughout the Mubarak years, Egyptian



Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi (L) shakes hands with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (R), via Al-Arabiya

Continued: Iran's Push into Egyptian Film?

7 November 2012

cinema has also been political. The Egyptian leadership used films like “Al-Irhabi” (*The Terrorist*) and “Al-Irhab wal Kebab” (*Terrorism and Kebab*) to satirize and ridicule Islamist groups. Having taken control, the Muslim Brotherhood sought its own revenge, trying and sentencing Adel Emam, the star of the films and Egypt’s best known comedian of the silver screen, to three months in prison for insulting Islam.

Western audiences know Iranian cinematography through the highbrow art films of filmmakers such as Abbas Kiarostami and Asghar Farhadi, whose film “Jodaeiye Nader az Simin” (*A Separation of Nader from Simin*), released in the West simply as “*A Separation*”) won an Academy award for Best Foreign Film, among other international accolades, last year. These art house films do not have much exposure inside Iran, however, where the general audience prefers actions movies and shoot-‘em-up thrillers, such as Hassan Karbakhsh’s “Lubnan Ashgh-e Man” (*Lebanon, My Love*), a Rambo-film in reverse, where Hezbollah are the heroes, and the Israelis the dastardly enemies. Many Iranian mass-release films also have a religious agenda, such as Djavad Mashghadri, “Toofan-e Shan,” (*Sandstorm*), in which a group of Iranian school children taken hostage by coarse and rapacious American soldiers during the U.S. hostage rescue attempt, pray to God, causing the sandstorm that doomed the mission.

Culture matters, and Iranian leaders see the conflict between themselves and more broadly the Islamic world on one hand, and the West on the other, to be not only a military struggle but also a cultural battle. The Iranian leadership has always emphasized the importance of media in its efforts to export revolution. They recognized that television is the paramount medium to reach a mass audience.

Iranian efforts to penetrate foreign markets are well-established. Shortly after Operation Enduring Freedom began, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, a Qods Force operative and current advisor to Supreme Leader ‘Ali Khamenei, set up radio stations throughout western Afghanistan. The Iranian government has also supported Tamadon (*Civilization*) television in Afghanistan. For Iraq, the Iranian government established al-Alam, an Arabic language television station, months before the United States followed suit with al-Hurra. Iranian satellite stations dominate the Bahraini market. The comments of Mojtaba Amani, Iran’s chief diplomat in Egypt, suggest that the Islamic Republic wants to extend its outreach to Egypt, not only through traditional diplomacy, but also through influencing Egypt’s formidable film industry. How they do this is open to question: at a minimum, Iranian diplomats will encourage Egyptian television to follow the Iranian precedent, ordering the veiling of women and a steady increase in religious programming. In Iraqi Kurdistan, Iranian officials distributed cell phones and video cameras to students, promising them cash if they captured footage they might broadcast; often, this included any footage which promoted the Iranian religious ideal or depicted opponents in a negative light. Money also matters. The Arab Spring has had a huge financial cost on Egypt; since Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak’s ouster, economists estimate that Egypt has spent more than two-thirds of its hard currency reserves. If the Egyptian government is going to continue subsidizing bread and basic foodstuffs, the Egyptian film industry may find itself short of cash. Egyptian authorities might interpret Amani’s comments as a subtle offer for subsidies, although certainly not to be given without political strings attached. If the Iranian government succeeds in penetrating the Egyptian media market, the next generation of Egyptians—and, indeed, Arabs across the Middle East—may be raised on television and films meant to indoctrinate an Iranian worldview. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



A Separation (2011), Jodaeiye Nader az Simin (original title), via <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1832382/>

¹ “See, for example, Hojjat al-Islam Kazem Sedighi, Tehran Friday Prayer Sermon, February 12, 2011. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8911220581>

The Monarchs' Turn?

7 November 2012

OE Watch Commentary: *Kuwait's recent protests and the political measures that sparked them are well-known by now. Some of the opposition figures leading the charge, most prominent among them former MP Musallam al-Barrak, have also become minor regional celebrities after accusing Kuwait's emir of attempting to "take Kuwait into the abyss of autocracy." Such coarse language earned al-Barrak and several others a trip to prison that was cut short by public outcry. Kuwait's opposition, indeed, is more united than ever: not a single opposition candidate registered for the upcoming parliamentary elections (December). The first accompanying article (from a Lebanese left-leaning newspaper) describes Kuwait's traditionally vibrant and mobilized opposition. Their full boycott of the elections has placed the emir in a difficult position.*

Much of Kuwait's political maneuvering has taken place on social media, especially twitter. The brief arrest of two members of the ruling Al Sabah family for tweeting favorably about the opposition is not, however, this month's main story. Rather, it comes courtesy of the anonymous Saudi tweeter "mujtahid," who had become a thorn in the Saudi ruling family's spine well before gaining New York Times notoriety.¹ On 31 October mujtahid posted a series of tweets disclosing that a Jordanian security firm had provided the Kuwaiti regime with riot police. Despite official denials from both Jordan and Kuwait, the revelations gained a life of their own and were quickly seized on by the opposition, as the second accompanying article (from a prominent Kuwaiti daily newspaper) shows.

The more interesting subtext concerns Jordan, which, like Kuwait, risks becoming politically dysfunctional. Although the protests in Kuwait may be unprecedented,

“Although the protests in Kuwait may be unprecedented, the conflict remains a struggle between the political elites of a rich country. Not so in Jordan, where a teetering economy, a political stalemate, and a civil war next door may be creating the perfect storm.”

Some observers, including the Kuwaiti writer and businessman Ahmed al-Sarraf, divide the opposition forces into four categories: the engine, the beneficiary, the fuel and the moral support.

Today, the engine and the beneficiary are the religious parties, which enjoy financial and institutional potential that is unmatched. The tribes are the fuel, and the moral support is provided by the entire spectrum of society. While speaking to *As-Safir*, Sarraf said that religious parties today — which will reap the benefits of this movement — are trying to take advantage of charismatic figures within the opposition. They are supporting them and promoting them during this interim cooperative phase...

Sarraf noted that the first configuration of an opposition in Kuwait dates back to 1920, and at the time it was linked to merchants and businessmen who were paying taxes. They remained the basis of the opposition until 1961. After that, Kuwait experienced a period of relative calm, until the beginning of the nationalist tide, when a political opposition appeared for the first time — consisting of nationalists, socialists and some communists — who demanded the right to participate in governance.

Yet what is the future of this opposition? The answer to this question lies in the coming days, at a time when the opposition asserts that the movement will not stop.

They are preparing for large demonstrations on “Constitution Day,” which falls on the 11th of this month. According to opposition supporters, the momentum of the movement will not decrease, despite the reduced number of demonstrations recently.

[They attributed this decrease in demonstrations] to the authorities making their best efforts to crack down on opponents. In this context, Dalal said that the authorities have committed all types of harassment and media deception in the recent period,



Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, outside the Oval Office, about to walk to the State Dining Room on Aug. 3, 2009. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)}} [Source=cropped from [http://www.flickr.com/pho

Continued: *The Monarchs' Turn?*

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*the conflict remains a struggle among the political elites of a rich country. Not so in Jordan, where a teetering economy, a political stalemate, and a civil war next door may be creating the perfect storm (see OEW 2.8, p. 18: <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Archives/GSW/201208/201208.pdf>). As the third accompanying article (from Jordan's main independent newspaper) indicates, the presence of Jordanian security companies in the Gulf is nothing new. What is new is the context of regional turmoil and the deepening alliance among the region's monarchies. At the time of this writing, the implementation of long-expected subsidy cuts in Jordan was met with protests across the country, some violent. Were these to spiral out of hand, who would be to blame? **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/21/world/middleeast/twitter-gives-saudi-arabia-a-revolution-of-its-own.html?pagewanted=all>

pointing out that the regime's proposal is not logical. The one-man one-vote system — which is currently approved — is a distorted version of the global system, because it does not allow for the development of parties or lists. The awaited law should be a replica of the Jordanian [electoral] system.

In contrast, the authorities and those who support them insist on upholding the law to change the electoral system. They accuse the opposition of looking out its own special interests, and claim that the new regime is the most democratic. They also believe that the opposition's momentum will decrease. Therefore, the coming days carry big hopes of fewer headaches.

Source:

إسلاميون وليبراليون ومستقلون.. وقبائل: من هي قوى المعارضة الكويتية؟
 “Islamists, Liberals, Independents and Tribes: Who is the Kuwaiti Opposition?” (al-Safir),
 Assafir.com, 7 November 2012. <http://www.assafir.com/Article.aspx?EditionId=2302&articleId=631&ChannelId=55283&Author=%D9%87%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%A1%20%D8%B2%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AA%D8%B1>
 (translation via: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/10/who-are-kuwaits-opposition.html>)

The situation in Kuwait became tense after the government decided to pass a temporary electoral law, based on the one-vote principle that is used in Jordan. Analysts indicated that the modification of the Kuwaiti law was based on advice from Jordanian politicians. Political and military relations between Jordan and Kuwait and with Gulf countries in general are close and have a long history. Since the independence of these countries in the 1960s and 1970s, Jordan has played a key role in establishing their armies and security services. There was a constant presence of Jordanian military and security delegations in the Gulf countries. Jordanian military and police academies graduated hundreds of Gulf officers, and many Jordanian officers worked and still do in Gulf military and security institutions.

Over the past decades, the participation of Jordanian forces to suppress insurgencies in Gulf countries, such as Oman for instance, are no secret. In Bahrain, Saudi Arabian forces that were invited in are still present and Jordan provided logistic and security aid to the Bahraini government to secure the situation on the street. Jordan has official agreements for military and security support with several Gulf countries for training and knowledge-sharing. These agreements, it appears, allow for security detachments to be dispatched in times of need and with the agreement of the other party.

The official Jordanian side prefers to make no declarations on this type of cooperation, given the topic's sensitivity, especially when related to security tasks such as dealing with street protests.

Last year the GCC in principle accepted Jordan as a member, only to later go back on this and instead forge a special partnership and create a fund for financial assistance. In doing so, Gulf politicians hoped to benefit from Jordanian experience in the military and security sectors, given the shared regional challenges faced by the parties and which

Continued: *The Monarchs' Turn?*

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require cooperation on all levels. It is notable that Kuwait was the first Gulf country to transfer its share of support for Jordan, one-quarter billion dollars, when the Jordanian government was most in need of every dollar to confront its fiscal deficit crisis...

Source:

لا تلوموا الأردن!

“Don’t Blame Jordan!” (al-Ghad), Alghad.com, 7 November 2012. http://www.alghad.com/index.php/afkar_wamawaqef2/article/31115/%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D9%84%D9%88%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%86!.html



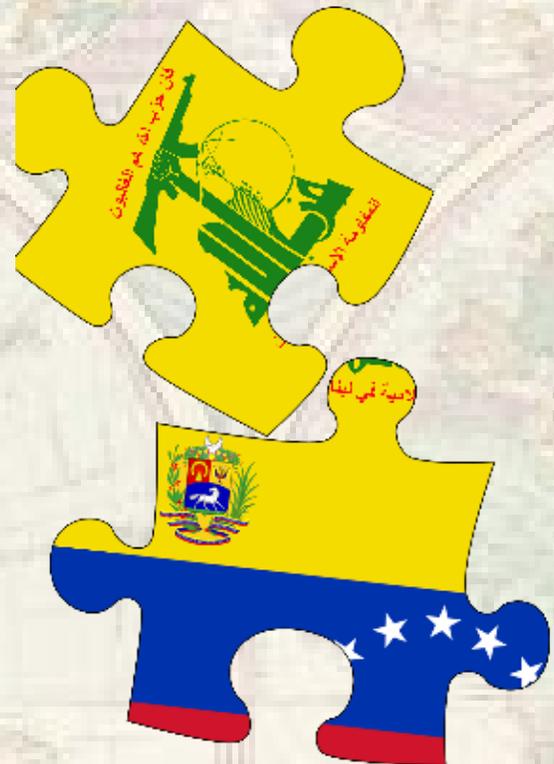
Radical Islam’s Western Foothold:

Hugo Chavez and Hezbollah

By Sam Pickell

“This points to a particularly worrisome possibility: that Hezbollah will move beyond financing and support in Latin America to pursue operational objectives within the Western Hemisphere.”

<http://FMSO.leavenworth.army.mil/universities.html>



Yemen: Moving toward the Endgame?

9 November 2012

“The centerpiece of the second phase of the GCC-sponsored agreement is the National Dialogue, which is to take place soon and set the stage for a negotiated transition to a new constitutional order. Its success will largely depend on events before the dialogue itself, as the various parties jockey for bargaining position in ways that are not always clear, even to the parties themselves.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The two-phase GCC-sponsored transition plan for Yemen is approaching a critical period. While the successful transfer of the presidency from Ali Abdullah Saleh to his former vice-president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi was itself remarkable, many issues were kicked down the road. This has become standard fare in Yemen, where temporary solutions seem to perpetually bring the country back from the brink of collapse. The centerpiece of the second phase of the GCC-sponsored agreement is the National Dialogue, which is to take place soon and set the stage for a negotiated transition to a new constitutional order. Its success will largely depend on events before the dialogue itself, as the various parties jockey for bargaining positions in ways that are not always clear, even to the parties themselves.*

A good example of this is the recent return of Tariq al-Fadhli to Zinjibar and the immediate tensions it created with the “popular committees” that helped government forces expel Ansar al-Shari’a militants from there. Reports that al-Fadhli had been killed by the local militia turned out to be false, and, at the time of this writing, he and a group of his followers were reportedly under siege by government forces and popular committee militiamen. Al-Fadhli, from one of Abyan province’s most prominent families, has played many roles over the years: key liaison for Yemeni fighters

Without a doubt, leaders who exploited a close relationship with President Hadi paved the way for al-Fadhli’s return to Abyan via armored vehicles belonging to the 115th Brigade’s Infantry Battalion, stationed in the city of Shaqra and under the command of the Republican Guard. The battalion’s commander himself, in a meeting with the security committee, said that he received orders from above to transport Tariq al-Fadhli to Abyan. He was subsequently removed by the chiefs of staff, in an attempt to foil the anger that erupted in Abyan and especially among the popular committees...



Abyan Province location indicated by A map marker, via <http://maps.google.com>

A source from the committees confirmed that there will be no dialogue with al-Fadhli unless he turns himself in. The source warned against dragging the province into violence again and creating strife between its tribesmen, which is what some groups working behind the scenes want in order for Abyan to remain without peace due to personal accounts and calculations...

Observers see in the return of al-Fadhli to Zinjibar as paving the way for al-Qaeda’s return, especially given the security vacuum in Abyan since the departure of Ansar al-Sharia and the state’s absence. Many consider this a calculated move to maintain the province as a continual battleground in which all the poles of the political conflict can play out their hidden battles to prove that they are the strongest party, possibly with agreement from high-level commanders in the state. Others see the province as returning to its pre-revolution conditions, with major divisions and fragmentation of the local society among the tribes of al-Fadhli, al-Yafaai, al-Audhali and al-Awlaki. This would mean the return of tribal conflict and the amplification of voices of discord...

Source:

عودة الفضلي وشبح القاعدة مرة أخرى
 “Al-Fadhli and the Specter of al-Qaeda Return” (Mareb Press), Marebpress.net, 9 November 2012. http://marebpress.net/news_details.php?sid=48850&lng=arabic

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in Afghanistan in the 1980s, southern supporter of the north (like current president Hadi) in Yemen's 1994 Civil War, political relative of General Ali Muhsin, one-time friend of Osama bin Laden, Southern Separatist leader, and, most recently, supporter of the al-Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Shari'a. It is not yet clear, as the first accompanying article (from a prominent independent Yemeni newspaper) notes, what he is up to this time around.

*Al-Fadhli's return to Zinjibar and the tension it has created are but one piece on the Yemeni chessboard. The main players in this game are former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, his son Ahmed Ali, and their allies, on the one hand, and the al-Ahmar brothers, General Ali Muhsin and their allies, on the other. Politically, the former are represented by the General People's Congress party, the latter by the Islah party. The government of Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, while attempting to balance between the two, has been unable to incorporate other important groups, most prominently the Houthis and the Southern Movement, into the transitional process. Many believe this opens them up to an alliance with the politically savvy Ali Abdullah Saleh, whose power has eroded significantly over the past year. This, at least, is the view put forth by Islah and its supporters, as shown in the second accompanying article (from an Islah-allied newspaper). While there is likely some intentional exaggeration in the way the Houthi-Saleh alliance is portrayed, the discourse of a broader civil war with regional implications and fought along sectarian lines continues to grow in Yemen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Ali Saleh and his family hide behind the scene, preserving their assets and safeguarding the immunity they have been granted and forging alliances with al-Qaeda and the Huthis to carry out their goals. As al-Qaeda's activities are limited in several southern areas and their movement is restrained, the Huthis in the north will be in no better position. When the expected presidential decree is issued against Ahmed Ali Saleh, if the Huthis do not mobilize, and Saleh is depending on them mobilizing, their alliance will collapse or at least decline, unless the Saleh family, out of despair, hands everything it has over to the Huthis...



Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh, via <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/images/62982.shtml>

...The United States will no longer favor the Huthis if they receive a green light to cause chaos in the capital and the cities and take over Sanaa. Iran's situation also suffers as the likelihood of the Syrian regime falling increases. Iran is likely to suffer from increasingly severe sanctions, which will impact its economy and ability to continue its current foreign policies.

Thus the facts which allowed the Huthis to expand during the recent past appear to have been reversed, forcing the Huthis themselves to move from a policy of attack and expansionism to one of self-preservation. They may seek reconciliation with the revolutionary movement as a first step in this transition.

Source:

فرصة الرئيس هادي في تفكيك عقدة الجيش

"Chance for President Hadi to Disentangle the Military Knot" (al-ahale), 9 November 2012: <http://alahale.net/article/6907html>

AMISOM's Internal Threat: the Possibility of Ugandan Troops Leaving Somalia

9 November 2012

OE Watch Commentary: Ugandan officials are furious over a leaked UN report alleging Ugandan support to the M23 rebel group in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As the accompanying article, "Is Uganda Really Set to Withdraw Troops From Somalia?," details, Uganda is threatening to pull its troops from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). As Uganda provides the largest contingent of forces to AMISOM, its withdrawal could jeopardize the hard fought gains towards establishing a viable national government in Somalia.

The other accompanying article, "Uganda 'Stabbed in Back' by UN Report - Minister," discusses, in part, how Uganda felt the UN report got its facts wrong. Whether the UN considered this a possibility, or perhaps out of fear that Uganda would withdraw from AMISOM, Ambassador H.S. Puri, the President of the UN Security Council, said the views expressed by the independent group of experts in the report do not necessarily reflect those of the UN (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201211040389.html>). This, as well as other diplomatic actions, may be enough to calm down the situation. Indeed, as the various articles relate, while Uganda's anger may be genuine, it is hard to gauge how likely the Ugandan government would be willing to lose both prestige and money if it withdrew from AMISOM. Their concerns, with attention drawn to them by threats of withdrawal, have been heard.

The question of Uganda's recent role, if any, in supporting M23 might be placed on the backburner for now. Though parts of the eastern DRC remain mired in fighting, losing Uganda from AMISOM over a controversial UN report may be



AMISOM Troops in Somalia, via <http://baidoamedia.com/amisom-oo-fariisimo-ka-sameysatay-baydhabo-sawiro/>

...Uganda has threatened to withdraw its forces from a number of peacekeeping missions including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Currently, the country provides the largest contingent to Somalia and has been key to the successes of the mission in its efforts to extend security beyond Mogadishu...

...This threat follows allegations of Uganda's support for the M23 rebellion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which came to light from a leaked version of the United Nations Group of Experts report on the DRC...

...The chances that the achievements of the AU mission will be reversed if Uganda withdraws, without replacement, are high...

...However, the troop pullout pronouncements, have raised questions about the country's role in Somalia being Somali-centered or informed by self-interest and the search for recognition of relevance...

Source: "Is Uganda Really Set to Withdraw Troops From Somalia?," Institute for Security Studies (South Africa), 9 Nov 2012, <http://www.issafrica.org/pgcontent.php?UID=31909>

...Uganda's Communications and Information Minister Ruhakana Rugunda told AFP his country felt "stabbed in the back" by a UN report which said Uganda and Rwanda have helped M23 rebels who are battling DR Congo government forces...

...The report on DR Congo by UN sanctions committee experts has infuriated Uganda and Rwanda, which both border the eastern region where M23 has been battling the government since March...

...The experts said Uganda had "actively supported" M23, a movement led by wanted war criminal Bosco Ntaganda, who the report said had bought a house in the Ugandan capital Kampala...

...The report quoted DR Congo army commanders and former M23 officers who said

Continued: AMISOM's Internal Threat: the Possibility of Ugandan Troops Leaving Somalia

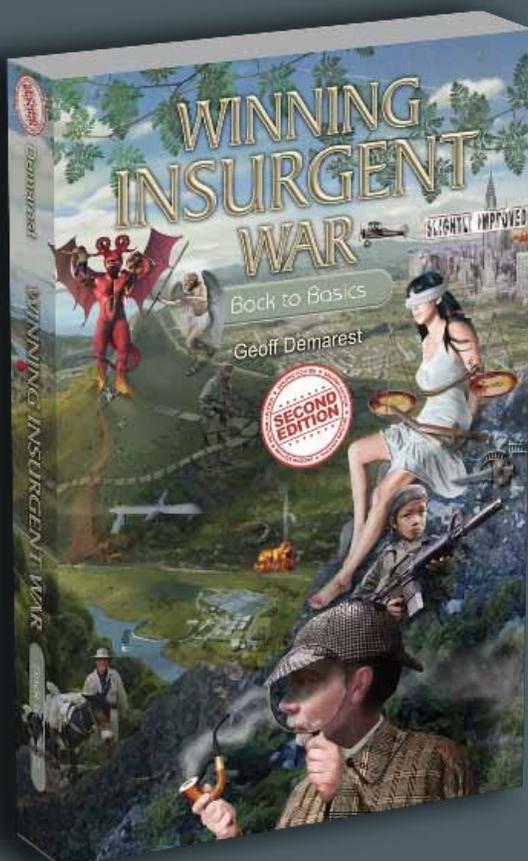
9 November 2012

too high a price for the African Union, UN, and other interested parties to pay. Though some may say the lesson learned is not to have AMISOM comprised of such a large number of soldiers from one country, the reality is that it has been hard to recruit acceptable combat forces for the Somalia mission, and Uganda's willingness to provide so many - whether for its own interests, Somalia's interests or both - has been critical to AMISOM's success. End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

Uganda had deployed about 600 troops alongside Rwandan forces to help the rebels prepare attacks...

...Rugunda said people who reported the troops to the United Nations had probably mistaken them for about 600 DR Congo troops who fled across the border to Uganda and were eventually sent back in July...

Source: "Uganda 'Stabbed in Back' by UN Report - Minister," AFP published in New Vision (Uganda), 6 Nov 2012, <http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/637077-uganda-stabbed-in-back-by-un-report-minister.html>



Geoff Demarest's *Winning Insurgent War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just 'insurgency.' In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest raises new and overlooked concepts related to modern conflict in a provocative manner designed to stir up debate and critical thinking. As Geoff Demarest puts it: "I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious."

Kenya: With Elections Approaching, Concerns Over Security After Cattle Rustlers Slaughter More Than Forty Police Officers

12 November 2012

OE Watch Commentary: *Simmering beneath the surface in many African countries are numerous conflicts among pastoralists or between pastoralists and agriculturalists. Periodically individuals are killed, but for the most part these low-intensity conflicts remain relatively hidden to the outside world, only making news when something startling occurs, such as when there is a large spike in the number of killings or if police are the victims. On both counts this is what happened recently in Kenya when, as the accompanying article relates, 42 police officers were killed in an ambush by cattle rustlers. Nine other officers are recovering from their wounds, and fifteen are still missing.*

As further information becomes available it will be possible to better piece together the events of this horrible massacre. Meanwhile, much of the nation is in shock. As the article states, "Cattle theft and the ensuing clashes between rival pastoralist groups claim dozens of lives every year in arid northern Kenya. However, it is rare for police officers to be attacked by rustlers."

*Though this violence does not appear to be politically motivated, it calls into question Kenya's ability to provide adequate security. People are particularly mindful of the violence that erupted after the December 2007 presidential election when, depending on the source cited, between 800 and 1500 people were killed and 180,000 to 250,000 were displaced. With the March 2013 election fast approaching, the slaughter of 42 police officers surely adds to the concerns of Kenyans that if post-election violence once again breaks out, security forces might not be able to contain it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***



Kenya Police, via <http://www.kenyan-post.com>

...Police officers hunting cattle rustlers in Suguta Valley were ambushed and shot indiscriminately by heavily armed militiamen believed to have come from Turkana...

...Another senior police officer involved in the search and rescue team told Capital FM News that up to 107 officers were pursuing the rustlers when the ambush occurred...

... "Only 50 came back alive," he said...

...With the confirmed death of 42 officers, 15 remained missing...

...The violence is not believed to be linked to politics, but it raises concerns over security and a lack of police capacity in volatile areas ahead of elections due to take place in March...

Source: Bernard Momonyl, "Kenya: Cops Killed in Ambush Hit Shocking 42," Capital FM News (Kenya), 12 Nov 2012, <http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2012/11/kenyan-cops-killed-in-ambush-hit-shocking-42/>

Africans Ponder U.S.-Military Funded News Websites

13 November 2012

Source: “Jason Straziuso, “US military behind Africa news websites,” Associated Press (Nairobi, Kenya), 13 November 2012: <http://news.yahoo.com/us-military-behind-africa-news-websites-164903010.html>

“Given some of Africa’s incredibly un-free media environments...it should be unsurprising that these pro-West websites are providing new framings of local topics that would otherwise not organically arise.”

OE Watch Commentary: More than ever, the ability to dictate the contours of a particular conversation is seen as an indelibly important part of military strategy. To that end, AFRICOM’s attempts at doing so through two African news websites seem to be finding less opposition than one might initially expect.

As the accompanying article details, AFRICOM’s creation and management of two news websites (*Maghreb.com* in northern Africa and *Sabahioline.com* in the Horn of Africa) are being **mostly well** received on the continent. The two sites, which operate in Africa’s two most tenuous regions, arguably fill an ideological void in such largely underfunded and unprofessional media environments. To be sure, nearly all of the countries encompassing these websites’ target markets are in decidedly “closed” media environments, according to Freedom House’s “Freedom of the Press” surveys. To that end, with the exceptions of Morocco and Mauritania (which garnered distinctions as “partly free”), all other countries in the service region of these websites were declared as hosting media environments that are “not free.” The worst is Eritrea, labeled as Africa’s most closed media society at 49th place (the rankings allow for ties), with other poor markets including Somalia at 47th, Ethiopia at 43rd, Sudan at 41st, and Djibouti at 38th.

The website’s headlines trumpet al-Shabab’s imminent demise and describe an American jihadist fretting over insurgent infighting. At first glance it appears to be a sleek, Horn of Africa news site. But the site — *sabahionline.com* — is run by the U.S. military.

The site, and another one like it that centers on northwest Africa, is part of a propaganda effort by the U.S. military’s Africa Command aimed at countering extremists in two of Africa’s most dangerous regions — Somalia and the Maghreb.

Omar Faruk Osman, the secretary general of the National Union of Somali Journalists, said Sabahi is the first website he’s seen devoted to countering the militants’ message.

“We have seen portal services by al-Shabab for hate and for propaganda, for spreading violence. We are used to seeing that. In contrast we have not seen such news sites before. So it is something completely unique,” Osman said.

But although he had noticed prominent articles on the site, which is advertising heavily on other websites, he had not realized it was bankrolled by U.S. military.

Al-Shabab and other militants have for years used websites to trade bomb-making skills, to show off gruesome attack videos and to recruit fighters. The U.S. funded websites — which are available in languages like Swahili, Arabic and Somali — rely on freelance writers in the region.

The site, which launched in February, is slowly attracting readers. The military said that Sabahi averages about 4,000 unique visitors and up to 10,000 articles read per day. The site clearly says under the “About” section that it is run by the U.S. military, but many readers may not go to that link.

Abdirashid Hashi, a Somalia analyst for the International Crisis Group, said he has read articles on Sabahi, mostly because of advertisements on other Somali websites, but he also didn’t realize it was funded by the U.S. He said he has no issues with the U.S. government running a news site.

“I don’t think they hide it. That’s up there. There’s an information war going on, so I



Omar Faruk Osman, via <http://horseseedmedia.net>

Continued: Africans Ponder U.S.-Military Funded News Websites

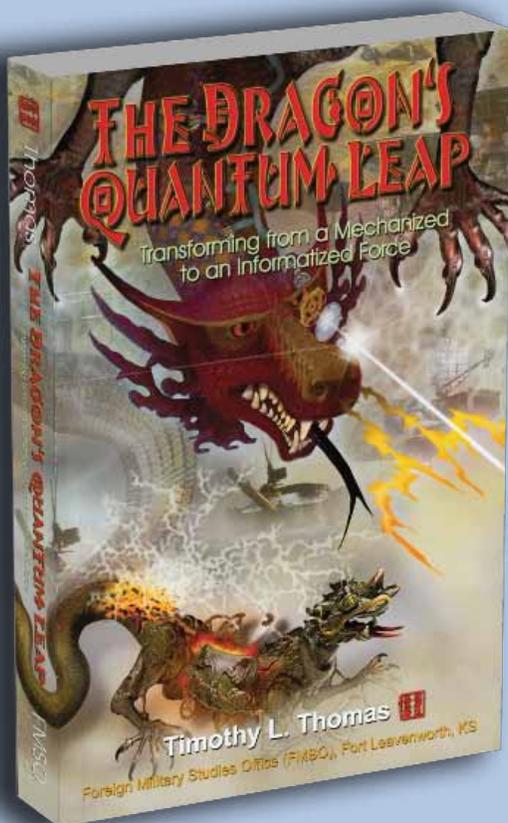
13 November 2012

Given some of Africa's incredibly un-free media environments, which partly receive bad rankings because of the presence of violence and intimidation against journalists, it should be unsurprising that these pro-West websites are providing new framings of local topics that would otherwise not organically arise. As the analysts in the story note, however, those writing for the sites face some occupational hazards: one would expect that journalists would face particular danger in Somalia, Eritrea, and Algeria, a local reality that the sites' administrators would be wise to address. End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

don't have any problem with that," Hashi said.

Osman said the articles on Sabahi are accurate and professional. But he said he feared that militants could attack writers who work for the site. Eighteen Somalis who work with media outlets have been killed this year, often in targeted killings.

Somali writers "can lose their life for working for this kind of a news outlet because of the extremists who target any critical voice or news service," Osman said. "The other issue is professionalism, because if someone is intimidated and is threatened all the time then he or she is reduced to self-censorship. He or she would be afraid if he files some important news that he would be targeted."



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**

World's Muslim Powers Court Somalia as Ally

14 November 2012

“In both the cases of Turkey and Iran, pledges of support frequently come couched in the form of Islamic solidarity, a seemingly new and important tactic as emerging powers attempt to ingratiate themselves with Africa.”

OE Watch Commentary: For years Somalia languished on the periphery of the world's geopolitical conscious. Now, however, courting Somalia as a pet project seems to be an all important strategy for two of the world's most important Muslim countries – Turkey and Iran.

After the fall of the Siad Barre regime in Somalia in 1991, the country had been largely without leadership, save for brief periods of rule by various temporary governing coalitions. Though the United Nations, the United States, and various other NATO allies tried their hands (unsuccessfully) at some process of nation building, Somalia generally remained a scar on the world's conscious, left in the shadows of most diplomatic conversations. However, with the rise of so-called emerging powers (or “middle powers,” such as the BRIC [Brazil, Russia, India and China] and CIVETS [Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa] countries), Africa has begun to be courted far more intensely.

Interestingly, Somalia has seen a tremendous amount of attention from two of the world's most powerful Muslim states: first from Turkey, and more recently from Iran. After the African Union drove the last al-Shebab troops out of Mogadishu in 2011, Turkey flooded the city with upwards of 500 development workers. It has since been working to build schools, roads, and hospitals, as well as improving public sanitation and renovating the Mogadishu airport. Internationally, Turkey has shown leadership by hosting various conferences on Somalia and asserting that it is one of its top foreign policy priorities. For its part, Iran has been eyeing Somalia for some time. Beginning in 2009 Iran began helping to control the Somalia coast against pirates there, but more for geopolitical reasons related to the Strait of Hormuz and less out of the type of solidarity espoused by Turkey. Interestingly, however, Iran recently announced that it would construct an embassy in Mogadishu in the near future.

Source: “Iran and Turkey Pledge Support to Help Rebuild Somalia,” Now Lebanon, 14 November 2012: <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=456599>



Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi (L) and his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu are seen before a meeting in Ankara, Turkey, August 7, 2012., via <http://www.voanews.com>

Top government officials from Iran and Turkey arrived in Mogadishu Wednesday on a one-day visit in a bid to bolster diplomatic and economic ties with Somalia as it emerges from decades of civil strife.

Leading the two delegations were Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu.

Salehi told journalists at the airport on his arrival that Iran would soon establish a diplomatic presence in Somalia.

“Our purpose in coming to Somalia is to keep extending our brotherly hand to the Somali people. We are delighted to be in Mogadishu today and very soon, the Iranian government will open the Embassy of Iran in Somalia,” Salehi said.

Ahmet Davutoglu for his part told the recently constituted Somali

Continued: World's Muslim Powers Court Somalia as Ally

14 November 2012

*In the cases of both Turkey and Iran, it should be noted that pledges of support to help aid Somalia in its reconstruction efforts frequently come couched in the form of Islamic solidarity, a seemingly new and important tactic as emerging powers attempt to ingratiate themselves with Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***

parliament that Ankara would help Somalia in its rebuilding effort.

The two ministers pledged the support of their respective countries in improving Somalia's infrastructure, with Iran planning to construct a hospital and Turkey offering to build a road.

In May, representatives from 54 countries who gathered in Istanbul to map out a better future for Somalia called for a broad international reconstruction effort.

Additional Sources:

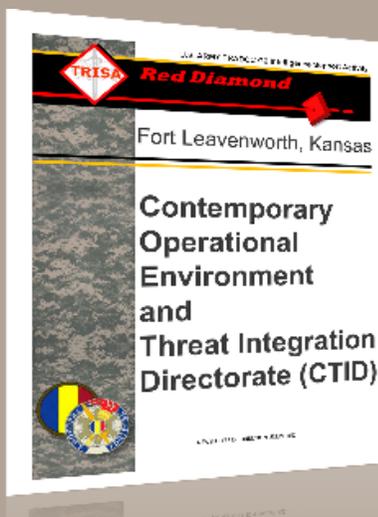
"How Africa Plays into Iran's Nuclear Ambitions": <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/17/how-africa-plays-into-irans-nuclear-ambitions/>

"Iran's Troubled Foray into Africa":

<http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/12/irans-troubled-foray-into-africa>

"Turkey's Love Affair with Somalia":

<http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2012/11/07/turkeys-love-affair-with-somalia/>



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>.

In Africa's North Korea, Eritreans Call for Regime Overthrow

13 November 2012

Source: Tesfa-Alem Tekle, "Eritrea: Opposition Renews Calls for Mass Revolt Against Regime," Sudan Tribune (Khartoum, Sudan), 13 November 2012: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201211140835.html>

OE Watch Commentary: Long described as Africa's North Korea, the stronghold of Eritrean President Isais Afiwerki is now being challenged more than it ever has, particularly by the Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO)'s calls for his overthrow.

As one of the leaders of the independence-era group, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (ELPF), which succeeded in helping Eritrea to break away from Ethiopia in 1991, Isais Afiwerki has ruled Eritrea with an iron fist since the country officially gained its independence in 1993. Afiwerki's highly secretive and authoritarian regime has long based its legitimacy on a sense of national paranoia derived from its historically belligerent relationship with neighbor and one-time "colonizer," Ethiopia. Indeed, Afiwerki rules the country as his dominion with near-complete control of the army, all levels of government, and the press. Human rights abuses, particularly in the military, are commonplace, and Eritrea consistently ranks as one of the least free places on earth.

Given the deeply oppressive nature of the Afiwerki regime, RSADO's calls for a military attack are highly dangerous, yet unsurprising. As detailed by the longer article, because of the regime's dictatorial nature, the group's organizers primarily reside outside of the country: the Eritrean diaspora is known to include vocal dissidents of the regime, and Ethiopia too has previously asserted that it would be willing to aid in an overthrow of the Afiwerki regime.

For the U.S. too, the ouster of Afiwerki would be a blessing, though its direct involvement in such an overthrow could tarnish its reputation in a region already wary of its presence. Yet whether RSADO's calls will ultimately amount to any more than empty threats remains to be seen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**

“Given the deeply oppressive nature of the Afiwerki regime, RSADO's calls for a military attack are both highly dangerous yet unsurprising.”

An exiled Eritrean opposition force on Tuesday made fresh calls for public uprising against president Isaias Afewerki's regime in Asmara.

Chairman of The Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO), Ibrahim Haron, told Sudan Tribune that Eritrea is currently facing an unprecedented political, economic, social and human rights crisis. The group alleged that Eritrean leaders have become more than ever corrupted and are lately confiscating military budgets to their own coffers. The opposition leader further said the Red Sea nation is witnessing a growing division among political and military leaders of the country.

As a result “the Eritrean Army has intensified its opposition against the ill military policies” he said adding “Eritrean defence forces doesn't any more have the trust on its leaders and has lost the spirit to militarily defend [their] own nation”.

Haron said, now was the right time to act against Eritrean government, calling on the Eritrean Army, opposition forces, as well as the Eritrean people at home and aboard to jointly unite to oust the regime.

According to the opposition group the mass revolution could be ignited in the coming few weeks.

Eritrea is a one party state, and does not have any legally functioning political opposition to the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ).

The Ethiopian-based, Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO) vowed to carry out military strikes to topple the Eritrean regime.

Military officials of the group on Tuesday told Sudan Tribune that its fighters are making necessary preparations to carry out strong military offences. RSADO leader called on all Eritrean opposition forces to unify.

Mekong River: Trans-National Concerns in the Heart of Southeast Asia

6 November 2012

Source: news.xinhuanet.com, "Principal suspect in Mekong River attack sentenced to death," November 6, 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-11/06/c_131954410.htm

OE Watch Commentary: *Since the building of the first dam across the Mekong River in 1993 in China's Yunnan Province, controversy regarding development in the Mekong River Basin has grown. What aspects of economic development will take priority? Who will be the greater among equals to police this vast waterway? Will traditional socio-economic activities be submerged by investments in infrastructure, dams, and modernity? China, Burma (Myanmar), Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam share the river, as well as the controversy. Each national actor brings its own desires for what the future role of the river will be. For example, China seeks an increase in the transport of goods and products, while Laos seems desperate for hydroelectric power as a source of revenue. All six are deeply dependent upon the Mekong River fisheries.*

A bloody event on the Thai – Burma border in October 2011 set the stage for these major themes to play out. An article in English.xinhuanet.com reports that six suspects have been tried in Chinese courts, found guilty, and sentenced for the murder of thirteen Chinese crew members of two commercial cargo boats. The grisly event involved Thai military, Burma drug gangs, and Chinese commercial interests. It immediately shed a spotlight on regional security and gave opportunity for China to instigate an expanded effort on joint law enforcement along the upper regions of the waterway. A "coordinated patrol"¹ was instituted and now is in its sixth iteration, with shipping levels almost returned to that previous to the murders a year ago.² Another article from Xinhuanet explicitly touts how the "murder trial... set a good example for regional judicial cooperation for the rest of the world."³ This emphasizes the positive role China sees for itself in this geostrategic region.

An article from the Bangkok Post of Thailand indicates the continuing tension in broader regional security responsibility. Thailand cooperated with China in the initial investigation into the murders and the apprehension of the suspects.⁴ However, it does not feel compelled to pursue charges against the Thai military personnel nor to allow China unfettered access to the Mekong along the Thai border.

Thailand and China are seeing the most financial potential along the waterway in terms of import and export. Both Laos and Cambodia are seeking future economic growth through

“The crime ring was busted earlier this year in a joint operation conducted by police from China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand...”

A Chinese court on Tuesday sentenced Naw Kham, a drug lord from Myanmar, and three of his subordinates to death for the murder of 13 Chinese sailors on the Mekong River last year.

Another two members of Naw Kham's gang... received a death sentence with reprieve and eight years in prison....The two ...are from Myanmar.

The six suspects, comprised of five people from Myanmar, Thailand and Laos and one stateless suspect, faced charges of intentional homicide, drug trafficking, kidnapping and hijacking or a combination of those criminal offenses. ...

... gang members were found to have masterminded and colluded with Thai soldiers in an attack on two Chinese cargo ships... on Oct. 5, 2011 on the Mekong River....

Nie Tao, a Chinese police officer of the local public security agency in Yunnan, said police are still working with authorities of relevant countries to bring other suspects implicated in the case to justice.

Chinese police will also provide necessary assistance, including evidence of Thai soldier renegades, to Thailand for its investigation and prosecutions, Nie said....

....Nicknamed "Godfather," Naw Kham was the boss of the largest illegal armed drug trafficking gang in the "Golden Triangle" region along the Mekong River....

....Investigations revealed that the Naw Kham gang was responsible for at least 28 cases of criminal attacks targeting Chinese ships and citizens, resulting in 16 deaths and three injuries....

....The trial of Naw Kham and other suspects shows that China is capable of and responsible for protecting its citizens, and that any criminal violation against its people will be subject to punishment in accordance with the law....

Continued: Mekong River: Trans-National Concerns 9 November 2012 in the Heart of Southeast Asia

*infrastructure development along the Mekong and its tributaries. Agence France Presse has published several recent articles on infrastructure development. These articles have been published widely in the region and seem to reflect local sentiment that cannot find a voice in the regional national press. The planned dams have much promise in terms of hydroelectric production, yet carry the specter of environmental degradation. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) was created in 1995 by the governments of the lower Mekong basin (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam). The intention is to gather information to support sustainable management of the entire river basin. Most recent reports from the MRC highlight the development challenges from hydropower development.⁵ The conflict among commerce, conservation, and criminality will continue. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)***

¹ “Problems on the Mekong river are far from over”, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/opinion/Problems-on-the-Mekong-river-are-far-from-over-30173121.html>

² “6th Mekong River patrol concludes amid closer regional cooperation” http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-09/26/c_131875167.htm

³ “Mekong murder trail a model of regional judicial cooperation” http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2012-09/20/c_131863289.htm

⁴ “Principal suspect in Mekong River attack sentenced to death” http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2012-11/06/c_131954410.htm

⁵ <http://www.mrcmekong.org/assets/Publications/basin-reports/MRC-SOB-Summary-reportEnglish.pdf>

Source: news.xinhuanet.com, “Mekong murder trail a model of regional judicial cooperation,” Cao Kai, September 20, 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2012-09/20/c_131863289.htm

“Initiated by China, senior cabinet members from China, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand met in Beijing on Oct. 31 last year and agreed to take joint action to crack down on cross-border crime and secure transportation along the Mekong River.”

Six foreigners suspected of murdering 13 Chinese sailors on the Mekong River went on trial ... a successful regional judicial cooperation among China and southeast Asian countries.

It is uncommon in China’s judicial practice for foreigners who commit crimes against Chinese nationals outside this country to be brought to justice before a Chinese court.

...That clearly shows the resolution of the governments of China, Thailand, Myanmar and Laos to jointly fight rampant crimes, including armed robberies and drug trafficking, in their border areas....

...The trial ... demonstrate(s) China’s judicial work to the world, adding confidence to those countries who expect to enhance cooperation with China....

...Union is strength. The trial of Naw Kham and his men has set a good example for regional judicial cooperation for the rest of the world.

Continued: Mekong River: Trans-National Concerns 9 November 2012 ***in the Heart of Southeast Asia***

Source: news.xinhuanet.com, "Govt denies drug lord's claim", September 22, 2012, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/313474/govt-denies-drug-lord-claim>

“The government has shrugged off Myanmar drug lord Nor Kham’s claim that Thai soldiers were responsible for the deadly attacks on two Chinese cargo vessels on the Mekong River last year.”

The government has shrugged off Myanmar drug lord Nor Kham’s claim that Thai soldiers were responsible for the deadly attacks on two Chinese cargo vessels on the Mekong River last year.

...Deputy Prime Minister Yutthasak Sasiprap said yesterday Nor Kham should provide evidence to back his accusation and name the individuals he claims were involved in the attack that killed 13 Chinese sailors in October.

“He can’t just accuse Thai soldiers. He has to come up with evidence,” said Gen Yutthasak, who oversees security affairs....

...Gen Yutthasak said the government would not turn a blind eye if Thai troops were found to have been involved in the attack.

Chalerm Yubamrung, also a deputy prime minister, who is in charge of drug suppression, said he was not surprised that Nor Kham had changed his tune.

“It is to be expected that the accused would deny charges in court because he has money and influence from drug trafficking,” he said.

Even so, Nor Kham’s changed testimony will not affect the case because witnesses and evidence strongly implicate him in the killings, Mr Chalerm said.

Mr Chalerm said the government would not seek Nor Kham’s extradition so that he could be prosecuted in Thailand for drug trafficking because he is expected to be sentenced to death by the Chinese court.

“We have worked closely with Chinese authorities in this case and provided all evidence to the Chinese side. I believe he will definitely be found guilty and be given the death sentence,” he said....

...Nor Kham and five co-defendants are standing trial in Kunming, capital of Yunnan province, for alleged murder, drug trafficking, kidnapping and hijacking ships.

The deaths of the Chinese crew members have been shrouded in mystery.

Nine army officers of the Pha Muang Taskforce intercepted the Chinese-flagged Hua Ping and Yu Xing 8 boats as they entered Thai waters on the Mekong on Oct 7, 2011.

The troops seized 920,000 methamphetamine tablets and found the body of a sailor on one of the ships.

They became suspects and faced criminal charges when the bodies of the other sailors turned up in the water.



Mekong River, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mekong.jpg>

Continued: Mekong River: Trans-National Concerns 9 November 2012 ***in the Heart of Southeast Asia***

Source: L'Agence France-Presse (AFP), "Laos to start construction of mega dam 'this week'" AFP, November 05, 2012, <http://khampoua.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/laos-to-start-construction-of-controversial-mekong-mega-dam/>

“The mooted 1,260 megawatt dam, the first of 11 on the key waterway, has become a symbol of the potential risks of hydropower projects in the region.”

Laos ... said it would start construction of a controversial multi-billion dollar dam this week, after adapting the design to calm environmental concerns from neighbouring nations.

“After two years of preparation the Laos government will have a ground breaking ceremony on November 7 and will then start working on the dam itself in the Mekong river this week,” deputy energy minister Viraphonh Viravong told AFP.

The \$3.8 billion hydroelectric project at Xayaburi, led by Thai group CH Karnchang, has sharply divided the four Mekong nations -- Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand -- who rely on the river system for fish and irrigation....

...Communist Laos, one of the world's most under-developed nations, believes the dam will help it become “the battery of Southeast Asia” by selling electricity to its richer neighbours.

Thailand has agreed to buy most of the electricity generated by the project, but Cambodia and Vietnam fear the dam could decimate their farming and fishing industries.

Environmentalists say the dam would be disastrous for the 60 million people who depend on the river for transportation, food and economy.

They fear Mekong fish species will become endangered as vital nutrients are trapped and dozens of species are prevented from swimming upstream to mating grounds....

Source: L'Agence France-Presse (AFP), “Cambodia approves controversial dam plan” AFP, November 02, 2012, <http://khmerization.blogspot.com/2012/11/cambodia-approves-controversial-dam.html>

“Nine dams, including at least four funded by China, are set to open by 2019.”

Energy-hungry Cambodia on Friday gave the green light to a multi-million dollar hydropower dam backed by companies from China and Vietnam that activists say will affect thousands of people.

The Hydro Power Lower Sesan 2 project will invest \$781.5 million to build a 400-megawatt hydroelectric dam on a tributary of the Mekong River in northern Stung Treng province, according to a government statement....

...UN human rights envoy Surya Subedi also raised concerns about the dam ... saying communities reported they had not been adequately consulted about the impact of the project.

Cambodia late last year opened the country's largest hydropower dam to date, a more than \$280 million Chinese-funded project that has attracted criticism from environmental groups....

...Nine dams, including at least four funded by China, are set to open by 2019, and once they are all operational the government says they will generate 2,045 megawatts of power, serving all Cambodia's provinces.

Mexican Indigenous Tribes: The New Mules of Drug Trafficking Organizations

3 November 2012

Source: "Indígenas mexicanos, las nuevas mulas del narcotráfico", Mundonarco, http://www.mundonarco.com/2012/10/indigenas-mexicanos-las-nuevas-mulas.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Mundonarcocom+%28Blog+del+narco%29

OE Watch Commentary: *The Rarámuri are a Native American people who live in the Tarahumara mountains of Chihuahua, one of the poorest areas of Mexico, where 49.1% of the population lives below the national poverty line. The population of the Rarámuri in 2006 was estimated between 50,000 and 70,000 people, the majority of whom live in high sierras and canyons, including Copper Canyon and the Sierra Madre Occidental.*

The Rarámuri are known for living off the land, but a ten-year drought in the Sierra Madre region of Chihuahua has devastated their agricultural endeavors. This drought reached its pinnacle in 2011 with just 12 inches of rain (the normal rainfall in the region is 21 inches). Other opportunities are not an option for the Rarámuri people, as there is no work in the Sierra Madre, a factor which has made young Raramuri people vulnerable to cartel recruitment. Current estimates indicate that around 150 Raramuri families live in the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez.

The Sinaloa Cartel

The leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, was born in the Sierra Madre and is no stranger to its people or its economic hardships. He grew up tending to poppy and marijuana crops and later advanced within the Sinaloa Cartel to his current position. He is also known for his recruitment efforts directed at the disenfranchised populations in the Sierra Madre region, and the Rarámuri people are no exception.

In reality, the Rarámuri have been forced into working as drug mules for two reasons: survival and the fact that the Sierra Madre is one of the most fertile regions in the world for growing illicit crops. Due to the large quantity of marijuana and poppy plants being grown in the region, the Mexican government carries out near constant eradication efforts, which destroy not only drugs but also the legitimate crops being grown by the Rarámuri for survival. This further dampens any chance the indigenous tribe may have for survival.

*A critical moment is approaching for the Rarámuri as they face continued drought and drug-related tensions. To curtail recruitment of this indigenous tribe, the Mexican government will have to address both environmental and employment challenges. If this does not happen, the future of the Rarámuri people may be jeopardized. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)***



Mexican Indigenous Tribes: The New Mules of Drug Trafficking Organizations

Multiple sources are indicating that the Sinaloa Cartel is using indigenous peoples from the Raramuri community (also known as Pies Ligeros or Tarahumaras) as drug mules. This idea is evidenced by the arrests of at least 50 Raramuris in the last four years; many of which were caught attempting to smuggle drugs from Ciudad Juarez into the United States.

Raramuri drug mules work in groups of 7 to 10, are given backpacks with 10 to 20 kilograms of drugs, and are provided with a guide to aid them in crossing the border. Each group is responsible for their shipment. The Raramuri transport their shipments during the evening hours and are known for their ability to walk extremely long distances.

How the Newcomers to the Politburo Might Affect a National Push for Innovation?

7 November 2012

OE Watch Commentary: *The following article was published in Nature, a premier international journal that covers all disciplines of science. The author, Gong Peng, is affiliated with Tsinghua University in China and the University of California, Berkeley, which affords him two perspectives upon which to base his analysis (innovation in the United States versus that in China).*

Gong points out that China is midway through a program to transform it into an innovation-oriented society. The country's steps and goals are an extension to Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms, which began to take root in 1978. Deng, according to the article, "viewed science and technology as 'the primary productive forces' of his strategy to transform a poor agricultural country into an affluent nation."

Gong blames China's shortfalls on achieving innovation on methods taken by engineer-minded individuals. He points out that China's science systems looks like they were designed by an engineer. For example, there are too many "mid-term and annual reviews with external audits at the university level, to check on progress." These and other steps can stifle creativity, which is needed for new ideas and hence innovation. With all that China has to offer—growing research and development funding, a growing talent pool of scientists, and the desire to achieve high results—Gong's hope is that having new appointees with backgrounds in economics and administration, as opposed to simply engineers, will drive the way to an innovative-oriented China. This hope could well be spot on. **End FMSO Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Peng Gong, "China's New Leaders Must Keep Science in Focus," *Nature*, November 7, 2012, <http://www.nature.com/news/china-s-new-leaders-must-keep-science-in-focus-1.11751>

"...to draw fresh talent to the country, China launched the 'Thousand Talents' programme in 2008 to entice the best researchers in science, technology, engineering, and management..."

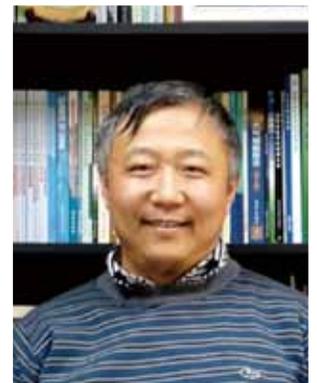
Since 1989, the political bureau (politburo) of the Communist Party of China has been dominated by officials trained in engineering. This time, appointees with backgrounds in economics and administration are expected to constitute more than half of the standing committee, the most powerful section of the politburo. The scientific community inside and outside the country is wondering how this shift will affect the future of scientific research in China.

...The country is half-way through a 15-year science and technology program to transform it into an 'innovation-oriented society.' Internal desire and external pressure to deliver this are strong.

...many Chinese students educated abroad do not return after they graduate. To combat this, and to draw fresh talent to the country, China launched the 'Thousand Talents' program in 2008 to entice the best researchers in science, technology, engineering, and management...the number of acquisitions of foreign companies by Chinese enterprises is increasing...

...China's talent pool is increasing, but there is still a shortage of scientists who are creative and original thinkers...

The Chinese science system looks like it was designed by an engineer. Project conception time is included in grant accounting, there are mid-term and annual reviews with external audits to check on progress, including counts of the number of published papers.



Professor Gong Peng, via <http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn>

Military Clash over Islands Unlikely: Taiwanese Scholars

13 November 2012

Source: Military clash in East China Sea unlikely: scholars,” Central News Agency, 13 November 2012, http://focustaiwan.tw/ShowNews/WebNews_Detail.aspx?ID=201211130023

OE Watch Commentary: *Several scholars were recently interviewed by the Taiwan Central News Agency and offered their analyses on the ongoing disputes in the South East Asian Sea and East China Sea. Though not as widely publicized or accounted for in political discussions, Taiwan also makes claims in both disputes. Taiwan President Ma has offered up a “Peace Plan Initiative” which calls for peaceful means toward resolution, and his proposal is often cited as the most moderate initiative presented to resolve the dispute.*

For the most part, these scholars agreed that “a military confrontation in the East China Sea is unlikely” and view actions that have occurred (and are expected to continue) as shows of bravado from both sides. They expect tensions to ease after the Chinese leadership transition and President Obama’s return to a second term, though they do not give justifications for this view.

*These experts, however, feel that conflicts involving private, small-scale naval hostilities and boundary testing in the South East Asian Sea and East China Sea will continue due to the complexity of the issues involving nationalism, state interest, and energy resources. The interviewees stated that the U.S. favors Japanese claims, but that the U.S. will not initiate hostilities against China. Instead, it will take a “more mature approach to Asian affairs in the coming years.” U.S. involvement in the Pacific territorial disputes tends to be the accepted and general view of most Taiwanese observers, though what exactly is meant by “more mature approach” remains ill-defined. **End OE Watch Commentary (Faruolo)***

Military Clash in East China Sea Unlikely

A military confrontation in the East China Sea is unlikely in the wake of the leadership shift in China and the recent elections in the United States, Taiwanese scholars said Tuesday.

Tsai Ming-yen, professor of international politics at National Chung Hsing University, told CNA that he thinks the possibility of a military clash is dim as the parties involved in the disputes are big economies that often have more sophisticated crisis management mechanisms.

Japan and the United States have domestic procedures for crisis management, and even China was able to very quickly contain a wave of anti-Japanese protests over the disputed Diaoyutai Islands earlier this year, he said.

The strong diplomatic rhetoric and social mobilization are meant merely to show determination and “test the limits” of the other parties involved, Tsai said.

Nonetheless, the disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea are unlikely to be resolved soon since they involve a wide scope of issues, ranging from territorial, historical and sovereignty matters to energy development, he said.

Meanwhile, Chu Yun-han, a research fellow at Academia Sinica’s Institute of Political Science, predicted that “the tensions (in the East China Sea) will cool off” in 2013.

The recent friction between China and Japan, which developed amid the Japanese government’s move to nationalize the disputed Diaoyutai Islands in September, could ease when Xi Jinping becomes China’s new leader and during U.S. President Barack Obama’s second term, Chu said.

Most players in the region will now focus on “more important” issues such as economic and environmental collaboration, the scholar said.

He noted that the U.S. has been hinting over the past year that it will back Japan and the Southeast Asian countries involved in the territorial disputes, against China.

The U.S., however, will not directly confront China on the issue but rather will take a “more mature” approach to Asian affairs in the coming years, Chu said.

The next U.S. secretary of state will seek to guide Asia into a more “predictable and controllable” situation, he said...

...Taiwan has to be careful not to be forced into taking sides on the issue as it has close trade ties with both the United States and China, Tsai said.

Taiwan Radar Data will not be Shared with US

6 November 2012

Source: “Radar data will not be shared with US: MND,” Taipei Times, 6 November 2012, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2012/11/06/2003547012>.

OE Watch Commentary: Taiwan’s legislature is currently working to pass next year’s budget, to include defense spending for 2013. Military officials were asked to disclose information on their activities during the session, including details of a new radar system. The newly purchased US\$1 billion Raytheon-developed early warning radar system is expected to significantly bolster Taiwan’s defense capabilities by collecting enhanced data on incoming objects. The media latched onto comments made by a senior Taiwanese general who stated that any incoming information collected by the radar would not be shared with the United States.

Observers outside of the media, however, regard the statements as strategically designed to misconstrue the Chinese military’s perceptions and understandings of U.S.-Taiwan military cooperation. Other viewpoints identify the fact that matters of information sharing are the prerogative of Taiwan’s policy makers within their respective agencies, especially in an age of increased and heightened electronic warfare.

Regardless, the statements made in the Taiwanese Legislature showcase a growing divide between political parties and their differing perspectives on how cooperative Taiwan should be with regard to its relationship with the U.S... **End OE Watch Commentary (Faruolo)**

Radar data will not be shared with US: MND

Taiwan will not share information gathered by its new early-warning surveillance radar system with the US after the system is completed by the end of the year, a defense official said yesterday.

...The military “will not offer” information collected by it to the US, said Lieutenant General Liu Shi-lay (劉溪烈), an official with the unit at the Ministry of National Defense responsible for communication, electronics and information.

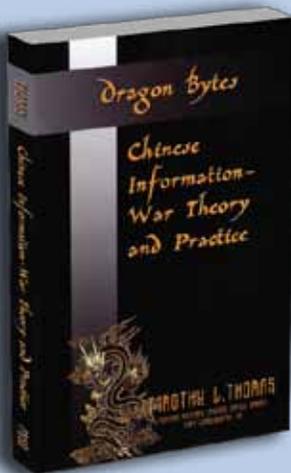
Liu made the remarks in response to concerns raised by Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Lu Shioh-yen (盧秀燕) that the military would provide information collected by the radar system to the US.

At a hearing of the legislature’s Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee, Lu also expressed concern that the system, which Taiwan purchased from the US, would be more beneficial to Washington than to Taipei.

Liu said the information collected by the radar system will be more valuable for the US, in the event of missile attacks by China.

However, the ministry has said that the radar system is necessary to help strengthen Taiwan’s combat readiness in case of Chinese attack, given that China currently has about 1,600 missiles targeting Taiwan.

On the possibility that the US may be able to intercept data collected by the system, Liu said the US would be unable to access any information unless Taiwan shares it.



Dragon Bytes by Tim Thomas examines China’s information-war (IW) theory and practice from 1995-2003. Some specialists may be surprised that the Chinese openly discuss not only computer network attacks and electronic preemption but also the development of IW units and an “integrated network-electronic warfare” theory (which closely approximates the US theory of “network-centric warfare”). The Chinese development of an IW theory is representative of their country’s philosophy and culture. By creating an “IW theory with Chinese characteristics” the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has offered an alternate way of viewing the application of IW than in the West.

North Korean Military University

30 October 2012

Source: Speech made by Kim Jong Un at the founding anniversary ceremony of Kim Il Sung Military University, Korean Central Television, 30 October 2012.

OE Watch Commentary: *The Kim Il Sung Military University is similar to the National Defense University and Command and General Staff College in the United States. Located in Makyongdae area of Pyongyang, its mission is to train mid-grade and higher officers. North Korea has an extensive military education system. Among others, there are the Kang Gun military school, similar to the US military academy (Kang Gun was the first Chief of the General Staff of the North Korean People's Army and died in 1950 during the Korean War); the Kim Il Sung Politics University, to educate political commissars for the military; the Kim Jungsuk naval academy (Kim Jungsuk was the first wife of Kim Il Sung and mother of Kim Jong Il); the Kim Hyungjik medical officer academy (Kim Hyungjik was the father of Kim Il Sung); and the Kim Chulju field artillery school (Kim Chulju was the younger brother of Kim Il Sung, but died when he was very young).*

Kim Jung Un, the new North Korean leader, trained at the Kim Il Sung Military University from 2002 to 2007. The graduates of this military university have dominated all important positions of the North Korean People's Army. As the brief excerpt from the 60th anniversary speech indicates, Kim Jung Un emphasizes the country's "military first" policy. The timing of the speech is important. Just prior to elections in the US and South Korea, Kim Jung Un announced that his country will continue to stress a robust defense over economic reform. Such rhetoric not only strengthens his legitimacy in North Korea society, but also within higher military circles (which may have needed fortifying, after he removed Lee Youngho, the former Chief of the General Staff, and a prominent military leader, in July 2012). End OE Watch Commentary (Kim)

Kim Jong Un Speaks on Kim Il Sung Military University Founding Anniversary

...Comrades! Today, we have reverently built the statues of the great generalissimos at Kim Il Sung Military University located at Mangyo'ngdae, which is a sacred place of the revolution, and we are significantly marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the university. It is the greatest honor and happiness of the teachers, cadets, and graduates of Kim Il Sung Military University and all of the men and officers of the people's army that the statues of great Generalissimo Kim Il Sung and great Generalissimo Kim Jong Il -- the founder and builder of our revolutionary armed forces and the banners of constant victories -- have been reverently built at the military university. [applause]

...I extend warm congratulations to the teachers and cadets of Kim Il Sung Military University who are significantly celebrating the 60th anniversary of the founding of the university with the reverent erection of the statues of the great generalissimos in the midst of the warm blessing of the generalissimos. [applause]

...I also send warm greetings to the graduates of Kim Il Sung Military University and all of the men and officers of the people's army who are reliably upholding the military-first revolutionary cause of our party at the guards posts of the thousand defense line of the fatherland. [applause]

...The great leader Generalissimo Kim Il Sung established the university during the severe fatherland liberation war of life or death, and by visiting the university many times during the period of his revolutionary leadership he illuminated the path to be walked by the university and put the university to the fore as the primary university of the country. [applause]

...The great leader Generalissimo Kim Jong Il, until the last moment of his great revolutionary life, put all his labor and heart and soul into strengthening and developing the university as the party's reliable main base of training military cadres and as a leading university of the world in line with the demands of the military-first era. [applause]

...On this deeply meaningful occasion, I pay the noblest respect and the highest glory to great Generalissimo Kim Il Sung and great Generalissimo Kim Jong Il who are still with the teachers, cadets, and graduates of Kim Il Sung Military University and with all of the men and officers of the people's army, vigorously rousing them to a final victory. [applause]

...Victory and glory to Kim Il Sung Military University that is vigorously advancing in the midst of the everlasting blessing of the great generalissimos! [applause]

The Kyrgyz Border Troops Move Headquarters from Osh to Bishkek

30 October 2012

OE Watch Commentary: On 30 October 2012 Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev directed the Kyrgyz Border Troops to move their headquarters from Osh to Bishkek, a reversal of a 2010 decree by his predecessor that transferred the headquarters from Bishkek to Osh. This action is the latest in a chain of events that began 21 August 2012, when a Kyrgyz Border Troop conscript shot and killed four of his comrades and an officer's wife. This incident outraged many in Kyrgyzstan, including President Atambaev, and eventually led to the removal of the Border Troops from the Kyrgyzstan's Security Service (KNB) subordination on 5 September 2012.

In 2010 the Border Troops headquarters had been moved to Osh, or the "capital of the South," as Kyrgyzstan's second largest city is sometimes called. Official statements at that time attributed the move to more efficient management of the volatile border regions in the Fergana Valley, where Kyrgyzstan faces the vast majority of its border challenges. The relocation of the Border Troop headquarters was also seen as a continuation of Bishkek's efforts to move several agency headquarters to Osh, and these moves were believed to be a concerted effort to more fully control the geographically and culturally distant South.

The relocation of the Kyrgyz Border Troops back to Bishkek was likely done at the behest of the Border Troops. By locating the Kyrgyz Border Troops headquarters near the governmental leadership, they can more effectively negotiate for sparse government resources. The Bishkek relocation may also be advantageous for the acquisition of international aid, as in the past the Border Troops have benefited substantially from foreign donors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

Source: "President Atambaev repositions State Border Service in Bishkek President of Kyrgyzstan," AKIpress News Agency, 30 October 2012. <http://www.akipress.com/>

President Atambaev repositions State Border Service in Bishkek President of Kyrgyzstan

Almazbek Atambaev signed the order to reposition the State Border Service from Osh to Bishkek.

The order was signed in a move to ensure border protection and an effective command of the units of the State Border Service.

The State Border Service will be headquartered in Bishkek now.

The previous presidential order of 2010 on stationing of the State Border Service in Osh was invalidated.

Source: Asker Sultanov, "Kyrgyz border force HQ moved to Bishkek," Central Asia Online, 3 November 2012. <http://centralasiaonline.com>

Kyrgyz border force HQ moved to Bishkek

Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev has signed a decree moving the headquarters of the Kyrgyz Border Guard Service to Bishkek from Osh, the Secretariat of the Defense Council said in a statement November 2.

The decision occurred October 18, the secretariat said, adding that several factors drove it: mainly, the distance of the force's headquarters from Kyrgyz military and political leadership didn't allow the force to implement orders from Bishkek well. The distance also led to poor co-ordination with the executive branch.

The border guard's isolation weakened its co-ordination with international organizations like the OSCE, UNDP and International Organization for Migration, which have aided it in personnel training and provision of equipment and infrastructure.

Furthermore, officers had to obtain housing in Osh, and those who had to attend conferences in Bishkek ran up high business travel expenses. The border force owes creditors more than 1.35m KGS (US \$29,000) for housing and almost 2.6m KGS (US \$55,000) for transportation, the secretariat said.



Kyrgyz Border Troop Commander- Major General Tilenov via <http://www.kabar.kg/eng/law-and-order/full/1790>

Russia's Military Support for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

30 October 2012

Source: Karabekov, Kabai, Chernenko, Elena, Safronov, Ivan, and Strokan, Sergei. "Киргизию и Таджикистан вооружат российскими деньгами (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are Being Armed with Russian Money)," *Kommersant*, 6 November 2012.

OE Watch Commentary: *Russia recently reached agreements with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan that will allow the Russian military to remain at bases in each country for the foreseeable future. The main obstacle in the negotiations related more to compensation than to the strategic implications of the bases. Russia recently reached another agreement with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to provide security assistance, as the following articles illustrate. Both articles give a basic summary of the deals, but from different perspectives: the first comes from Kommersant and gives a Russian view, while the second article comes from a source that focuses on Uzbekistan.*

One of the more interesting aspects of the articles talks about the reasons behind the recent agreement. The first article casually mentions how Russia is complicating its relationship with Uzbekistan because of the deal, while the second states that the security assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could be a move to spite the government of Uzbekistan. The second article also mentions Uzbekistan's decision to withdraw from the Collective Security Treaty Organization in July of this year. Prior to July, Uzbekistan and Russia had been at odds for a number of years over various issues, particularly related to regional security. Russia's decision to strengthen the neighbors of Uzbekistan is part of

“The money allocated for Tajikistan will go toward upgrading the country's air defense system and while this would be beneficial, it does not help some of the more pressing needs for the country's domestic security.”

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Are Being Armed with Russian Money

In response to U.S. efforts to squeeze Russia in Central Asia, Moscow is strengthening its position in the region. As it became known to *Kommersant*, Russia is ready to spend \$1.1 billion to upgrade the Kyrgyz army and \$200 million for the needs of the armed forces of Tajikistan... According to sources, Moscow promised Bishkek \$1.1 billion to modernize the army...

It is not a loan, but for military support. The source in the Russian General Staff of Russia told *Kommersant* that the Russian Ministry of Defense will agree with Bishkek by March 2013 what kind of equipment will be covered in the program. The first delivery of Russian weapons is expected to be sent to Kyrgyzstan in the summer of next year.

Bishkek needs all kinds of small arms, and it hopes to receive infantry fighting vehicles, reconnaissance patrol cars, helicopters, and stationary field hospitals. Also, for operations in mountainous terrain, the Kyrgyz Defense Ministry needs motorcycles, portable mortars, and satellite communications... The program of military support for Tajikistan is more modest... The \$200 million will go to upgrade air defense of the country.

An expert at the Moscow Carnegie Center, Alexei Malashenko, warns that investing unprecedented amounts in rearming Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, "Russia is going all in; this is a risky step with unpredictable consequences." Russia not only signed up to support the least stable regimes of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but also make a gesture that complicates relations with Uzbekistan.



Alexei Malashenko, via <http://www.carnegieendowment.org>

Continued: Russia's Military Support for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

30 October 2012

an ongoing dispute between the two governments. More significant is that the articles do not offer more specific information on what effect the security assistance will have for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

*Certainly \$1.1 billion in security assistance could go a long way for Kyrgyzstan's Defense Ministry, but there is no mention if the other agencies (Interior Ministry or the National Security Committee, which controls the border guards) will receive any of this assistance. The second article contains a quote from a member of the Kyrgyz Defense Council on how the assistance should first strengthen the border guards, which is an aspect of security that Kyrgyzstan needs help with but falls outside of the Ministry of Defense. The \$200 million allocated for Tajikistan will go toward upgrading the country's air defense system, and while this would be beneficial, it does not help some of the more pressing needs for the country's domestic security. Ultimately, Russian security assistance to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan could be aimed at alienating Uzbekistan, but until it is clearer how the assistance will be allocated, it is difficult to see how it benefits security overall for the recipients. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

Source: Россия вооружает Кыргызстан и Таджикистан (Russia is Arming Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan)," Uznews, 6 November 2012.
http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=ru&sub=top&cid=32&nid=21217

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan Are Being Armed with Russian

In the next year, Kyrgyzstan will receive the latest Russian weapons for \$1.1 billion, while for Tajikistan \$400 million; why is Moscow arming the neighbors of Uzbekistan? All Russian military aid to the two countries is being provided free of charge.

To spite Karimov?

Russia has shown increased activity in Central Asia, after the United States began to develop bilateral relations with Uzbekistan. The U.S. made an agreement with Islam Karimov with the transit of goods from Afghanistan, which NATO forces intend to leave in 2014...Warming relations between Tashkent and Washington marked a demarche by Karimov to declare Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)...The Uzbek demarche forced Moscow to strengthen relations with other countries in Central Asia.

We will not stand for this price!

Kyrgyzstan had its external debt of \$489 million written off (by Moscow) and signed an agreement for construction of hydroelectric dams. Tajikistan did not lose out on this. Russia solved the problem of customs duties on fuel products (for Tajikistan). In response, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rolled over on the standing of Russian military bases on their territories...Experts believe that Moscow is not going to give Washington the lead in the strategically important region.

Weapons and Hydroelectric Power Plants

According to a member of the Defense Council of Kyrgyzstan Tokon Mamytov, Russian assistance should first strengthen the border guards...Experts believe that Russia will support Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the dispute over the construction of Kambarata and Rogun. In this issue, Tashkent might be alone. According to experts, a pro-American course by Tashkent could seriously weaken the position of Uzbekistan in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

An Inside Look at Kazakhstan's Border Guards

24 October 2012

Source: Rakhim, Raikhan and Nur, Karla. "Night on Guard Duty," Vox Populi, 24 October 2012. <http://www.voxpopuli.kz/en/post/view/id/831>

“The Border Guards have just as many, if not more, day-to-day responsibilities and duty hazards than their counterparts in other services, yet receive a lower quality pool of recruits.”

OE Watch Commentary: While the case of Vladislav Chelakh (who is charged with killing 14 of his fellow border guards and one park ranger in May 2012) continues, the government of Kazakhstan appears to be doing some damage control for the Border Guards service in the following photo report. Two reporters from Vox Populi, a site that features photo reports on various topics related to Kazakhstan, spent a couple of days visiting border posts in southeastern Kazakhstan, not far from the site where the border guards were found murdered.

The photos and accompanying captions are a fairly honest look at the Border Guards, a few of whom mention some of the challenges in this service. The report talks, among other things, about how border guards are issued weapons and live rounds on duty. While this is an obvious necessity, given what the border guards are tasked with, it is interesting when juxtaposed with how these men come to be in the service. The report also mentions how the Border Guards receive the conscripts who are not accepted by the other ministries, particularly the Ministry of Defense. The Border Guards have just as many, if not more, day-to-day responsibilities and duty hazards than their counterparts in other services, yet receive a lower quality pool of recruits.

The Border Guards have, like the other ministries, tried to incorporate more contract soldiers into the ranks, but it is an ongoing process. The case of Chelakh certainly grabbed headlines, even though it was a rare incident. It has, however, hurt the reputation of the Border Guards service among the population in Kazakhstan, who believe that low morale and hazing were contributing factors to the incident. If the government of Kazakhstan is going to improve the Border Guards as a whole, in addition to the problems already mentioned, it may need to start with cleaning up their tarnished reputation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Sleeping quarters via <http://www.voxpopuli.kz/en/post/view/id/831>

...Soldiers keep to their routine here. I did not see pistols under the pillows or machine guns under the beds of contract soldiers. After the shift is over, the weapons are left at the guns [arms] room, otherwise military men could be removed from the post for such major violation of rules.

The majority of military men fell asleep in the cramped room at the barracks. At that time three contract soldiers were on night duty. A lonely sentry in an old booth several metres from barracks, a duty watchman and a signalman protect the post situated in such dangerous place. Deep sleep, absence of weapons and element of surprise are decisive factors. To neutralise a sentry, who trusts his comrade-in-arms, then get in and shoot the others is not difficult for a trained soldier. Such thoughts fill my head that night at the post...

An Interest in Tajikistan's Border Security

15 October 2012

Source: Shodiev, Khaydar. "Анатолий МИХЕЕВ: «Мы не зря воевали...» (Anatoliy Mikheev: We did not fight for nothing...)" Asia-Plus, 15 October 2012.

<http://www.news.tj/ru/newspaper/interview/anatolii-mikheev-my-ne-zrya-voevali>

“The Soviet-Afghan War ended in 1989, but the conflict did not completely end in the years following for the Russian border forces that were posted along the Tajik-Afghan border.”

OE Watch Commentary: In recent years there has been a lot of concern in the Russian military and security structures, in addition to those from Central Asia, about ongoing operations and the general security situation in Afghanistan. Much of this has focused on what will happen when forces in Afghanistan withdraw in 2014, specifically that the coalition has not considered Russian and Central Asian viewpoints or the consequences of the withdrawal. The following article mentions a similar line about Afghanistan, but also reveals some of the reasoning behind it.

The Soviet-Afghan War ended in 1989, but the conflict did not completely end in the years following for the Russian border forces that were posted along the Tajik-Afghan border. The Russian border guards occasionally dealt with violence spilling over from Afghanistan in the 1990s, as evidenced in the article's brief timeline, and assisted the Commonwealth of Independent States' peacekeeping force during the Tajik Civil War (1992-97). The Russian general interviewed in the article gives a more detailed history of why Russia has a vested interest in the border security of Tajikistan.



Tajikistan map, via <http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

Anatoliy Mikheev: We did not fight for nothing...

On October 19, 2012 the border cooperation group of the Russian FSB (Federal Security Service) in Tajikistan will mark its anniversary. Exactly twenty years ago Russian border guards units came to the Tajik-Afghan border to protect the border, with their Tajik colleagues, from external threats. On the eve of the anniversary, we met with the chief of the Russian FSB border cooperation group, Major General Anatoliy Mikheev.

- Anatoliy, what are the tasks of the Russian advisors now?
- We provide practical assistance to our Tajik colleagues in the organization and planning of the protection of the Tajik-Afghan and Tajik-Chinese borders. Our officers help organize logistics of border units and we provide organization of tactical exercises and command and staff training. We do this within the framework of the Council of Commanders of Border Troops. Most of our officers have served in Tajikistan; they have a great deal of combat experience and know the border and the atmosphere.
- Coalition forces are gradually leaving Afghanistan. How do you see the Tajik-Afghan border after the withdrawal of ISAF troops in 2014?
- (General Mikheev) Experts agree that the complete withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan will not happen. ISAF will leave part of the armed forces and military bases. The situation in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of forces will escalate and opposition will

Continued: An Interest in Tajikistan's Border Security

15 October 2012

Source: Shodiev, Khaydar. "Анатолий МИХЕЕВ: «Мы не зря воевали...» (Anatoliy Mikheev: We did not fight for nothing...)," Asia-Plus, 15 October 2012.

<http://www.news.tj/ru/newspaper/interview/anatolii-mikheev-my-ne-zrya-voevali>

This gives some background as to why Russia raises concerns about the situation in Afghanistan and how it will affect the region. However, it also somewhat contradicts a recent Russian deal to provide additional support to Tajikistan (see "Russia's Military Support for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan" in this month's OE Watch).

*The recent deal provides \$200 million to upgrade Tajikistan's air defense system, which is a worthwhile effort, but is not the most critical area of security for Tajikistan at the moment. The Russian general mentions inadequate funding as one of the problems of effectively protecting the border. Regardless of where security assistance funding ends up, border security in Tajikistan will be important for those who have already invested in it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

increase, especially in the north of Afghanistan close to the borders of Tajikistan.

- We often hear about violations and breaches on the Tajik-Afghan border. Can the border guards (of Tajikistan) cope with the problem after the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan?
- (General Mikheev) There have always been and will be violators of the border. Tajik border guards tend to close the areas where frequent violations take place. This is mainly because of geographic features of the border. To be able to put a reliable barrier on the border we need a huge amount of funds. Of course, if Afghanistan was calm, if the flow of narcotics from there transiting through Tajikistan to Russia and further to the West, the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border would be more peaceful.
- Anatoliy, we know that from 1993-97 you defended the borders of Tajikistan. Was it difficult to serve in a "hot spot"?
- (General Mikheev) I served in the Darvaz (District). It was a very difficult and important sector of the border. From 1993-94 this section of the border was important for the opposition. During that period there were more than 200 armed clashes. Here in 1994 a border detachment was organized and I was appointed its commander. It was very difficult to counter the militants, who were trying to infiltrate from Afghanistan.
- Again, you have been sent to serve in Tajikistan. How do you feel about coming back?
- (General Mikheev) I left Tajikistan in 1997 with a sense of duty. I was wounded twice here and have been awarded orders and medals. When I was asked to continue to serve here, I was very glad. I came here for my motherland and arrived as one of them.

Timeline

A brief historical background on the activities of the Russian border guards in Tajikistan from 1992-2012:

- October 19, 1992, the task force of Russian border guards in Tajikistan was created
- July 13, 1993 the border post of the 12th Moscow border detachment fought with militants; during the clash 25 Russian border guards were killed
- In 1998 the force was transformed into the Russian Federal Border Service group in Tajikistan
- By the summer of 2005, in accordance with an agreement between Russia and Tajikistan, Russian border guards handed over all areas under protection on the Tajik-Afghan border to Tajikistan

Kremlin's \$4.2 billion Arms Deal with Iraq

13 November 2012

OE Watch Commentary: *Nuri al-Maliki made his first trip to Moscow as Iraq's Prime Minister, on 8 October 2012, at Russian President Vladimir Putin's invitation. By the end of his visit Maliki and Putin had signed a \$4.2 billion weapons deal and discussed future agreements between Baghdad and Russian oil companies. Reportedly, this is the largest single deal of Putin's era, and it makes Iraq the third largest buyer of Russian arms. In November the Western press reported that Iraq had cancelled or was renegotiating the arms deal because of concerns about corruption. Meanwhile, the Russian press was reporting that the US had pushed Russia out of Iraq. (See, for instance Thomas Whittle, "Iraq to renegotiate arms deals with Russia over graft allegations," November 13, 2012 <http://www.nzweek.com/world/iraq-to-renegotiate-arms-deals-with-russia-over-graft-allegations-24044/>, "USA Stops Russia from Entering Iraqi Arms Market," Pravda, November 12, 2012 http://english.pravda.ru/russia/economics/12-11-2012/122771-usa_russia_iraq-0/)*

Regardless, the arms deal appears to be far from over. On 24 October Russia's Chamber of Commerce and Industry's online publication Vedomosti printed two experts' opinions. By its own description, Russia's business representatives founded the Chamber to represent and protect entrepreneurs' interests.

One expert, Alexei Chichkin, focuses on the change to the Syrian conflict. He describes Baghdad's opposition to Ankara's position towards Syrian and Iraqi Kurdistan and its intentions to redirect the Iraqi oil transit route through Syria, rather than Turkey, adding that, given Russia's support of Baghdad's position, the likelihood of external intervention in Syria will decrease.

Source: "Ближний Восток: новый баланс влияния (Middle East: New Balance of Influence)," Torgovo-promyshlennyye Vedomosti (Commerce and Industry News), 24 October 2012. http://tpp-inform.ru/analytic_journal/2840.html



Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (L) seated with Vladimir Putin, via <http://www.iraq-businessnews.com>

Middle East: New Balance of Influence

...[Journalist] Alexei Chichkin writes, The interest of the government and business of Iraq in the restoring and developing relations with Russia, and Baghdad's strong opposition of Turkey's intentions in Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan show that the Iraq is strengthening its position in the region. It is not inclined to "repeat" EU and NATO policy with regard to Syria...Perhaps for the first time in the 80-year history of independent Iraq, this government is speaking as a united front on economic and political matters.

....

Recall also that Iraq delivers, since May oil to Syria on preferential terms despite pressure from the U.S. and the EU. In addition, Baghdad intends, before the end of October, to significantly strengthen its troops contingent on the Iraqi-Turkish border. Recently, Bagdad reached an agreement with Jordan to build a pipeline to the Jordanian port of Aqaba on the Red Sea.

The latter means that Iraq plans to reorient its oil exports via Turkey to transit via Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, while Iraqi oil into its own ports comes through Syria.

In such circumstances, the Iraqi position, considering a similar Russian position, reduces the possibility of external intervention in the Syrian conflict. At the same time, the geography of Iraqi oil exports begins to change...."

Sergei Nebrenchina's comment: Iraq is the world's leading country in oil reserves. This is why it became one of the first victims of foreign military and political expansion, which led to a fundamental change in the political and economic situation in this Muslim country. Currently, the main flows of Iraqi oil are allocated, in quotas,

Continued: Kremlin's \$4.2 billion Arms Deal with Iraq

13 November 2012

The second expert, Sergei Nebrenchina, paints Iraq as a primary victim of external aggression due to its massive oil reserves, as a result of which Iran, China, and even Moscow were "deprived" of their share of Iraqi oil and influence in the country, which they cannot accept. He agrees that the arms deal changes the dynamic of the Syrian conflict and that redirecting oil through Syria is based on Iraq's national interests and the interests of other countries in the region. "For Russia," he adds, "the stabilization of the situation in the Middle East is of particular importance from the point of view of promoting its economic and military-political interests, ensuring its national security."

Pravda, the Communist Party's newspaper, believes Iraqi Kurdistan's "separatist" aspirations are key. According to Pravda, Moscow's actions seem to suggest that it does not support Kurdistan using its autonomous status to "bypass" Baghdad, and the arms deal is Bagdad's way of showing appreciation for the Kremlin's support. Pravda notes the Iraqi government's desire not to be anyone's puppet and to buy weapons based on its needs.

*The Baghdad-Moscow arms deal comes after Baghdad announced in August 2012 its intentions to sanction Russia's Kremlin-connected Gazprom if it signed an oil agreement with Iraqi Kurdistan. In October 2012 Gazprom announced that it halted production-sharing agreements in Kurdistan. (see Stephen Bierman, *Iraq Minister Says Gazprom Neft Freezes Kurdish Deals*, IOD Says, Bloomberg, October 10, 2012. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-10/iraq-minister-says->*

and are under the control of leading Western companies, which operate with the full support of their governments and NATO. Other world and regional powers, including China and Russia, were deprived as the result of Saddam Hussein's removal from power in Baghdad. Meanwhile, Iraq remains the fourth OPEC oil exporter.

At the same time, in Iraq itself, there are enough influential powers that cannot accept with the current situation. To some extent they are supported in third countries, especially in Iran and China, and even in Russia, which cannot accept that to a large extent lost their former influence in Iraq and the access to its energy resources.

In connection with this confrontation around Syria today acquires special geopolitical importance and goes beyond the region. Recent deterioration of the situation in Lebanon and Kuwait, permanent Israeli-Palestinian fighting, open confrontation between Tehran and the U.S. and its allies in the region have been implicated in the development of the situation in Syria....

In this context, the intention of certain forces in Iraq to cut oil supplies to Turkey and to redirect oil exports transit through Syria answer Iraq's national interests and interests of other countries in the region. However, realizing these plans is not easy, as Baghdad continues to be under strong control of NATO's leading states, which includes Turkey. Further developments in the region and t Iraqi oil's fate will depend on how consolidated, and consistent will be China's, Russia's and Iran's resistance to Western domination of the region. For Russia, the stabilization of the situation in the Middle East is of particular importance from the point of view of promoting its economic and military-political interests, ensuring its national security."

Source: Lyubov Lyulko "Экономические связи Ирака и РФ оживились (Economic Ties of Iraq and Russia have Revived)," Pravda (Truth), 13 October 2012 <http://www.pravda.ru/economics/rules/globalcooperation/13-10-2012/1131218-iraq-0/>

Ties of Iraq and Russia have Revived

...Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived to Russia to return the bilateral relations to the level of confidence and friendship that existed in the 1960's-1980's. At the meeting with the President and Prime Minister of the Russian Federation agreements of economic nature, which unpleasantly surprised Americans...

The reason is simple - Iraqi Kurdistan, given its autonomy, is trying to bypass the federal government. This political gesture suggests that the Russian authorities do not support separatist movements in Iraq, which is very much valued by the Iraqi leadership. Therefore, the deposits share of in the development of American Exxon, Total and



Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, via <http://www.defense.gov>

Continued: Kremlin's \$4.2 billion Arms Deal with Iraq

*gazprom-neft-freezes-kurdish-deals-iod-says.html). Yet, Kurdistan's president, Massoud Barzani, will make an official visit to Moscow in November, also at Putin's invitation. Reportedly, the trip is unrelated to al-Maliki's October trip to Moscow. ("Kurdish PM Barzani to Visit Moscow," Iraq Oil Report, October 21, 2012 <http://www.iraqoilreport.com/daily-brief/kurdish-pm-barzani-to-visit-moscow-9082/>). These events seem to indicate that Moscow is continuing to lean towards Bagdad, but has not entirely closed the door on Arbil. Syria may be one reason. If Bashar al-Assad falls, Moscow may feel that Kurdistan could also become important for Russia strategically. Russia's commercial and arms deals in Iraq, such as this one, are important to watch as the Kremlin is working on putting itself in a leadership position in Middle East affairs as a counterbalance to the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

Chevron (who want to deal directly with the Kurdish autonomy), is likely to be handed over to Russian companies....

Al-Maliki confirmed...he wants greater presence of Russian companies in the oil industry, as well as in laying the pipelines. Military-technical cooperation is resumed. According to the agreement signed in Moscow, the amount of contracts for the supply of 42 air defense systems Shell and 30 helicopters Mi-28 is \$4.2 billion. This is the largest one-time deal in the Putin era, beginning in 1999, and it puts Iraq in third place in Russian weapons export (after India and Venezuela).

...Russia also plans to agree with Iraq on sale of MiG-29M/M2 and armored vehicles. ...

U.S. troops' withdrawal from the country late last year led to quite undesirable consequences for the U.S. and confirmation of this is the contracts signed in Moscow. "We are not going to play a puppet the role and someone serve someone else' monopolistic interests We have good relations with the United States[.] And with Iran. But we do not want to be surrounded by constant conflict. We buy guns based on our needs," said al-Maliki.

Of course, it is difficult to reconcile the irreconcilable, but we will see how the Iraqi prime minister can accomplish this.

Russia's Increased Cooperation with Egypt

4 November 2012

Source: “Россия и Египет увеличат экспорт (Russia and Egypt will Increase Export),” Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper), 5 November 2012. <http://www.rg.ru/2012/11/05/egipet-rf-anons.html>

OE Watch Commentary: On 4 November 2012 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov went on a Middle East tour. His first stop was Egypt, where he met with the Egyptian leadership and, on behalf of Russian President Vladimir Putin, invited Egyptian President Mohammad Morsi to visit Russia. Morsi accepted.

The Russian press reports varied. Some emphasized the increased Russia-Egypt economic cooperation aspect of Lavrov's meetings in Cairo, only touching upon the Egyptian government's initiative to create a regional quartet (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Iran) to resolve the Syrian conflict, while others focused more on the Syrian issue.

All reports consistently noted Morsi's party affiliation—the Muslim Brotherhood, which has been on Russia's list of terrorist organizations since 2003.

Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper), the Kremlin's official newspaper, focused primarily on the free industrial zone between Egypt and Russia that Lavrov discussed in Cairo, and reported that the two sides signed an intergovernmental cooperation program on culture, education, and science-related matters for 2012-2014.

Izvestiya, the Soviet Union's former newspaper of record, now owned by an independent media holding, focused on Syria. Although the article credited Morsi for coming up with the quartet idea, the article's title gives the impression that it is Russia that is looking to resolve the Syrian crisis. Izvestiya also quoted Moscow Carnegie Center expert Alexei Malashenko, who was skeptical of how successful this quartet be without the U.S. and Europe.

Utro.ru (Morning), a mainstream daily, focused solely on Russia's willingness to cooperate with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Lavrov gave several reasons why Moscow is cooperating with the Muslim Brotherhood, and the press reported all or most of them: the Brotherhood is on the terrorist list because of specific acts of specific individuals, which does not prohibit contact with other party members;



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Egyptian Foreign Minister Kamel Amr had talks in Cairo on Monday. (Photo: AA), via http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=297173

Russia and Egypt will Increase Export

...[A] free industrial zone in Egypt Russia will promote joint export to neighboring countries, said Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Mohammed in Cairo after meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Following the talks, foreign ministers signed an intergovernmental cooperation program between Russia and Egypt in the spheres of culture, education, and science, for 2012-2014, and also discussed the creation of a free industrial zone in Egypt and Russia....

In addition, the negotiations touched upon forming a regional “quartet” on Syria. Earlier, Egypt took the initiative to create a “quartet” on Syria, which would include Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey.

“We support Egypt's initiative to form a regional quartet to help resolve the situation in Syria,” said Sergey Lavrov. He expressed the hope that this initiative will correct an injustice Geneva conference, where Saudi Arabia and Iran were not invited.... Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammed Amr said that the quartet... already had several meetings.... He said Russia and Egypt are united in their wish to “end the bloodshed in Syria.”

Answering a question about how he views the rise to power in Egypt representatives of the Muslim Brotherhood, which since 2003 is considered a terrorist organization in Russia, Lavrov said Moscow has full respect for the choice of the Egyptian people... According to [Lavrov], the decision to add the Muslim Brotherhood to the national list of terrorist organizations by the Russia's Supreme Court was motivated by specific crimes....

Continued: Russia's Increased Cooperation with Egypt

4 November 2012

Moscow leadership observes that the Brotherhood itself is changing as result of inter-party dialogue; the Kremlin respects the will of the Egyptian people, who chose Morsi.

Russian tourists were the largest group of foreign visitors to Egypt until the anti-Mubarak protests, when the number fell by 40 percent. This could be one factor behind the increased economic ties, which are important for the Kremlin to emphasize.

Historically, the Russian (tsarist) leadership supported Egyptian's Christians for centuries, and the Soviet leadership supported ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak's secular regime. Russia is also in a difficult position because the Muslim Brotherhood supports the opposition fighting against Bashar al-Assad in Syria and, unlike Mubarak, Morsi has no previous ties to Russia.

Reuters reports that Morsi's aim in creating the regional quartet could be to put Egypt back in a leadership position in the Middle East.¹ The Kremlin, for its part, also wants to regain influence in the region, which might explain its increased cooperation with Morsi.

End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)

¹ "Russia endorses Egyptian-led regional group on Syria," 5 November 2012, Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/05/us-syria-crisis-russia-egypt-idUSBRE8A40J320121105>

Source: "Россия ищет выход из сирийского тупика Сергей Лавров намерен активизировать исламский фактор в урегулировании вокруг Сирии (Russia is seeking a way out of the Syrian impasse Sergey Lavrov intends to activate the Islamic factor in settling situation around Syria)," Izvestiya (Russian Newspaper), 6 November 2012. <http://izvestia.ru/news/539057#ixzz2BYLvKOiP>

Russia is seeking a way out of the Syrian impasse

Sergey Lavrov intends to activate the Islamic factor in settling situation around Syria

...During talks with Lavrov Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi proposed an Islamic quartet on Syria as part of Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Around the same time, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced an initiative to create two peacekeepers troikas in Syria - Turkey, Russia, Iran, and Turkey, Iran, Egypt.

"We welcome all formats, if they can lead to a peaceful settlement of the Syrian conflict," said the deputy head of the Russian Foreign Ministry Mikhail Bogdanov.

However, a member of the Moscow Carnegie Center Alexei Malashenko is skeptical about these Cairo and Ankara proposals.

"All this sounds nice, but is a kind of half-measure after the failed main force. It's not even a game, but something akin to declarative statements," the expert told Izvestiya.

In his opinion, Syria won't listen to "these quartets and troikas."

"Without the heavyweights - Americans and Europeans - no solution is possible. The most interesting events will begin when the U.S. will end the electoral campaign and Washington would act more energetically. Obama will finally have finally freed up his hand. And Romney, if he wins, will have to show that determination he talked about so much."

Source: "Россия готова сотрудничать с правящей египетской партией 'Братья-мусульмане'" (Russia and Egypt will Increase Export)," Utro.ru (Morning), 5 November 2012. <http://www.utro.ru/news/2012/11/05/1081916.shtml>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with the Egyptian newspaper "Al-Ahram" today that Russia is ready to cooperate with the ruling party of Egyptian "Muslim Brotherhood" in spite of the fact that it is on the list of terrorist organizations in Russia.

"We are ready to cooperate with all political forces of modern Egypt that speak in support of country on the basis of national unity and social cohesion, for further progress of reforms in the interest of all the people. We see that Muslim Brothers themselves are changing, including under the influence of intra-party discussions," Lavrov said, adding that Russia respect the democratic choice of the Egyptian people.

The Minister noted that the inclusion of the party on the list of terrorist organizations in Russia was because of specific crimes committed by certain persons speaking on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Supreme Court decision did not impose any formal restrictions on contacting the Brotherhood's representatives....

Russian Missile Concerns

19 October 2012

OE Watch Commentary: *Last month Russians and Americans observed the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis. As an increasing number of former sensitive records have been declassified, historians and researchers have discovered just how close the two countries came to a possible nuclear exchange. Among other reasons, scholars in both countries agree that, besides helping to defend the Castro regime in Cuba, Khrushchev was motivated by a perceived strategic nuclear weakness on the part of the USSR. Surreptitiously sending medium- and intermediate-range missiles to Cuba would address both issues.*

Perceived strategic weakness still plays a factor in Russian defense decisions today and provides some of the rationale behind recent plans to develop a new liquid fuel ICBM. Despite assurances from American defense officials, Russian leaders remain concerned over US plans to construct a global missile defense system which could eventually neutralize or deteriorate Russia's strategic nuclear retaliatory capability. As the excerpt from the first article points out, although the Russians do not want to engage in another arms race, "creating this missile... is an appropriate response to the American PRO [missile defense] system."

Concern over US missile defense is not the only factor in Russia's development of a new ICBM. As the excerpt from the

Source: "Страшнее 'Сатаны.' Российские военные одобрили проект новой баллистической ракеты, до конца года ее запустят в производство," ["More Fearsome Than the 'Satan' -- The Russian Military Has Approved a Design for a New Ballistic Missile; It Will Be Put into Production by the End of the Year"], Vzglyad Online, 19 October 2012.



Russian Topol-M missile, via <http://perevodika.ru>

New Ballistic Missile Design Reported

The Defense Ministry has approved the design of a 100-ton, liquid-propellant, intercontinental missile; its production will already begin by the end of 2012. In its specifications, the new missile will surpass the Voyevod, which is called Satan in the West, and can deliver 15 medium or 10 heavy nuclear warheads to a distance of more than 10,000 kilometers...

The Russian Defense Ministry has approved the preliminary design of a new, heavy, liquid-propellant, intercontinental missile (MBR), the production of which will start by the end of this year and will be finished by 2018...

RVSN commander Sergey Karakayev said earlier to RIA Novosti that Russia will create a new, heavy, 100-ton missile by 2018. We note that all recent Russian developments in intercontinental ballistic missiles -- both ship-based (Bulava) as well as land-based (Topol-M, Yarus) have been solid-propellant...

According to some information, the development of a new, liquid-propellant ballistic missile falls under the heading "Breakthrough" or "Inevitability" in the State Arms Program through 2020....

Col Gen Yesin reported in an interview to the newspaper Vzglyad that "those who are creating this missile and the military believe that this is an appropriate response to the American PRO [missile defense] system". "We do not want an arms race. There will be a limited number of warheads in accordance with START. We plan to apply our efforts under this framework," he said.

"They have chosen their line and are paying no attention to Russia's actions; therefore, this will not be an additional push. They are carrying out their own program. I will not say that they

Continued: Russian Missile Concerns

19 October 2012

second article makes clear, to fulfill limits on lift capability stipulated in the new START 3 treaty, Russia actually has the option to build a new missile. As one of its chief missile experts points out, the new missile “will carry 10 re-entry vehicles and will make it possible to reach the level of deployed warheads allowed under the START III treaty in a few years time.”

*Whether making a virtue of necessity to meet START targets or genuine concern over US plans to field a global missile defense system, some within the Russian leadership still perceive a strategic weakness vis-a-vis the US. To address this vulnerability, Russian leaders appear determined to improve its strategic nuclear missile inventory. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

will carry it out successfully, for they have many problems. Nevertheless, they do not know the specifications and abilities of our missile. Therefore, it is doubtful that they will be able to make changes in their program,” Yesin added...

“The Voyevod has an old system of PRO penetration aids that are not so perfected. They basically have passive jamming systems, but the new missile will have active electronic emitters that blind the homing heads. Such a system is used on the newest systems -- the Yars and Bulava,” Yesin continued, expressing certainty that effective means for fighting against such systems have not yet been created.

“A liquid-propellant missile allows putting a large payload into the trajectory, which allows the delivery of a powerful set of PRO penetration systems, which make the selection of targets -- the true warheads -- difficult, and at the same time this assures penetration,” the general stressed.

Seventy-seven billion rubles will be appropriated for the development and manufacture of missile systems under the State Arms Program through 2020. According to Vladimir Putin, who held the post of prime minister at the time, 15 billion rubles will go for the development of the enterprises. Half of the money allocated to the enterprises will be directed for the modernization of Krasnoyarskiy Mashinostroitelnyy Zavod’s production lines for the new missiles.

Source: “Russia needs new missile to reach START level for warheads – analyst,” Interfax-AVN Online, 8 November 2012.

Defense analyst Vladimir Dvorkin has said that the main reason behind the development of Russia’s new liquid-fuel missile is to reach the maximum number for the deployed warheads set by the US-Russian nuclear arms control treaties, Interfax-AVN military news agency reported on 8 November...

“It will carry 10 re-entry vehicles and will make it possible to reach the level of deployed warheads allowed under the START III treaty in a few years time,” he said.

However, he continued, “the emergence of such missile is a destabilizing factor”. “It is possible that it will have a non-nuclear warhead,” said Dvorkin...

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov was quoted as saying that Russia “has traditionally had heavy ICBMs”. “The new missile will contribute to Russia’s security,” he said, adding that it should be seen as a means to “retain Russia’s entire nuclear triad at a modern level”....

NPO Mashinostroyeniye’s deputy head Andrey Goryayev was quoted as saying earlier that the creation of the new missile would take about 10 years.



Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, via <http://rian.ru>

Russian TV Media and the Removal of the Russian Defense Minister

One big story this past month dealt with the removal of Russian Defense Minister, Anatoliy Serdyukov, presumably stemming from corruption and/or mismanagement within the Ministry of Defense (MoD). Widely criticized within the armed forces for his lack of military experience and radical and, some would say, poorly planned military reform, Serdyukov had alienated many in the military (both active duty and retired personnel) since his appointment in 2007. Still, up until earlier this month he retained the loyalty of the Russian Commander in Chief, Vladimir Putin.

The situation took a radical turn after 25 October, when all the major Russian media broadcasted reports of an early morning raid on a company (Oboronservis) and the apartment of one of Serdyukov's close female associates, who directed this company. The reports included details of alleged fraudulent deals handled by this company, which has close ties to Serdyukov and other high-level MoD employees. The reports also suggested an illicit liaison between Serdyukov and this female director.¹

The story continued to brew for the next two weeks, with investigators leaking scandalous details to the media on the dishonest means used by this company to sell off military-owned property and the luxurious lifestyle of those who profited from these schemes. Finally, on 6 November, in a staged televised discussion, President Putin announced that he was replacing Serdyukov with a new defense minister.

This brief essay will look at how Kremlin authorities use the media (primarily TV) in Russia today. Specifically, it will examine how the media portrayed Serdyukov's recent dismissal and, by deconstructing this incident, attempt to illustrate some of the major characteristics of the modern Russian television media. It is by no means an exhaustive examination, but rather a thumbnail sketch of how current Kremlin leaders work to shape the information domain via their main television stations.²

Background to the Incident

Over the past twenty years, Kremlin officials and senior officers within the Russian MoD have been faced with the challenge of reforming their military. Russia inherited much of the equipment, manpower, and infrastructure of the former Soviet military hegemon, and scaling down this gigantic armed edifice into something more flexible and modern has been a struggle. The sheer scale of the task, the absence of a long-term plan, a lack of funding, domestic instability, an ever-changing geo-political situation, and resistance among some military officials (both active and retired) are just a few of the factors which have complicated the reform effort.

Considerable military restructuring (on paper at least) had been made prior to Serdyukov's appointment in February 2007. The brief conflict against Georgia in August 2008 provided an additional catalyst for the latest round of reforms. While still victorious, the fighting revealed problems with MoD's command and control over its ponderous and sprawling military organization. Key components of Serdyukov's reform effort dealt with creating combat-ready brigades from the old system (which had been based on massive mobilization) and consolidating and streamlining its command, training, and logistical structure.

One important element of Serdyukov's reform focused on outsourcing non-military functions and scaling back much of the MoD's extensive property holdings, under the presumptions that a smaller military should focus on combat tasks and did not need all these excess facilities (training grounds, sanatoria, administration buildings, etc.). An umbrella organization, Oboronservis [Defense Service], was created in 2008 to handle the management and contracting of these services and properties.

Similar to other areas of the Russian economy (particularly where state and private interests intersect), allegations of corruption within Oboronservis soon surfaced. Over the past few years there were numerous (not widely publicized) reports regarding questionable deals to sell off excess military property.³ However, these were considered small potatoes compared to the wider feast of Russian corruption. This suddenly changed during the last week of October 2012, when nearly all the major Russian media focused on a series of alleged criminal deals among high-level officials within the MoD and Oboronservis.

Media Coverage Surrounding Serdyukov and Oboronservis

On 25 October, in a highly choreographed media operation, Russian investigators conducted an early-morning raid on the Moscow offices of Oboronservis and also on select defense officials. The alleged charges dealt with fraud and misappropriation of state funds, whereby military-owned properties were sold at a fraction of their cost to interested parties. Corruption within the MoD is hardly a revelation, but noteworthy, were the top-level personnel involved in this story. Besides the highly unpopular defense minister, among

Continued: Russian TV Media and the Removal of the Russian Defense Minister

others implicated were Yevgeniya (Elena) Vasilyeva, his attractive former Chief of the Defense Ministry Real Estate Department.

The story was initially covered in considerable detail on all of the major Russian TV stations, suggesting that investigators leaked sensitive information to solidify their case.⁴ This type of “information hit job” has been well developed over the past decade and usually includes the following characteristics: a concerned newscaster announces the outline of the alleged crime, followed by a reporter at the scene who interviews police officials on the criminal specifics. Law enforcement spokespersons detail which laws were broken and the probable course of the investigation. The story is then repeated, often adding new details in subsequent reports, until the particular message has become abundantly clear.

This media-saturation method has been employed effectively against both overt Kremlin critics and those who have fallen out of favor with the authorities. Just recently a populist, left wing opposition leader (Sergei Uldatsov) was the target of a clever smear campaign, according to which he reportedly was bribed by a Georgian to stoke protests in Russia. Two years ago the once popular mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov (and his wealthy wife), were subjected to an even more aggressive media onslaught, depicting them involved in every sort of financial malfeasance, which ultimately forced them to flee the country.⁵

The fingerprints of Russia’s security agencies are apparent in these information-slander operations, and indicate a close link between the media and the intelligence services. Where compromising material (kompromat) is lacking, it can be manufactured. Given that corruption, however, remains an essential lubricant in the modern Russian economy, “uncovering” questionable practices is routine. Equally predictable is the leaking of this sensitive information to a pliant media.

Repetition is a key characteristic of Kremlin media manipulation and was employed in the story surrounding Serdyukov and Oboronservis. After the story first broke on the morning of 25 October, there were more than 50 follow-up stories during the next four days on Russia’s three major TV networks (ORT, NTV and Rossiya 1). Each of the weekend (27-28 Oct) summary news programs covered the story in detail. The following week (29 Oct-5 Nov) there were 21 related stories in the same major media which described the arrests of mid-level managers and their luxurious lifestyles.⁶

Superficially, it might appear that the media’s tenacity in covering this story influenced President Putin to finally remove Serdyukov as Defense Minister on 6 November. This assertion, however, rests upon the faulty assumption of an independent media. True to form, the media’s role from the announcement of the investigation within Oboronservis until Serdyukov’s dismissal less than two weeks later was to prepare the Russian viewing audience of this decision.

Implications

In his many televised news conferences President Putin likes to pepper his comments with Russian aphorisms. One of his favorites translates as “He who pays for the music, orders the song.” In constructing his “power vertical” President Putin understands the importance of staying on message and, where necessary ‘ordering’ messages to remove any threats to the system’s stability. While not wholly subservient, the major Russian TV media today understand well who is ordering the music and respond by producing the appropriate music.

There has been considerable speculation as to the reasons behind President Putin’s dismissal of Serdyukov as Defense Minister. While the why’ may never be fully answered, the question as to how? and the role which the major media played is quite clear. Kremlin authorities are masters in manipulating media to get a certain message across and will employ this skill as necessary.

Another favorite Putin aphorism translates as “The dogs bark, but the caravan moves on,” where he suggests that all the media reporting, commentary, and analysis (to include all the barking on the Internet) have little effect on the country’s direction. In the system created by the current Kremlin leadership, the caravan masters have control over the dogs’ barking, and can sic these beasts against any perceived threat.

It is not surprising that the Russian television audience tends to view the media as a tool in the hands of the elite. Given their history with information access, many Russians would agree with President Putin’s jaundiced view of free speech, where the wealthy and powerful order the tune. Any Western media criticism of Russian policy is often interpreted through this same prism as a means by foreign elite to weaken the country to gain a geo-political or economic advantage.

Continued: Russian TV Media and the Removal of the Russian Defense Minister

Finally, while the Serdyukov incident reveals the Kremlin's finesse in employing this powerful media arsenal against a domestic target, it can also be directed against foreign objectives. For the past decade, these same information managers have been waging a low-level media war against the United States. While some of the criticism can be justified, much of the reporting has been one-sided and tendentious. Today, nearly half of the Russian population regards the US in a negative light.⁷ In the event of a crisis, these same info managers could turn up the volume for an audience already receptive to this anti-American message.

¹ The story was covered in all the major Russian press outlets. For an example of the initial coverage, see: Olga Bozhyeva, "Ministry of Defense Against Investigators. Has a Decision Been Made to Tackle Fraud in the Military Department in Order To Strike a Blow Against Anatoliy Serdyukov?" *Moskovskiy Komsomolets Online*, 6 October 2012.

² Again, the major story of the day, covered in all the media. For an on-line example, see: Sergey Smirnov and Aleksey Nikolskiy, "Putin Has Dismissed Serdyukov," *Vedomosti Online*, 6 November 2012.

³ Among other sources, questionable financial dealings by Oboronservis over the past four years have been described in detail by Viktor Baranetz, former Russian military press secretary and now military correspondent for the popular media site, *Komomolskaya Pravda*. His blog can be accessed at: <http://blog.kp.ru/users/2125404/profile>

⁴ For a good example, see the Vesti newscast on Rossiya 1 for 25 October 2012; available at: <http://rutv.ru/brand/show/episode/170607/viewtype/picture> accessed 14 November 2012.

⁵ These media hit-jobs have reached an art-form under the one-sided and often deceitful reporting by Arkadiy Mamontov who now hosts a program called Специальный корреспондент [Special Correspondent] on Rossiya 1. His latest masterpiece Коррупцированная оборона [Corrupt Defense] looks at the Oboronservis scandal. Program available at: <http://rutv.ru/brand/show/id/3957> Accessed 13 November 2012. See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5FWl9KKzko> Accessed 15 November 2012.

⁶ Data count of the three major Russian television stations and newscasts at 1200, 1800 and 2100 during stated time periods. Archival access of these newscasts available at: <http://rutv.ru/?d=0>, <http://www.ntv.ru/>, and <http://www.ltv.ru/>.

⁷ There is considerable variance in poll data regarding Russian views toward the US. Factors affecting the results include the sample question and specific population queried. For a recent example, see: <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/121584.html> (accessed 12 November 2012) where almost 50% of the respondents viewed the US in a negative light.