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DRC: With the Intervention Brigade, MONUSCO Is (Finally) Making a Significant Difference

“The successes of the Intervention Brigade has earned it the respect of locals, who had given up hope that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) would protect them from being constantly terrorized by armed groups and even, at times, their own soldiers.”

OE Watch Commentary: For those following the conflicts in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, or at least trying to follow the conflicts (as there are many actors, though frequently only one objective – enrichment), it appears there is finally a glimmer of hope that an area besieged by rebels and soldiers, both domestic and foreign, may finally come under some semblance of order and central control. As the accompanying article relates, “the new Intervention Brigade for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), made up essentially of South African and Tanzanian troops, has done what 17,000 peacekeepers have been unable to do for years: hit back hard against the militias and rebels who wreak havoc in the eastern DRC.”

Such stories of success by African militaries are welcome news from a continent that lately has witnessed some dismal performances by its troops. March of this year saw South African forces in the Central African Republic unable to keep in power then-President Francois Bozizé, who had to flee from Seleka rebels advancing on the capital. Mali in 2012 saw Tuareg rebels, as well as al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, taking control of a significant swath of the country, requiring French intervention to retake the land, as the Malian Army was unable to do so on its own. Thus, the Intervention Brigade’s successes in the DRC are a source of pride and perhaps the sign of a new, more capable force, such as the one envisioned and argued for by South African President Jacob Zuma during the May 2013 African Union Summit.

Prior to the Intervention Brigade’s appearance in the DRC, 17,000 soldiers of MONUSCO (the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC) were tasked with keeping the peace in eastern DRC. According to the accompanying article, the locals “had given up hope that ...MONUSCO would protect them from being constantly terrorized by armed groups and even, at times, their own soldiers.” The UN Security Council



The Intervention Brigade’s mandate is to “carry out targeted offensive operations, with or without the Congolese army, against armed groups that threaten peace in eastern DRC.”
Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/drc-welcomes-action-by-un-intervention-brigade/1736011.html>

Source: Liesl Louw-Vaudran, “Congo-Kinshasa: Give Them the Helicopters,” Institute for Security Studies (South Africa), 10 Oct 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201310110609.html?viewall=1>

...According to (ISS Senior Researcher) Roux, peacekeeping operations were in a transitional phase and the DRC Intervention Brigade could well represent a ‘tipping point’ towards giving peacekeepers more fighting capability. ‘The new buzzword is robust mandates,’ he said...

...At the end of August the Intervention Brigade, working together with the Congolese army achieved sizeable successes over the M23 rebels, who have emerged as the main ‘spoiler’ fighting force in the area...

...It was the first aggressive posture deployed by the Intervention Brigade and it effectively pushed back M23. In addition, it boosted the confidence of FARDC (DRC military),’ the group found, according to the UN Security Council Report...

...‘In MONUSCO’s assessment the joint operation had also changed the perception of the peacekeepers in the eyes of the civilian population who had been unhappy with what they saw as a lack of effective engagement from MONUSCO in neutralizing armed groups in the area.’...

...A classic example was when M23 took Goma [in November 2012], the air operations team was out of contact - sitting in a conference at Entebbe in Uganda - so there was no authorization for the helicopters. The South African Rooivalk attack helicopters deploying shortly will change this dynamic.’...

...He also stressed that the mission needed a sophisticated mortar- and artillery-tracking radar capability to establish the origin of the shelling that was a bone of contention on both sides of the DRC-Rwanda border. Roux explained that the lack of military hardware and sufficient capability was sometimes attributed to the bureaucracy within the UN system...

(continued)

Continued: DRC: With the Intervention Brigade, MONUSCO Is (Finally) Making a Significant Difference

authorized the deployment of an intervention brigade within MONUSCO to specifically “carry out targeted offensive operations, with or without the Congolese army, against armed groups that threaten peace in eastern DRC,” essentially incorporating, as one commentator described it, a much needed “robust mandate” into their mission. Composed of 3069 troops, the Intervention Brigade brings the total number of MONUSCO peacekeepers to slightly over 20,000.

The article notes the capabilities of the intervention brigade could be greatly enhanced with force enablers, especially attack helicopters. These would be particularly useful in its fight against M23, a well-armed rebel group that at one point had taken over the city of Goma while UN peacekeepers stationed there watched. MONUSCO does have attack helicopters (Mi-35s), but the request to use them involves a long bureaucratic chain of command. By having attack helicopters dedicated to the Intervention Brigade, they could be brought more quickly to bear on enemy forces.

*There are thoughts that the brigade’s successes will lead the UN to help it acquire the helicopters, as well as other equipment, including sophisticated mortar and artillery tracking radar. With such force enablers the brigade could greatly enhance its capabilities and perhaps, along with more “robust mandates” from the UN, bring peace to an area that for a very long time has been at war. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

...The UN Department of Field Support has ‘templates’ that restrict the type, capability and number of vehicles, weapons and special capabilities that troop-contributing countries can deploy. This is a critical restriction when the UN Security Council is passing robust mandates containing issues such as the protection of civilians under imminent threat - which may require active fighting against well-armed and capable ‘spoilers’...

...Speakers and participants at the ISS seminar agreed that ...the seemingly interminable wars in the DRC, which had been dragging on since the late 1990s, had created an exceptional situation. The continual splitting up of militias and rebels and the ‘recycling’ of combatants was a huge problem..

.... the nature of peacekeeping was changing, because in many cases, like in the DRC and recently in Mali, there was no peace to keep. Often peacekeepers had to deal not only with one group of rebels, but also with ‘the fracturing of insurgents’. In Darfur in Sudan, for example, rebels have split into more than 30 factions...

...The DRC peacekeeping mission has gone through various phases, but has been a disappointment for the greater part of the last decade. Finally, giving the ‘peacekeepers’ the mandate and firepower to stop rebels and militias is clearly paying off - at least for now...



*The Intervention Brigade’s mandate is to “carry out targeted offensive operations, with or without the Congolese army, against armed groups that threaten peace in eastern DRC.”
Source: UN.org*

“Despite the extraordinary efforts of the security forces, Boko Haram appears unbowed and its campaign undimmed.”

OE Watch Commentary: Boko Haram has evolved. After losing the battle of Maiduguri in 2009 to Nigerian security forces, a defeat which almost spelled the end for the militant Islamic group, it has morphed into an even more potent and more vicious adversary. As the accompanying article relates, “Over the past three years it has embraced ever more ambitious goals (from encouraging northern Muslims to live more piously to turning Nigeria into an Islamic state), extended its area of operations (attacking targets as far south as Abuja), lengthened its list of targets (there is now no-one it is not prepared to kill), and developed its operational capabilities (its 2011 assault on the UN was the first suicide bombing ever carried out in the country).”

Despite periodic pronouncements from Nigerian officials that Boko Haram’s attacks on civilian targets are desperate moves of a weakened organization, there is evidence to suggest Boko Haram is actually gaining strength, not losing it, and that such attacks are signs the group can operate in certain areas with little fear of the security forces. The accompanying article even goes so far as to declare Nigeria a failed state, as there are “parts of the north that lay beyond the Federal Government’s direct control.”

The author of the accompanying article also argues that Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has growing influence over Boko Haram, as evidenced by the similarities between Boko Haram and the modus operandi of AQIM and its associates in Algeria. These include the lack of discrimination in targets, as both Boko Haram and AQIM kill large numbers of civilians. Along these lines, both show pitilessness and extreme violence during these attacks. In the Nigerian village of Dumba, Boko Haram killed 44 people, the majority by slitting their throats, a common tactic of the Algerian insurgents, “because of its strong symbolism; it is how animals are slaughtered. And some of those who survived at Dumba had their eyes put out.”

An additional commonality of particular interest from a military standpoint is that both have been known to wear military fatigues. In Nigeria this could reflect “that Boko Haram fighters are impersonating security personnel and have the means to do so; that the group



Corpses recovered from a massacre by Boko Haram on a highway. Source: <http://www.cknnigeria.com/2013/09/142-corpses-recovered-after-boko-haram.html>

Source: Jonathan Hill, Worsening Violence in Northern Nigeria reveals echoes of Algeria and AQIM, African Arguments, 9 Oct 2013, <http://africanarguments.org/2013/10/09/worsening-violence-in-northern-nigeria-reveals-echoes-of-algeria-and-aqim-by-jonathan-hill/>

...Boko Haram’s recent, deadly attack on the agricultural college in Gujba, Yobe State has raised some difficult and urgent questions for the Nigerian federal authorities and international community. The most pressing – how and why did this happen – quickly give way to more substantive concerns about the efficacy of the security forces and their counter-terrorism campaign...

...Certainly this latest atrocity casts a pall of doubt over the repeated claims of senior military officers and politicians that the war is being won. Especially since this was no isolated incident but the latest in a series of equally grave assaults. When taken alongside the raids on the villages of Benisheik and Dumba in mid-September, and the secondary school in Mamudo in early July, the attack on Gujba speaks not of a group that is struggling to survive but of one that is thriving.

...Despite the extraordinary efforts of the security forces, Boko Haram appears unbowed and its campaign undimmed.

...That Nigeria is now a failed state is beyond question. Whether it can avoid breaking apart remains to be seen...

...By increasingly re-enacting what has already happened in Algeria, Boko Haram appears to be committing itself to a similar path to that taken by AQIM and its direct forbears the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA)...

(continued)

Continued: Nigeria Struggles to Cope with an Evolving Boko Haram

has serving soldiers in its ranks; [and/or] that there is active collusion between the faction and certain military units or commanders.”

*Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, already being questioned regarding his ability as a southerner to effectively deal with the terrorism in the north, took the precarious step of granting additional powers to the military. In a country known for coups, further empowering the Armed Forces could be his undoing. However, with Boko Haram’s increasing ties to AQIM, its campaign of terror, and the inability of the Nigerian security forces to eliminate them, President Jonathan’s decision to provide the military with extraordinary powers, though personally risky, is understandable. As the article relates, however, it appears that, at least so far, even with the military having additional powers, Boko Haram will continue to survive and evolve. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

...The long term consequences of this latest phase of violence will be devastating for northern Nigeria and scarcely any less harmful for the rest of the country. What few educational opportunities there are in the region are being degraded leading to a reduction in the already low levels of literacy and numeracy. Inter-communal tensions are increasing and spreading to the south. Southern discontent at the mounting cost of the counter-terrorism campaign is rising especially since much of the revenue paying for it comes from the oil sector in the Niger Delta...

Turkey and Africa: A Rising Military Partnership?

By Karen Kaya and Jason Warner

Like many other aspirant emerging countries such as China, Brazil, and India, since 2002, Turkey has unleashed a charm offensive in Africa, deepening bilateral ties with African states in the realms of economics, politics, and more notably, defense and security affairs.

This paper considers the implications from this ever-growing relationship between Turkey and Africa for the U.S.. Where do Turkey’s interests in Africa converge with those of the U.S. and where do they diverge?

Given that Turkey’s military and security interests and goals in Africa largely parallel those of the United States, the U.S. stands to benefit from the unique chance to partner with a Muslim ally whose presence in parts of Africa appears to be more welcome than those of other Western countries due to its shared religion, cultural ties and lack of imperial history.



<http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-Africa.pdf>

Al Shabaab's Westgate Mall Attack Focuses Attention on Corruption in Kenya's Security Forces

October 2013

“Despite the extraordinary efforts of the security forces, Boko Haram appears unbowed and its campaign undimmed.”

OE Watch Commentary: *As a former Kenya government employee, the author of the accompanying article is well aware of that country's corruption, particularly with regards to the very people entrusted to enforce the laws - the security forces. Al-Shabaab's recent attack on the Westgate Mall has brought that corruption front and center. News of the horrific devastation wrought by the Somali terrorists was made even worse by the reprehensible conduct of some members of the security forces, with the emphasis on “some,” as many did act valiantly.*

Still, it is hard to be dismissive of these less-than-professional actions as being only that of a few rogue elements. Underlying core values in the security services seem to be shaky. As the accompanying article states, “To the outrage of many, it would seem that first responders took time to rob the high-class stores in the mall, consume a vast quantity of alcohol and even relieve the dead and dying of their blood soaked wallets and watches. This cold heartedness and corruption was utterly shocking.” Many shopkeepers, upon returning to the mall after the siege ended, discovered expensive merchandise missing, safes and cash registers broken into, and even mannequins picked clean of their clothing.

With a culture of corruption at some of the highest levels of government, it is perhaps not surprising that it also permeates much of everyday life, including that of soldiers, though the military, known for generally not immersing itself in politics - unlike many other African nations - has traditionally been well respected. Its behavior in the Westgate Mall, however, has resulted in a strong hit to its reputation.

There have been other signs that perhaps Kenya's military is not of the high caliber the country's leaders, often situated in large cities away from most military actions, have made it out to be. “Attitudes towards [the military] in those parts of Kenya where they have conducted counter insurgency operations ...are far more negative. When it was announced in September 2012 that the army was being deployed to stop the violence in Tana River district many in the local community fled!”

There have been other articles depicting bungled intelligence preceding the attack, condemnation of some of the security forces

Source: John Githongo, Kenya: Westgate - ‘Our Turn to Eat’ Costs National Security The Star (Kenya) 9 Oct 2013, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201310100456.html?viewall=1>

...The President and opposition leaders joined hands in demonstrating empathetic leadership that was reassuring and much needed. But then it has become clear that actually government officials didn't really know what they were doing during the siege...

...By the start of this week some of the international forensic teams that had been dispatched to help examine the bodies of the ‘dead terrorists’ had decided to leave the country in frustration when no bodies were produced...

...Then the highly respected, Lt. Gen. (rtd) Humphrey Njoroge, took the very unusual step of writing in a local daily essentially, gracefully and carefully, criticizing his own former colleagues in a piece titled ‘The military lost the plot in Westgate siege’. The article said that, “As a result Lt-Gen Njoroge worries deeply about two things regarding terrorism in Kenya. One is corruption, the other idle and highly trained former soldiers and policemen...”

...Njoroge was making wasn't that our troops had the wrong equipment or other logistical limitations: indeed Kenya has almost all the hardware of a middle income country. The ‘software’ failed at Westgate: the will to serve one's country honestly and with honour; the will to put one's life on the line for an idea called Kenya that a few terrorists were determined to violently undermine. The terrorists, however, knew us well enough to take advantage of this fatal flaw. They obviously calculated that in a crisis “these people have the troops, the equipment, the intelligence and communication machinery, the fancy infrastructure of a modern security system, but they don't have respect for anything other than themselves as individuals.”...

...On Twitter the alleged al Shabaab Twitter accounts infuriatingly oozed with this contempt; they sneered at us, their apparently valueless Kenyan foes...

...President Uhuru's speech 10 hours after the siege started was utterly impressive. But it all rang hollow; there was an emptiness to it that was attenuated when one read of or was told about how rescuers turned into vultures at Westgate. This is a strong taboo in African culture...

...One narrative is that the attack was dastardly but the response was far more unsettling in what it said about us and our security services...

... it forced the question: perhaps the ‘war on terror’ has excessively focused on so-called failed states like Somalia and Afghanistan. There hasn't been enough recognition that a highly globalised country with a coast and good infrastructure as far as the service sector is concerned, combined with a high level of systemic corruption may actually be just as preferable for terrorists to set up base as countries in the failed states category...

(continued)

Continued: Al Shabaab's Westgate Mall Attack Focuses Attention on Corruption in Kenya's Security Forces

during the attack, and criticism over the follow-on investigation. The accompanying article's author lays the blame squarely on corruption in Kenyan society. He also notes the almost apathetic attitude towards corruption in the country, especially when everyday people, including soldiers, indulge in this. "Our top leaders steal and get away with it, now it's our turn! Why whine about us small people 'helping ourselves' when the Big Men do it all the time without consequence?" "Our president and deputy president are at the Hague charged with the worst crimes a human being can be charged with and you are going to ask me about mere 'theft'?"

*Right now Kenyan troops are in Somalia attempting to neutralize al Shabaab. Thus, not just Kenya but the entire region depends on the Kenyan military to forge and maintain peace. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***



Kenyan forces at the Westgate Mall.
Source: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/world/mall-siege-ignites-worries-for-kenya/2143577>

Central African Republic Instability Threatens Neighboring Countries

October 2013

“The failure to act now could not only prolong and exacerbate the appalling conditions the people of the Central African Republic have had to endure, but could also see the crisis spread beyond its borders and throughout a region already facing enormous challenges.”

- UN humanitarian chief, Valeria Amos, Sept 2013

OE Watch Commentary: According to French President Francois Hollande, as noted in the first article, there is no state in the Central African Republic (CAR). As the security situation continues to deteriorate in the former French colony, Hollande has expressed concern that the instability could spill over into neighboring countries. Several of these - Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo - already have significant degrees of violence and can ill afford additional trouble.

A brief review of recent events is in order to explain how this resource-rich but impoverished country finds itself heading towards failed state status. A conflict in December 2012 between the army and a coalition of rebel groups known as Séléka eventually resulted in the rebels making their way towards the capital, Bangui. This led to President François Bozizé's flight from the country. Rebel leader Michel Djotodia assumed the presidency, but he has not brought security and stability to the country. As the UN Security Council said, there has been “a total breakdown in law and order.”¹ The African Union has 2500 soldiers in CAR, but with the growing violence, as well as prodding by President Hollande, the UN is planning to offer additional support.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is on the ground in CAR, witnessing events firsthand. As the organization reports in the second article, “MSF is horrified by what we are seeing, including burnt villages and appalling scenes of murder.” They have seen attacks on healthcare workers, including one being executed. As they write, “If this instability continues, access to healthcare for people in the country – already severely tested – will be dangerously impaired.” MSF left Somalia because of the violence there; one wonders if the same will happen in



Seleka rebels are being blamed for a significant portion of the looting and killing and general chaos in the Central African Republic. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23708790>

Source: “France Expresses Concern Over Central African Republic,” Sudan Tribune, 14 Oct 2013, <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article48443>

Article #1:

...”There is also an emergency at a regional level because there is a risk of spill over,” said the French President...

...The French President’s remarks comes a day after the French Foreign Affairs Minister, Laurent Fabius, announced that France would increase on its 400 troops currently stationed in Bangui, the CAR capital.” We will increase our support, especially in the logistics domain, after the United Nations resolutions (are approved). We will also increase troops, a little at first. This will be done before the end of the year,” Fabius said...

...CAR has witnessed an increase in violence since the toppling of President François Bozizé in March by the Seleka rebels...

...The conflict in CAR between has displaced about 400,000 people from their homes...

...In September the UN humanitarian chief, Valeria Amos, warned that unless the chaos in CAR is addressed it could spread to the rest of the Great Lakes region...

Source: Central African Republic: Fighting reaches unprecedented levels of violence Medecins Sans Frontieres, 16 Oct 2013, <http://www.msf.org/article/central-african-republic-fighting-reaches-unprecedented-levels-violence>

(continued)

Continued: Central African Republic Instability Threatens Neighboring Countries

CAR. Even worse, will the instability in CAR spread to bordering nations, as some, including President Hollande, are warning, thus engulfing the entire region in chaos? End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)

1. "Central African Republic is serious threat to region - UN," BBC News, 15 Aug 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23708790>

Article #2:

...Tens of thousands of people have fled in a new wave of attacks and ruthless killings by armed groups and government forces in north-western Central African Republic the international medical aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reports today. More than 30,000 people are internally displaced in Bossangoa, and thousands more in the surrounding areas. All are living in precarious conditions with limited or no access to shelter, clean water, food and sanitation...

..."More than 80 per cent of surgeries have been for wounds that are conflict-related."...

...MSF has heard numerous firsthand accounts of attacks characterised by religious divisions. These include the execution by armed men of eight people who were separated from a larger group as they fled by truck, and the targeted killing of two men in a village, which subsequently caused many others of the same religion to take flight...

...As the rainy season continues, those in the bush are also particularly at risk of contracting malaria – the number one killer in the country...

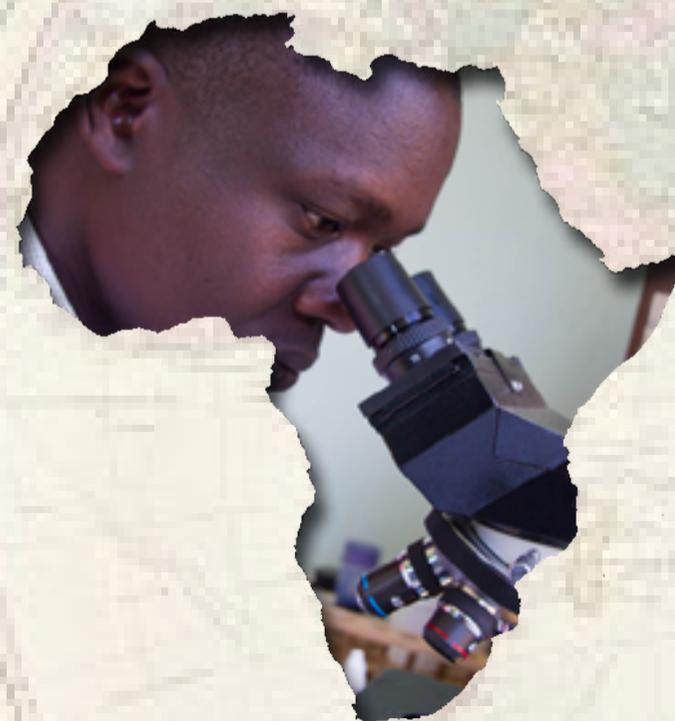
...If this instability continues, access to healthcare for people in the country – already severely tested – will be dangerously impaired...

Africa's Brain Drain: Its Impacts on Security and Stability

By Lieutenant Colonel Robert Feldman, U.S. Army Reserve.

Africa is bleeding. Much of its lifeblood, composed of well-educated individuals who could help tackle its toughest problems, is flowing away. This hemorrhaging of engineers, doctors, teachers, nurses, businesspersons, scientists, and others with extensive training constitutes Africa's brain drain. This brief study examines the impact of this loss in the social, economic, political and security spheres.

<http://fmsso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Africa's-Brain-Drain.pdf>



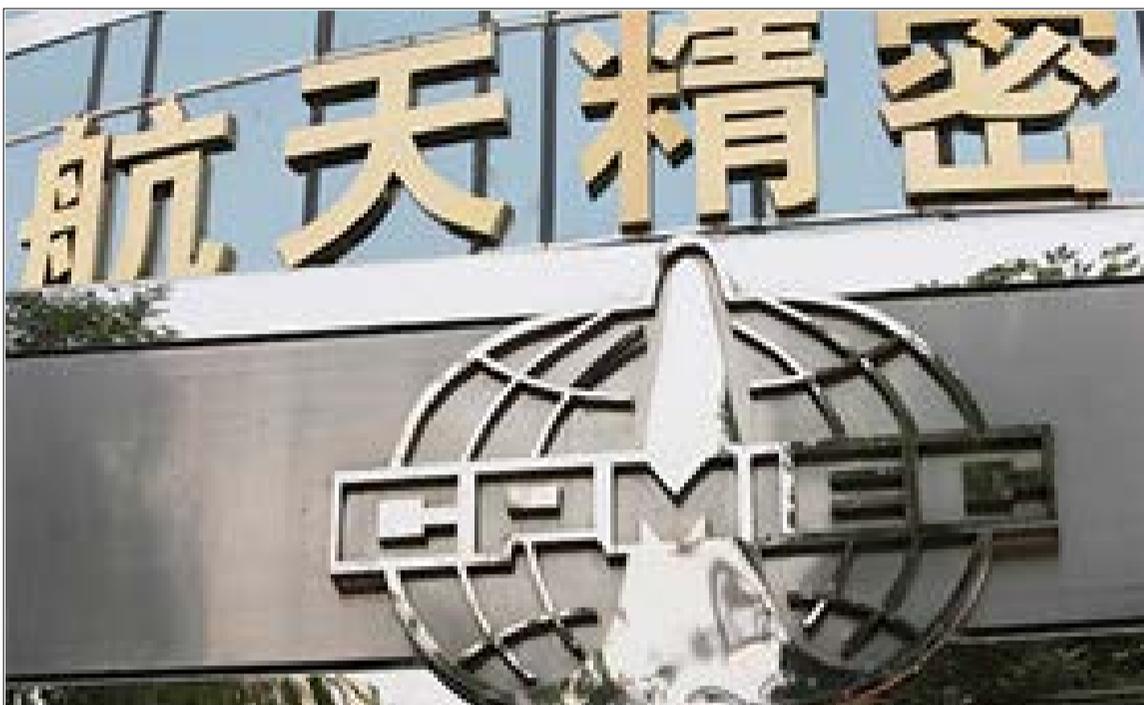
“...Turkey... stands to lose. Instead of improving its security, it will likely end up with a stand-alone system that will never be fully integrated with NATO air and missile defenses. All the while, irritating long-time allies who are left to question Ankara’s strategic aims.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 26 September 2013 Turkey announced its decision to start talks with a Chinese firm to co-produce a long-range air and missile defense system. NATO and the U.S. expressed concern and warned of compatibility issues between the Chinese-made system and the NATO systems.

The contract was awarded to the China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corp. (CPMEIC), a company that the U.S. has sanctioned for violating the Iran, North Korea and Syria Nonproliferation Act. This is the first time that a Chinese supplier has won a major order for such equipment from a NATO member.

As the first accompanying passage from the Turkish press points out, Turkish officials claim that the deciding factors were price, technology, local work share, technology transfer and credit financing terms. They also claim that the system can be fully integrated with the NATO systems and that it will not mean Chinese access to NATO-classified technology. However, as the second passage points out, some analysts are claiming that the move was “penny-wise, pound-foolish,” and are calling on Turkey to reconsider its decision. They claim that by choosing the cheaper Chinese system, Turkey will end up with a stand-alone system that will never be fully integrated with NATO air and missile defenses, in addition to irritating its long-time NATO allies. The third and fourth passages discuss the likelihood that the deal will not go through. The fifth passage discusses U.S. concerns about China’s capacity for cyber-technology and theft.

In late September-early October 2010 Turkey and China held a bilateral military exercise in Turkey, the first such exercise that China conducted with a NATO member. This, coupled with the numerous high-level diplomatic and military visits between the two countries since 2009, has led to talk of a new “strategic partnership” between Turkey and China. While it is debatable whether the two countries are



The logo of the China Precision Machinery Export-Import Corporation (CPMEIC), which is sanctioned by the U.S. Source: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/turkey-nato-eu-china-ballistic-missile-system-lockheed.html>

Source: Kıymet Sezer, “Füzeleri NATO için değil Türkiye için alıyoruz (We are buying the missiles for Turkey, not for NATO),” Stargazete.com.tr, 4 October 2013, <http://haber.stargazete.com/politika/fuzeleri-nato-icin-degil-turkiye-icin-aliyoruz/haber-794896>

“Murat Bayar, [the Undersecretary for the Defense Industry] discussed the decision to start discussions with China regarding the long range air defense system. Bayar, who said that the U.S. and European bids were over four billion dollars, stated that the Chinese offer was at 3.4 billion dollars. Bayar also said that the Chinese offer promised the most local work share, and that almost all of the missiles would be produced in Turkey. He also said that the mobile vehicles for the systems would also be domestic.

Bayar, who also discussed assessments regarding the need for NATO-member countries to use NATO systems, said, “We are not sharing any of NATO’s systems with China. We are taking Chinese information and sharing them with our own systems. The system is not linked to China. Once integrated, it is a closed system... We are not buying the system for NATO, we are buying it for Turkey’s needs.”

Source: “Editorial: Turkey: Rethink Missile Deal,” Defensenews.com, 29 September 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130929/DEFREG03/309290013/>

“The winner here is China, which has proven it can sell a major system to a sophisticated buyer and is now poised to gain important industrial and military insights — and market cachet.

Turkey, meanwhile, stands to lose. Instead of improving its security, it will likely end up with a stand-alone system that will never be fully integrated with NATO air and missile defenses. All the while, irritating long-time allies who are left to question Ankara’s strategic aims.

Turkey must reconsider its decision.”

(continued)

Continued: Turkish Perspectives on the Turkey-China Missile Deal

at the level of a strategic partnership, this deal is an important one in the realm of increasing defense cooperation between the two countries.
End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)

(For background reading on Turkish-Chinese relations, please see FMSO Monograph, "Turkey and China: Unlikely Strategic Partners" May 2013, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-and-China.pdf>)

Source: Murat Yetkin, "Türkiye, Çin füzeleri kararından döner mi? (Might Turkey renege on its decision regarding Chinese missiles?)," Radikal.com.tr, 3 October 2013, http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlar/murat_yetkin/turkiye_cin_fuzeleri_kararindan_doner_mi-1153708

"...The Chief of the General Staff Necdet Özel...when asked why the Chinese system was preferred, said, 'Ask the political authority'; meaning the government. The National Defense Minister Ismet Yılmaz...said that the preference had to do with joint production, technology transfer and the lower cost. But this statement does not answer the criticism coming from NATO or the U.S.

Going back to our original question: Might Turkey renege on its decision? It is absolutely possible that the decision might be reconsidered."

Source: Burak Ege Bekdil, "Concerns Mount Over Turk-China Defense System" Defensenews.com, 29 September 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130929/DEFREG01/309290018/>

"But some analysts say awarding the contract to CPMIEC does not mean it will take effect and Turkey will eventually build a system based on Chinese technology.

At the moment, the average contract negotiation time in the Turkish procurement system [after a winner has been announced] is about two years," a source said. "And there have been several negotiations ending up in failure before a contract was signed. Even after signing a contract, some programs have failed to materialize. This is a possibility for this one, too."

Source: Nihat Ali Özcan, "Türkiye'nin füze tercihi ve müttefiklerin itirazları (Turkey's missile preference and its allies' objections)," Milliyet.com.tr, 11 October 2013, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/turkiye-nin-fuze-tercihi-ve-siyaset/ydetay/1775878/default.htm>

"There are visible and invisible reasons for why the U.S. and NATO are objecting to Turkey's choice of China. The claim that the Chinese missile systems may not be compatible with the U.S. and NATO systems does not explain everything. It seems that the main problem is different. What concerns the U.S. is China's cyber technology and its indisputable ability an capacity for "technology theft".

Turkey and China: Unlikely Strategic Partners

By Ms. Karen Kaya

In late September-early October 2010 Turkey and China held a bilateral military exercise in Turkey, the first such exercise that China conducted with a NATO member. This, coupled with the numerous high-level diplomatic and military visits between the two countries since 2009, has led to talk of a new "strategic partnership" between Turkey and China. While it is debatable whether the two countries are really at the level of a strategic partnership, the burgeoning Sino-Turkish relationship, which has remained unconsidered and understudied, is worth examining in order to assess the implications it may have for the U.S. and its defense community. This article analyzes the Turkey-China relationship in light of their strategic interests and discusses why it is unlikely that they will become true strategic partners, given the wide divergence between these interests.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Turkey-and-China.pdf>

“Turkey is trying to... show that no security threats will be tolerated from anyone.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 15 October the Turkish Army announced that it had fired on fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), an al-Qaeda-linked group in northern Syria, in retaliation for a stray mortar shell that hit Turkish soil. This is the first time the Turkish Army has responded to al-Qaeda-linked targets in Syria.

As the accompanying passages point out, the move comes amid domestic and international criticism of the Turkish government's Syria policy, which many claim include supporting al-Qaeda-linked groups, by allowing them to use the border areas as a base to attack Assad forces. Some in the Turkish press are questioning whether this response to the ISIS represents a significant policy change or merely a symbolic act aimed at diffusing such criticism, and point out that it is striking that a single unexploded shell should provoke such a reaction from the Turkish side. Others claim that the move proves that the government has shifted from supporting such groups and is now taking concrete action against them.

Many have long argued that supporting jihadists in Syria is short-sighted and will eventually come back to haunt Turkey in the long-run. The government officially denies any claims of arming such groups or facilitating passage of jihadi fighters. However, Human Rights Watch recently called on the UN Security Council to ensure that no arms are passing through Turkey to “abusive” groups. In addition, Kurdish groups in northern Syria who have been fighting jihadi groups accuse Turkey of supporting jihadists against the Kurds. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



The Turkish Armed Forces responded with a howitzer strike on locations belonging to the al-Qaeda linked Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) in Syria. Source: <http://english.sabah.com.tr/National/2013/10/17/turkey-exchanges-fire-with-alqaeda-offshoot-on-syrian-border>

Source: “Genelkurmay’ dan Suriye açıklaması (Statement from the Chief of the General Staff on Syria),” CNNturk.com.tr, 16 October 2013, <http://www.cnnurk.com/2013/turkiye/10/16/genelkurmaydan.suriye.aciklamasi/727430.0>

“The Turkish Armed Forces reported that mortars were fired from Syria’s Azaz/Parsa Mountain region [in northern Syria], and that after a stray mortar hit Turkish soil, the Turkish Army responded with four howitzer shells fired against Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) targets in the region.”

Source: Nihat Ali Özcan, “Dört top mermisi Suriye politikasında “kelebek kanadı” etkisi yaratabilir mi? (Can four shells create a ‘butterfly wing’ effect in the Syria policy?),” Milliyet.com.tr, 18 October 2013, <http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/dort-top-mermisi-suriye/siyaset/ydetay/1778380/default.htm>

“There is... a symbolic importance in the strike. The statement by the Turkish Armed Forces regarding the target’s identity [the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham], might bring a new dimension to the recently increasing claims that ‘Turkey is helping radical groups.’... Therefore, we should know shortly whether the shells were a turning point or simply a subordinate commander following orders. If the statements and firing continues, it might be a turning point in claims that Turkey is helping radical groups. It might prompt many changes having a butterfly wing effect. At the same time, the “four shells” might also make Turkey a target. Particularly for al-Qaeda and its affiliates.”

Source: “Turkish Army bombed Al-Qaeda Positions,” Aydinlik.com, 18 October 2013, <http://www.aydinlikdaily.com/Turkish-Army-bombed-Al-Qaeda-Positions-969>

“...with this recent move by the Turkish army, it appears that the AKP [Justice and Development Party] government has backpedalled from supporting terrorists and is now taking concrete action against them.

According to Kadri Gürsel, a columnist of Milliyet Newspaper... “Turkey is trying to rebuild the image of its Syria policy and show that no security threats will be tolerated from anyone. The confusing part is, the AKP government took this measure only weeks after deciding

(continued)

Continued: Turkish Army Fires on Jihadi (ISIS) Targets in Northern Syria

to reopen the border gates, through which supplies and money have been flowing to jihadist rebels in Syria... It is also striking that a single unexploded shell should provoke this reaction from the Turkish side, when stray ammunition from Syria has resulted in the deaths of multiple Turkish citizens in the region over the course of the Syrian crisis.”

Source: Semih Idiz, “Pressure Mounts on Turkey Over Radical Groups in Syria,” Almonitor.com, 15 October 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/10/turkey-must-control-jihadists-entering-syria.html>

“Ankara continues to be accused of turning a blind eye as members of these [radical] groups use Turkish territory for various purposes in their fight not just against the Assad regime, but also the moderate elements of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the Syrian Kurds... It is of course no secret that the Erdoğan government initially supported the group known as Jabhat al-Nusra in the belief that it was the most effective fighting force against Assad... Today, however, the Erdoğan government argues vehemently that it never supported Jabhat al-Nusra or any other radical group in Syria, saying it is opposed to terrorism wherever it comes from.”



Turkey's Role in Afghanistan and Afghan Stabilization

By Karen Kaya

Turkey views its presence in Afghanistan not only as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, but also as a “brotherhood duty” to help the Afghan people restore peace. Turkey’s views towards Afghanistan are also based on its own strategic interests: as long as Afghanistan is unstable, the whole region will be unstable, posing a security threat to Turkey. When Afghanistan becomes a secure and stable country, this will introduce wider stability in the region, bringing new economic benefits for the region in general and for Turkey in particular.

http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20130831_art007.pdf



OE Watch Commentary: On 30 September Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan announced a series of reforms, also called the “democratization reform package,” in a move aimed to address some of the problematic aspects of Turkey’s democracy, such as the headscarf ban and the issue of Kurdish rights.

While the package contains reforms on 28 topics, the most debated ones are those that pertain to the right to education in the Kurdish language - something the Kurds have been demanding for a long time. The reforms call for allowing private schools to offer some classes in Kurdish, a move deemed mostly unsatisfactory by the Kurds, who would like the government to introduce a Kurdish curriculum in public schools as well. The package also calls for a partial lifting of the headscarf ban in government offices (to exclude the military, police and judiciary).

The accompanying passages from the Turkish press point to the debate surrounding the reforms. Many claim that while the package is not satisfactory, some elements indicate that the government is proceeding in the right direction. Commentators also lament that the package contains no change to the vague antiterrorism laws, under which journalists and politicians can be jailed.

The first passage discusses the differing views of the package and focuses on the lack of change to the antiterrorism laws, which the commentator claims enable anyone to be labeled as a terrorist. Turkey has long been criticized for jailing journalists, Kurdish politicians, and, more recently, military officers under this law. The second passage, from a pro-Kurdish site, discusses two Kurdish politicians’ dissatisfaction, in which they claim that the reforms will not help solve the problems or tackle the stalemate in the peace process between the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party. The third points out that lifting the headscarf ban in government offices is an important move that is being watched closely

“For some, this package is the beginning of an unparalleled democratization festival. For others, it is a very delayed [package] which includes very little reform, and reflects a government mentality that doesn’t accept that basic rights and freedoms should be part of the definition of citizenship, and not a gift.”

Source: Soli Özel, “Paket izlenimleri (Reflections on the package),” Haberturk.com.tr, 2 October 2013, <http://m.haberturk.com/yazarlar/soli-ozel/882427-paket-izlenimleri>

“The fact that there was no change to the definition of ‘terrorism’ in the Anti-terror law or the Criminal law, which enables declaring anyone as a ‘terrorist’, will be criticized.

According to some, this package is the beginning of an unparalleled democratization festival. For others, it is a very delayed [package] which includes very little reform, and reflects a government mentality that doesn’t accept that basic rights and freedoms should be part of the definition of citizenship, and not a gift.

Undoubtedly, since Turkey’s most burning issue is the Kurdish issue, the steps taken in this field... are the most debated elements of the package. It will be debated whether Kurds will be satisfied...”

Source: “Oyalama paketi! (Stalling package!), Ozgurgundem.com, 1 October 2013, http://www.ozgur-gundem.com/?haberID=85004&haberBaslik=OYALAMA%20PAKETI!&action=haber_detay&module=nuce

“The co-chairman of the [pro-Kurdish] Peace and Democracy Party Gültan Kışanak said, ‘This is not a package that answers Turkey’s democratization needs. It has been prepared to answer AKP’s needs, not the public’s. It is not a democratization package, it is an election package...’

[Another Kurdish politician] Ahmet Türk said, “This package is far from being one that can contribute to the solving of the Kurdish problem or tackle the stalemate in the settlement process.”

(continued)

Continued: Reflections on Turkey's Democratization Reform Package

in the Arab world, where it is viewed as an exemplary move by Erdoğan for the entire Islamic world. The fourth passage, from a pro-government daily newspaper, applauds the package and claims that the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) is the only party that can move the country forward in terms of justice and equality. However, it also says more reform is needed.

The package comes shortly after Turkey's image suffered following the June protests, in which thousands of people took to the streets to protest the prime minister's style of governance and intrusion in their individual liberties. Commentaries have also discussed that Ankara hopes the package will alleviate some of these negative images. Erdoğan has said that more such reform packages are to come in the near future. End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)

Source: Sami Kohen, "Paketin dışa yansımaları (The external reflections of the package)," Milliyet.com.tr, 2 October 2013, <http://dunya.milliyet.com.tr/paketin-disa-yansimalari/dunya/ydetay/1771425/default.htm>

"[For many observers in the Arab capitals], the most important element of the package is the lifting of the headscarf ban. In the eyes of those who support this, Erdoğan's stance is an exemplary move for the entire Islamic world."

Source: Hilal Kaplan, "Paket ve çaresizlik (The package and helplessness)," Yenisafak.com.tr, 2 October 2013, <http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/HilalKaplan/paket-ve-caresizlik/39856>

"The democratization package has proven the truth once again: The AKP [The Justice and Development Party] is the only party that has the potential to move the country towards more justice and equality..."

The package is lacking because it didn't touch the Anti-terror Law; and it enforces a hierarchy on the lifting of the headscarf ban [by excluding the military, security and judiciary]...

What is certain is that we are in a better place today than yesterday."



Changing Trends in Israel – Turkey Security and Military Relations: Their Perspectives

This article analyzes the changing trends in the military and security relations between Turkey and Israel. It identifies factors of the operational environment that influence bilateral relations and includes a thorough discussion of each of the factors from a Turkish and Israeli perspective. It argues that relations are a product of the structural changes in the two countries' operational environments.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Changing-Trends-in-Israel-Turkey-Security-Relations.pdf>



“This administration will not accept factional pressures on the university.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Tehran University is symbolically important to the Islamic Republic. The university became a major center of social agitation against the Shah in the run-up to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Upon Ayatollah Khomeini’s victory, the campus became a center for the regime’s new religious activism and the site of weekly public sermons by Khomeini or handpicked substitute prayer leaders. The University also became subject to a cultural revolution, as religious commissars purged many women faculty members and those teaching subjects—especially in the humanities—deemed corrupted by Western philosophy or liberalism. Because of its symbolic importance, authorities are especially sensitive to political activity at Tehran University, and not without reason: the 1999 civil unrest, which would remain the largest anti-government protest in the Islamic Republic’s history until the election protests a decade later, began with a press freedom rally outside a Tehran University dormitory.*

While the Islamic Republic might be a dictatorship—the Supreme Leader, after all, is not subject to popular election and only those whom an unelected Guardian Council approves can run for president—it is far from autocratic. Over the years students have continued to test the limits of free political discourse at the University of Tehran, occasionally heckling senior regime officials who come to speak. In order to curtail politically embarrassing episodes of students ruining photo-ops with blunt or disrespectful questions, both the Intelligence Ministry (literally the Ministry of Information and National Security) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ paramilitary Basij have maintained a robust presence on campus.

That newly-elected President Hassan Rouhani used his inaugural visit to the University of Tehran to reinforce, at least theoretically, academic freedom suggests a desire to make good on some of his campaign’s reformist promises. That he spoke so directly regarding the Ministry of Intelligence presence on campus, however, reinforces Iran’s subtle police state. He may have called upon the



University of Tehran (UT) coat of arms. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Tehran

Source: “Vezarat-e Etela’at Rah ra Baraye Diplomasi Ilmi Baz Konad, Daneshgah Markaz-e Hezb Nist” (“Ministry of Information Could Open the Way for Diplomacy, the University is not a Party Center”) Fars News Agency, 14 October 2013. <http://farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13920701001303>

The University is Not a Political Party Center

According to the Fars News Agency pool reporter, Hassan Rouhani, president of the Islamic Republic, our country, gave a speech this morning in a ceremony marking the beginning of the school year in the Allameh Amini Hall at Tehran University in which referring to both past and new education traditions at the University of Tehran, said, “in the beginning, the work of this university and especially the humanities faculty was great, so that there was an exodus from other institution to this great center.”

The president continued, it is known in generations past, when scholars such as the martyrs [Morteza] Motahhari and [Mohammad] Beheshti were present, we students were able to take advantage of the academic center, and Tehran University was a center not only for science, but also for social and political responsibility which both yesterday and today was promulgated in society...

With reference to the reading of two statements by students at the event, Rouhani said, “It was very nice for me that two statements from student groups were read because they both show that the words from your heart are beautiful”. He emphasized that freedom of expression is one of the glories of our country and our universities and is due to the work and achievements of the Islamic Revolution, and not all countries have such freedom of expression...

Criticizing the government and those running the government is a great blessing and we need to realize that sympathetic criticism is very valuable not only for the government but also for the country. It is true that the university is not a [political] party center, and students have a right to conduct political and social activities at the

(continued)

Continued: University vs. Intelligence Ministry

*Intelligence Ministry to give students space, but he did not demand that they depart the campus. Accordingly, Rouhani's policy might be understood to be "report but do not interfere." Nor did Rouhani condemn the Basij presence on campus, where they retain both faculty and student chapters. This might suggest that Rouhani either does not believe himself strong enough to take on the Basij, strong supporters of his predecessor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, or, conversely, he simply does not want to constrain the paramilitaries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

university... The main mission of the university is science and technology, but science and knowledge can rule only when there is a free environment of criticism, thought, and opinion in our universities.

In the university, only law must rule alongside this language. This administration will not accept factional pressures on the university.

"My dearest, dear and great students, professors, officials, ministers, intellectuals and scholars: If you have created a security environment you have spread discord."

Addressing the Ministry of Intelligence, he added, "Open the door to diplomacy and trust the university, the great professors of this university and the students because all of them love dear Iran and seek the country's expansion."

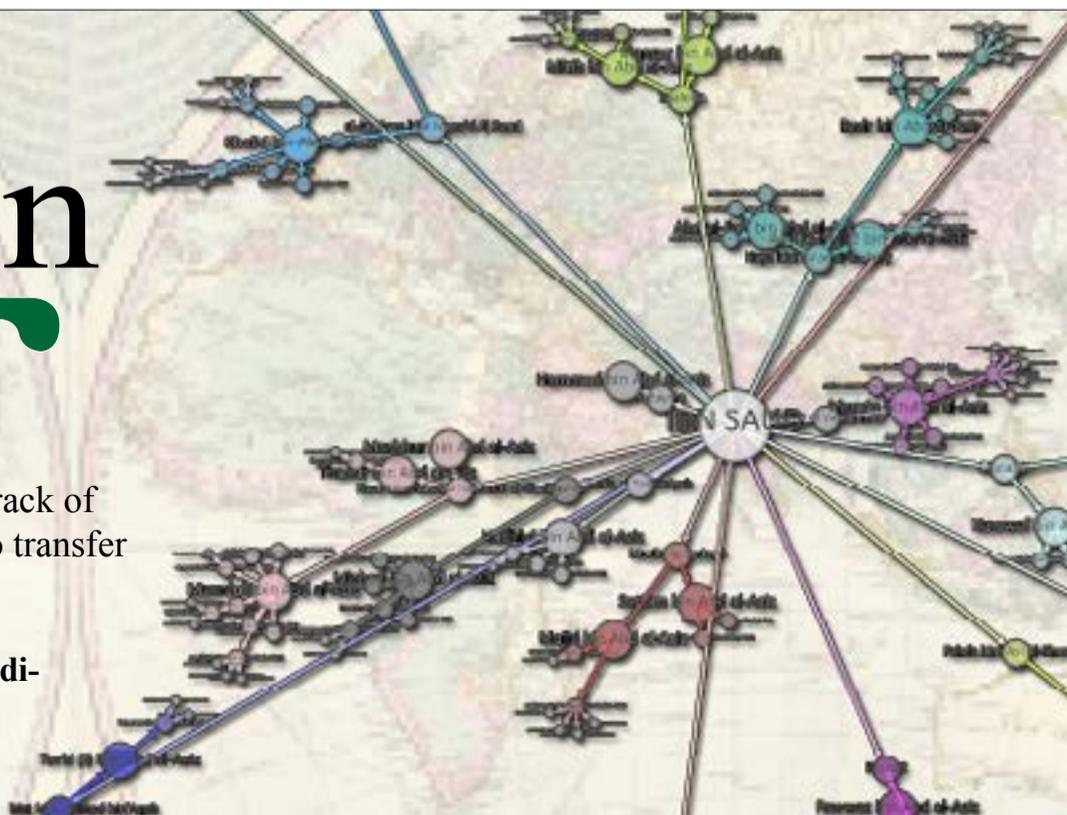
Mapping Saudi Arabia's Succession

By LUCAS WINTER

Foreign Military Studies Office

This paper aims to serve as a guide for keeping track of the key players as the Saudi royal family seeks to transfer power to a new generation of princes.

<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Saudi-Succession/Saudi-Succession.pdf>





“Our religious beliefs and experience and the imperialist nature of the domineering powers tell us that this confidence will never be gained unless, God forbid, our people become a dead people.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since his August 2013 inauguration, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has waged a diplomatic campaign that has renewed hope that Tehran may be serious about negotiating resolution to the international dispute regarding its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Safeguards Agreement and its uranium enrichment. That Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei seemingly blessed Rouhani's outreach by speaking of Iran's "heroic flexibility" has underscored the importance of Rouhani's diplomatic offensive. However, there is growing reason to doubt that Khamenei's "heroic flexibility" includes a willingness to resolve the nuclear impasse. Immediately following his mention of "heroic flexibility," several aides to and associates of the Supreme Leader clarified that Khamenei blessed a change in tactics but not in policy.

The excerpted article in Kayhan provides more cause for concern regarding just how flexible Iran might be in nuclear negotiations. Kayhan is important for Iran-watchers because the Supreme Leader appoints its editor. Therefore, many believe it reflects the thinking of Khamenei more than other regime outlets. The following excerpts from a lengthy Kayhan column criticize the notion of confidence-building, which is a cornerstone of Western diplomacy. Generally speaking, the author equates confidence-building with compromise and perhaps acknowledgement of previous malfeasance. This, he suggests, means that Iran should refuse any concessions toward the West in forthcoming nuclear negotiations.

Iran does negotiate and it has in the past struck deals and stood by them, even after long periods of ideological antipathy. For example, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini agreed to and abided by a ceasefire ending the Iran-Iraq War even after swearing for years that Iran would not stop until its armies passed through Iraq and liberated Jerusalem. Yet columns such as those appearing in Kayhan should remind us that the norms of diplomacy as understood by the West and those envisioned by Iran often have very different philosophical bases. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Etemad ya Ijad Bavar” (“Confidence or Creating Belief?”) Kayhan, 17 October 2013. <http://www.kayhan.ir/920725/2.htm#N200>

Confidence or Creating Belief?

“Confidence building” is a concept involving two sides, is bilateral, and most often is used in cases when advancing a goal requires the cooperation of the other side or sides... Almighty God says: “Mohammad the Messenger of God—peace be upon him—and those who are with him are violent with regard to the infidels, and merciful with regard to the faithful.” Quite obviously, to the same extent that it recommends to the faithful to have confidence in each other, the Quran also warns against having confidence in infidels, and in certain verses, it has made having confidence subject to specific requirements. Here, one question comes to mind: Is gaining their confidence the requirement for having a relationship with the infidels, or not...?

Confidence building in international norms means consenting to movement within a mutually agreeable framework.... In fact, a person who says that he is building confidence is saying that he is moving toward a certain framework and rules that are acceptable to the other side. Hence, the new nuclear negotiation team of Iran is saying: In exchange for our movement toward building confidence, our rival, in other words, the West headed by the United States, must accept Iran's right to enrichment. This, however, despite its chic appearance, is some sort of contradiction, because moving within the framework and rules accepted by them outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty means in fact for Iran to agree to give up its nuclear right. Why? Because, when our nuclear team speaks about the right of its country to enrichment in accordance with the standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the other side speaks of a superior legal rule and responds: This “indisputable right” has been taken away from you through the resolutions of the Security Council—including Resolution 1737—and your country has become an exception. In order to have those rights once again, you must act on your commitments and obligations in the resolutions and engage in negotiations with the IAEA after getting through the Security Council regarding this right...

Our religious beliefs and experience and the imperialist nature of the domineering powers tell us that this confidence will never be gained unless, God forbid, our people become a dead people. The movement of Iran, however, on the course of power and strength, which requires confidence in the ability of the Iranian people, will certainly have results.

“The Iranian navy can help fulfill the requirements of Namibia”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Iranian outreach to Africa (detailed in the April 2013 Operational Environment Watch) continues apace, despite the transition from the Ahmadinejad to Rouhani administrations. The excerpted article notes a visit by the commander of the Namibian Navy to the Islamic Republic to meet with his Iranian counterparts and tour various Iranian naval facilities.*

The visit culminates a diplomatic revival in ties between the two countries. While Iran had maintained an embassy in Windhoek in the decade after the Islamic Revolution, it shuttered its embassy 15 years ago because of the economic cost of maintaining the embassy and its diplomatic presence. Iran’s renewed interest in Namibia coincides with Namibia’s expansion of its uranium mining industry; today, Namibia is the fifth largest producer of uranium after Kazakhstan, Canada, Australia, and Niger.¹

*While the report says that Iran seeks to provide assistance to counterpiracy efforts not only off the Horn of Africa but along the west coast of Africa as well, Tehran’s naval outreach also suggests that Tehran is seeking to leverage its emphasis on naval development for diplomatic gains, and that it continues to seek locations to which it might send flotillas to show the Iranian flag. In recent years the Iranian Navy has sent ships through the Suez Canal into the Eastern Mediterranean, and made numerous port calls in Sudan; earlier this year, it sent three ships into the Pacific Ocean, making port calls in China and Sri Lanka. It appears that the Iranian government hopes to continue that trend and send its Navy into the Atlantic Ocean as well. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***

1. “World Uranium Mining Production,” World Nuclear Association, July 2013, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Nuclear-Fuel-Cycle/Mining-of-Uranium/World-Uranium-Mining-Production/#.UmGahhDCbEM>



Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari. (Internet Photo). Source: <http://www.ekspertai.eu/static/uploads/cache/800x600/2012/10/Iran%E2%80%99s-Navy-Commander-Rear-Admiral-Habibollah-Sayyari.jpg>

Source: “Amadagi ‘Azam beh Namibia ra Navhayaman Darim” (“We Are Ready to Dispatch our Fleet to Namibia”) Fars News Agency, 8 October 2013. <http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13920716001435>

We Are Ready to Dispatch our Fleet to Namibia

According to a report of the Fars News Agency defense correspondent, Rear Admiral Habibullah, commander of the navy, in a meeting with his Namibian counterpart Peter Vilho, noted that the trip had been due to the efforts of the Iranian ambassador in Namibia and said, the Namibian delegation arrived today in their first visit to Iran....

He added that the Iranian navy can help fulfill the requirements of Namibia in the fields of training, maintenance, and dock construction; and said we are ready to have a port call from the Namibian navy and we are ready to dispatch a fleet to those shores.

Referring to his talks with the Namibian naval commander, he said that in these conversations, as we discussed training, they will visit Nowshahr [Naval] University [outside of Chalus, a town on the Caspian Sea], Rasht [a town on the Caspian], the factories of Bandar Abbas, and the [new] Jamaran [class] destroyer.

“Its formation was announced from the besieged Ghouta rather than from hotels abroad...”

OE Watch Commentary: On 24 September several prominent Syrian Islamic rebel brigades issued a joint statement rejecting the legitimacy of the opposition Syrian National Coalition and calling for rebel unification under the banner of Islam. Three nominal members of the Supreme Military Council (a.k.a. the Free Syrian Army or the “moderate rebels”) signed the statement: the Idlib-based Suqur al-Sham, the Aleppo-based Tawhid Brigade and the Islam Brigade, which is based in the Rural Damascus Province’s “Eastern Ghouta” area. The salafi-jihadi groups Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham also signed. The first accompanying article, from the Saudi daily al-Hayat, explains how this announcement is the first step in a carefully planned project aimed at unifying the rebel ranks in preparation for a negotiated end to the Syrian crisis.

Less than a week later a very official looking ceremony announced the founding of the Army of Islam. Over forty armed groups formally pledged their allegiance to Zahran Alloush, leader of the Islam Brigade, which is based in the Damascus suburb of Duma. According to the second accompanying article, taken from Hizbullah’s al-Manar website, most of the groups that joined this new formation are either unknown or small and irrelevant. The Army of Islam, by this reading, is simply a rebranding of the Islam Brigade.

Whatever the case, a serious plan to unify the Syrian rebellion – at least its armed component – under the banner of Islam is underway. Few deny the link between this push to unify and Saudi Arabia’s recent takeover of the Syrian opposition file from Qatar. Zahran Alloush is known to have links to Saudi Arabia: his father, a Salafist scholar, is based there. On 1 October Reuters published an article expounding on Saudi Arabia’s links to the Army of Islam. As noted in the third accompanying article, the reaction was swift, with an Army of Islam spokesman emphasizing the group’s fighting credentials while also contrasting its presence



(From left to right) Hassan Abboud (leader of Ahrar al-Sham), Ahmed Abu Issa (leader of Suqur al-Sham) and Zahran Alloush (leader of the Army of Islam). Source: <http://alhayat.com/Content/uploads/Article/131005052657025.jpg>

Source:

كتائب إسلامية سورية تتوحد بدعم إقليمي استباقاً للحل السياسي
Ibrahim Hamidi, “Syrian Islamic Brigades Unify with Regional Support in Anticipation of a Political Solution,” 6 October 2013, al-Hayat. <http://alhayat.com/Details/558955>

According to information provided to al-Hayat, the agreed-upon step by the factions, regionally supported in anticipation of a political solution, consists of three stages: issuing a statement revoking the legitimacy of the “coalition” and organizing and unifying its ranks into two main blocs, one in the north and one in the south; declaring a military government to “put decision-making in the hands of soldiers that are on the inside”; and, announcing a political stance based on “overthrowing the regime, all of its symbols and pillars,” meaning “refusing dialogue or negotiations” with it...



Logo of the Army of Islam.
Source: <http://goo.gl/IgOM11>

It bears noting that the leader of the “Army of Islam” Zahran Alloush (from Rural Damascus), the leader of Ahrar al-Sham Hassan Aboud (from Hama) and the leader of Suqur al-Sham Ahmed Aissa al-Shaykh (from Idlib) all spent time in the Sidnaya prison near Damascus. It is feasible that they may have also met the leader of al-Nusra Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani (from Rural Damascus) in Sidnaya. All of them left prison some months after the peaceful protests broke out. Many of the leaders and members of the Islamic brigades fought against the Americans in Iraq...

(continued)

Continued: The Army of Islam

on the ground with the luxurious life of the Jordan- and Turkey-based rebel leaders.

*The foreign-based rebel military leadership is usually criticized for two main reasons: being absent from the battlefield and distributing weapons and ammunition based on personal rather than revolutionary considerations. In the fourth accompanying article, taken from the Saudi news website Elaph, a member of the Supreme Military Council barks back at Army of Islam accusations of selective distribution of weapons and ammunition. Such spats may increase. The trend toward the Islamic unification of Syria's rebellion is likely to continue, putting increased pressure on the Supreme Military Council to either adapt or face internal collapse. **End FMSO Commentary (Winter)***



Zahran Alloush.

Source: https://fbcdn-sphotos-c-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-prn2/1234512_454852951296979_1962163157_n.jpg

Source:

جيش الإسلام بقيادة زهران علوش ... ذراع بندر بن سلطان في ريف دمشق

“The Army of Islam led by Zahran Alloush... Bandar bin Sultan’s Arm in the Damascus Countryside,” 10 October 2013, al-Manar. <http://www.almanar.com.lb/adetails.php?eid=615459&cid=21&fromval=1>

The blows received by armed groups in Rural Damascus, especially the Islam Brigade, forced them to renew themselves. In this case, nearly fifty brigades lacking in battlefield reputation and unknown in the military balance unified under its banner. Syria followers note that what is called the Army of Islam is simply a revised version of the Islam Brigade, which was itself a copy of the Islam Company...

Source:

”جيش الإسلام“ يرد على رويترز... لسنا تبعاً للسعودية، وقرارنا سوري 100%

“The Army of Islam Responds to Reuters... We do not Follow Saudi Arabia, our Decisions are 100% Syrian,” 5 October 2013, Zaman al-Wasl. <http://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/41834.html>

Everyone ought to know that the Army of Islam is a 100% Syrian decision born from the womb of the Syrian Revolution. Its formation was announced from the besieged Ghouta rather than from hotels abroad. Its soldiers are Syrian and want to liberate Syria from Iranian and Russian submission and from the sectarian occupation of the majusi Alawites, which has destroyed the country, its lands and its offspring.

Source:

الجيش الحر لـ”إيلاف“: اتهامنا بتوزيع السلاح بلا عدل باطل

“The Free Syrian Army Tells Elaph: Accusations of Unfair Weapons Distribution are False,” 8 October 2013, Elaph. <http://www.elaph.com/Web/news/2013/10/840886.html>

[According to a source in the Free Syrian Army], “The Army of Islam receives weapons from the military council leadership from the north and the south. They know well that without the council’s cover they would not receive weapons. Where do they get their support from, if the council did not support them?”... The source added: “These critiques, which are part of a deliberate campaign to cast doubt on others and on their efforts and to misinform, do not serve the interest of the Syrian people. Before directing criticism, officials in the Army of Islam should know that the council leaders are the ones that steered the military assistance toward the Islam Brigade, before it named itself the Army of Islam.”

Reshuffling the Deck in Raqqa

9 October 2013

“...their excuse for being in the region, where they control the grain silos and the oil fields that still flow in the direction of the regime...”

OE Watch Commentary: The Syrian city of Raqqa, located in the Euphrates Valley east of Aleppo, rose to prominence in March 2013 when it became the first provincial capital to switch from regime to rebel control. Although peripheral to the regime’s core interests, the city lies at a key juncture on the road linking Iraq’s Anbar Province with northern Syria. The highway along the Euphrates forks at Raqqa, with one path leading north to the town of Tell Abyad (around 100 km) on the border with Turkey and the other continuing west to the city of Aleppo (around 195 km). Raqqa’s location is such that in the 9th century – as the expansive Abbasid empire was beginning to fissure – the Caliph Harun al-Rashid temporarily moved his capital to Raqqa for a dozen years. Nowadays the Syrian regime’s formal military presence in the province is limited to the military airport south of the Tabqa Dam, the 93d Brigade Headquarters in Ain Issa north of Raqqa, and the besieged headquarters of the Syrian Army’s 17th Division on the provincial capital’s outskirts.

By early summer 2013 Syria’s “big three” Islamist militias - the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) and Ahrar al-Sham, who head the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF) - all had established a firm presence in the city of Raqqa. As a result, the smaller Free Syrian Army (FSA) units that had formed locally in 2012 and militias with roots in Aleppo and Idlib both became marginalized. A belated response came on 17 July 2013, when Raqqa’s strongest local FSA battalions merged to form the 11th Division. As the first accompanying article notes, residents welcomed the new formation, seeing it as a force that would put local interest over programmatic Islamic ones while counterbalancing the military strength of the three Islamist groups. This proved to be wishful thinking.

On 18 September two key components of the FSA’s two-month-old 11th Division in Raqqa joined JN. Over the next few days, as mentioned



Map of Syria with Raqqa province highlighted.

Source: http://web.orange.co.uk/images/ice/news/bskyb_image_211604_v1_261212_world_map_of_syria_raqqa_province_online_1_400x240.jpg

Source:

الرققة: عن واقع الكتائب العسكرية، وإدارة المدينة المحررة، والثورات اللاحقة!

“Al Raqqa: The reality of the military brigades, the administration of the liberated city and the revolutions to come.” The Republic for Studies of the Syrian Revolution, 29 August 2013. <http://therepublics.net>

(English translation available at: <http://therepublics.net/2013/09/16/al-raqqa-the-reality-of-the-military-brigades-the-administration-of-the-liberated-city-and-the-revolutions-to-come/>)

The overwhelming majority of Al Raqqa’s residents welcomed this new formation and had high hopes for it. In their eyes, this umbrella organization of military brigades, predominantly local in composition and operating beneath the Free Syrian Army’s banner (FSA), creates a military counterweight in the liberated city to offset the strong presence of brigades beholden to Jihadist, Salafist ideology...

The Al Nusra Front left Al Raqqa. Today, all that remains of the group are slogans liberally daubed across the city’s walls. The Front’s dispute with ISIS and the subsequent phenomenon of fighters leaving the Front for their rivals hastened the Front’s departure from Al Raqqa to set up in nearby Al Tabaqa, another liberated city, in what appears to be a dividing up of power between the two groups...

Al Raqqa’s residents are divided when it comes to the Islamist Ahrar Al Sham Movement... It is no secret that immediately after the liberation of Al Raqqa the Movement took control of most of the city’s public funds and utilities. This included taking over the Central Bank, rumored to be holding between four and six billion lira at the time. The Movement is famous for rushing to take over any public utilities it can lay its hands on in liberated territories... It may be highly significant that the headquarters of the Ahrar Al Sham Movement in Al Raqqa is situated within the Central Bank and the main offices of the military court system, while ISIS has taken the governor’s offices as

(continued)

Continued: Reshuffling the Deck in Raqqa

in the second accompanying article, the short-lived division's remaining brigades joined one of the big three (ISIS, JN or SIF).

JN is by far the greatest beneficiary from this reshuffling. By linking up with local fighters, it continues cultivating its new image as a local and less extreme alternative to ISIS; the alliance also helps reopen JN's weapons pipeline in Raqqa, which was shut off after its split with ISIS. The impact this may have on the position of the Idlib- and Hama-based Ahrar al-Sham and the Iraq-based ISIS in Raqqa is less clear. Broad ambitions have brought both groups to Raqqa, cross-border ones in the case of ISIS, national ones in the case of Ahrar al-Sham. Ahrar al-Sham recently signed a declaration, alongside JN and several of the strongest nominal FSA brigades (for more on this see the other entry on Syria in this issue), calling for the unification of Syria's Islamic brigades; ISIS was excluded from the statement. Whether or not this points to a further consolidation in Raqqa, one thing is becoming clear, according to the third accompanying article: Raqqa's residents are losing patience with the experiments in Islamic governance being conducted on them, not only by ISIS but also by Ahrar al-Sham.
End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

its base. A symbolic reflection, perhaps, of the reality of their respective ambitions and approaches on the ground.

Source:

لواء أمناء الرقة يبايع أحرار الشام
 "The Umana al-Raqqa Brigade Pledges Allegiance to Ahrar al-Sham," Asian Society Information Agency, 21 September 2013. <http://www.asianewslb.com/vdcbszb0.rhb00pukur.html>

...Thus the "Umana al-Raqqa" becomes the fifth faction over the past two days to defect from the Free Syrian Army and join a jihadi group. The "Thuwar al-Raqqa" and "al-Muntasir Billah" brigades pledged allegiance to Jabhat al-Nusra, while the Salahaddin Brigade and the 313 Battalion pledge allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. This means that the city of Raqqa has in practice become devoid of any effective FSA presence and moved fully into the custody of jihadi groups. Analysts do not rule out armed clashes breaking out between them over influence and to try to monopolize power in the city.

Source:

انفجار الصراع بين «داعش» و«أحرار الشام» على الغنائم والنقود في الرقة السورية
 "The Battle between ISIS and Ahrar al-Sham Breaks Out over Spoils and Influence in Syria's Raqqa," al-Sharq (Saudi Arabia), 9 October 2013. <http://www.alsharq.net.sa/2013/10/09/966543>

The activist mentioned that ISIS and Ahrar al-Sham exploit the presence of Assad's forces 17th Division near the city as a justification for their presence there. He explains that neither of these groups wants to liberate or target the base, even though residential neighborhoods in the city are bombed from it daily. This division's presence is their excuse for being in the region, where they control the grain silos and the oil fields that still flow in the direction of the regime...

The activist confirmed that residents of the city and its surroundings are fed up with these two groups and their behavior toward citizens...



The logo of the short-lived "11th division" in Raqqa. (Internet Photo).

Source: https://fbcdn-profile-a.akamaihd.net/hprofile-ak-prn2/c144.33.418.418/s160x160/1075828_1374787209408739_1552508160_n.jpg

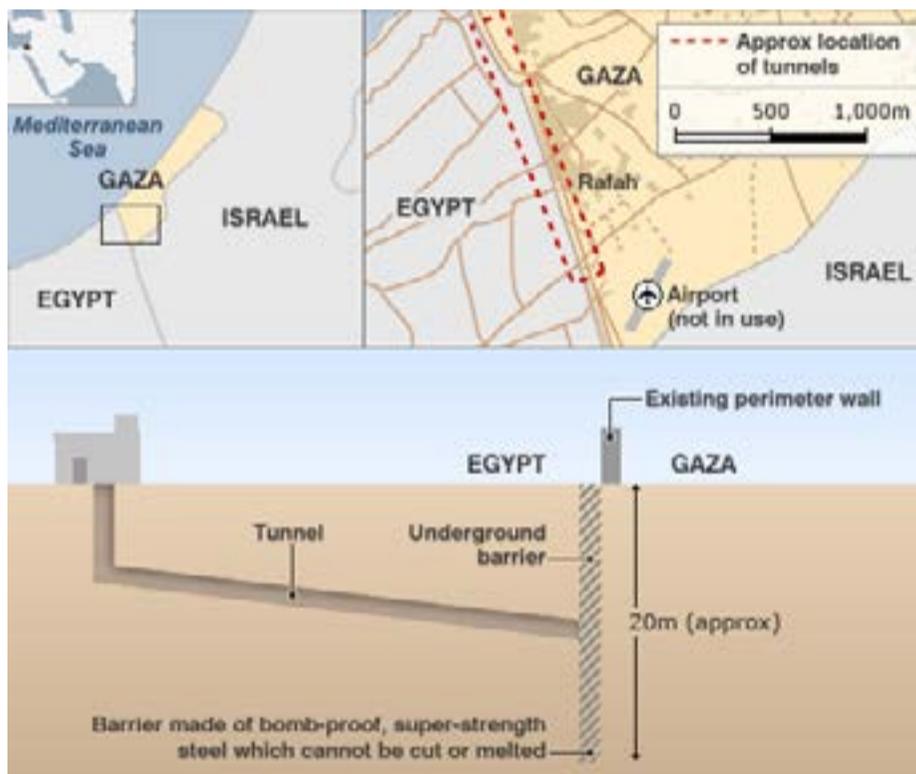
“...The government in Gaza has also prohibited any demonstrations in solidarity with the detained president and in opposition to Al-Sisi...”

OE Watch Commentary: The new Egyptian authorities and Hamas appear to be on a collision course. Bogged down in the Sinai, Egypt's rulers accuse Hamas of running a shoddy operation that allows weapons and jihadis to flow freely from Gaza into the Sinai. Over the past couple of months Egyptian authorities have closed the Rafah border crossing for several days and demolished hundreds of the tunnels that are vital to Gaza's economy. They now seem poised to create a buffer zone on the Egyptian side of the border.

Hamas does not want a confrontation. As the first accompanying article notes, the group has gone to great pains to avoid irking Egyptian authorities. Egyptian media, however, have whipped themselves into a frenzy over Hamas. The second accompanying article, from an influential Egyptian columnist and critic of the current regime, warns against the drift that is drawing Egypt into confrontation.

Hamas's fall over the past two years has been precipitous. Largely stripped of its credentials as a resistance movement after opting to join the emerging (but now-defunct) Egyptian-Qatari-Tunisian-Libyan "Brotherhood Axis," Hamas is now rumored to be pondering a crawl back to the "Resistance Axis" (Syria-Iran-Hizbullah). Egypt's interdiction of tunnel traffic is certain to squeeze Gaza's economy and put greater pressure on Hamas to find a benefactor soon.

Adding to this urgency, Hamas must brace for challenges on the internal front. Barring any surprises, Gaza's version of the "Tamarod" movement, modeled after the massive one-day protest that led to Morsi's overthrow in Egypt, will be the first challenge. While recognizing the risk of there being no Gazan equivalent to Egypt's national army, the movement has called for mass protests against Hamas on 11 November. The third accompanying article, from an Iraqi daily, is an interview with "the media spokeswoman for the Tamarod movement in Gaza."



Underground Egypt-Gaza tunnel. (Internet Photo). Source: http://i31.photobucket.com/albums/c363/Arzeh/gaza_barrier.gif

Source:

اعلان حرب مصري على حماس: من الظالم ومن المظلوم؟
 Abd al-Bari Atwan, "Egypt Declares War on Hamas: Who is the Oppressor and who is the Oppressed?" 24 September 2013, Rai al-Youm. <http://www.raialyoum.com/?p=6945> (English translation available at: <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/africa/7533-egypt-declares-war-on-hamas-but-who-is-the-oppressor-and-who-is-the-oppressed>)

Since the July coup, some Egyptian TV stations have opened the doors of media hell against Hamas in particular and the Palestinian people in general. They have aired programs depicting Hamas as the greatest threat to Egypt and its people; the reason for the military maneuvers in Sinai; responsible for the queues at petrol stations; behind the shrinking of loaves of bread; and profiting from the increased price of tomatoes and onions. The irony of it all is that all of these largely artificial crises were resolved the day after the coup.

...
 The Hamas government, which admitted making mistakes in its opposition to the coup that overthrew their Muslim Brotherhood ally President Morsi, has banned mosque Imams from speaking about internal Egyptian affairs or insulting General Al-Sisi. The government in Gaza has also prohibited any demonstrations in solidarity with the detained president and in opposition to Al-Sisi and the coup-led government. Moreover, some Hamas officials, Ismail Haniyeh and Mousa Abu Marzouk among them, have praised Egypt and its army on television, thanking them for their grace towards the Palestinian people. All that was left was for them to kiss their hands and bow in gratitude, asking for forgiveness, but they did not receive any; instead the measures against them have become more stringent and arbitrary.

(continued)

Continued: Egypt and Hamas on a Collision Course?

*With Syria in a stalemate, the “Moderation Axis” (Saudi Arabia, the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jordan, and the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority) may seize the chance to piggyback on Egypt’s frenetic purge of the Muslim Brotherhood and be ready to support the emergence of a more pliant entity to rule Gaza. Hamas’s signals that it may be willing to be this pliant entity are going unheeded. In all likelihood this will lead it back into the resistance camp, where it would be welcomed (perhaps after a mild scolding) as a useful negotiating tool. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

Source:

تعذيب الفلسطينيين لا يصنع أمنًا
Fahmi Huweidi, “Torturing the Palestinians Will not Create Security,” al-Shuruq (Egypt), 14 October 2013, <http://shorouknews.com/columns/view.aspx?cdate=14102013&id=33d2cee3-06dd-42d7-b79b-b4847a726b0a> (English translation available at: <http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/articles/middle-east/7819-torturing-the-palestinians-will-not-create-security>)

On many past occasions I have refuted the idea that the tunnels are a threat, by urging people to look at the facts and not the popular impressions of the tunnels and Hamas being a threat to Egypt’s security. Over time, this impression has turned into a belief that settled amongst the masses, as well as the political and security elite. It has come about as a result of media campaigns and the promotion of such ideas by those who would benefit from poisoning the relationship between Egypt and Hamas and from dealing a blow to the resistance and ensuring the continued blockade on the Palestinians in order to humiliate and suppress them. There is no doubt that Israel stands to benefit the most from this, nor can we deny the role played by the Palestinian Authority security agencies in Ramallah, who have a score to settle with Hamas. Documents were recently published which revealed efforts by these agencies to drive a wedge between Hamas and Egypt’s people and government...

Source:

هند العربي من حركة تمرد غزة لـ الزمان : حماس تمارس القتل وتعتقل الأطفال

“Hind al-Arabi from Gaza’s Tamarod Movement tells al-Zaman: Hamas Kills and Arrests Children” 8 October 2013, Al-Zaman (Iraq). <http://www.azzaman.com/?p=46924> (English translation available at: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/10/gaza-tamarod-protests-oust-hamas.html>)

Unfortunately, Hamas is the one primarily responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. It is difficult to repeat the scenario in Egypt because the army in Egypt stood with the people. In Gaza, there is no army. Hamas has threatened anyone who protests with a massacre and a new war in the Strip. We don’t receive support from any party and we communicate only with members of human rights organizations in Egypt and the Arab world to demand the prosecution of Hamas for the crimes it committed against the Palestinian people. We do not interfere in the affairs of Egypt and reject Hamas’ interference in Egyptian and Arab affairs. Because of this interference, the king of Saudi Arabia has announced cutting off his relationship with the Palestinian cause. The Egyptian army, or the Egyptian government, would not claim that Hamas is interfering in Egyptian affairs unless it had evidence to prove it.

Tunnel recently uncovered by Israeli troops.
Source: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/10/13/233519108/israel-discovers-tunnel-leading-to-gaza-army-says>

Ethiopia Renaissance Dam: Egypt's Strategic Concern that doesn't have to do with the Middle East

“The issue caused one of the most significant foreign policy crises during the one year rule of ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. Morsi staged a roundtable discussion ... attendees suggested aggressive action against Ethiopia.”

Source: http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-05-31-the-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam-egypt-and-sudan-move-from-denial-to-acceptance/#.UmhRU_nUISI

OE Watch Commentary: Most international news coverage of Egypt focuses on the stability challenges facing the military government following the removal of President Morsi, who himself came to power following the Arab Spring. Despite this internal turmoil, Egyptians have not lost sight of their international interests and concerns. Some of the most important ones have nothing to do with the U.S. or the Middle East.

The Nile River is Egypt's single most important natural resource, so Egyptians closely scrutinize the river policies of the Upper Nile nations. When, as the second article highlights, Ethiopia moved forward with construction plans on the Blue Nile, Egyptians viewed this with suspicion, particularly given Egypt's current and projected water requirements. As the first article points out, from an Egyptian perspective, tension with Ethiopia over the Renaissance Dam was a major foreign policy challenge for the Morsi administration. Although this was probably more of a diplomatic blunder than a potential shooting war, the tensions were real, and the current military government has made progress in improving relations and adopting a cooperative rather than confrontational posture. Nevertheless, the interaction between Egypt and Ethiopia shows that international conflict over water resources could become reality in the 21st century. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Source: Staff Author(s), “Egyptian and Ethiopian FMs discuss common interests: Spokesman,” *Ahram Online*, 27 Sep 2013 <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/82621/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-and-Ethiopian-FMs-discuss-common-interest.aspx>

Article #1:

Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy and his Ethiopian counterpart Tedros Adhanom agree on the importance of overcoming recent tension between their countries over a new dam being constructed by Ethiopia over the Blue Nile In June, the Ethiopian parliament ratified a treaty ... replacing colonial-era agreements that grant Egypt and Sudan the lion's share of water rights from the river. Ethiopia's planned \$4.2 billion hydro-electric dam on the Blue Nile has been a source of concern for the Egyptian government. ... The issue caused one of the most significant foreign policy crises during the one year rule of ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. Morsi staged a roundtable discussion in June Unaware the meeting was being aired live, attendees suggested aggressive action against Ethiopia.

“The minister considers the security breakdown the country has faced to be the main reason behind the postponement of many irrigation development projects....”

(continued)

Continued: Ethiopia Renaissance Dam: Egypt's Strategic Concern that doesn't have to do with the Middle East

“Egypt suffers from a water shortage of more than 23 billion cubic meters a year. Egypt receives 55.5 billion cubic meters from the Nile, which represents more than 95% of Egypt’s water resources, and consumes nearly 78.5 billion cubic meters.”

Source: Muhammad Abdul Monsef, “Ministry of Water Resources seeks alternative methods for increasing Egypt’s water share,” Daily News Egypt, 07 October 2013, <http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/10/07/ministry-of-water-resources-seeks-alternative-methods-for-increasing-egypts-water-share/>

Article #2:

A televised meeting between ousted President Mohamed Morsi and other political parties regarding Ethiopia’s announcement that they would divert the Nile to build the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) was the cause of a big diplomatic faux pas.

The Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation for the El-Beblawi government, Dr Mohamed Abdul Muttalib, ruled out escalation with Ethiopia as a means solve the dam crisis. ... Abdul Muttalib said: “Egypt is prepared to help administrate the electricity produced by the GERD, connect it to the national electrical grid, and participate in [the] administrating of the dam ...”

Egypt suffers from a water shortage of more than 23 billion cubic meters a year. Egypt receives 55.5 billion cubic meters from the Nile, which represents more than 95% of Egypt’s water resources....

According to the minister, the irrigation ministry is currently examining increasing Egypt’s share of the Nile through implementing projects to utilize water losses in upstream states. The Baro-Akobo project on the Blue Nile in Ethiopia could provide 12 billion cubic meters of water to be split between Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan and the Jonglei Canal project would provide 7 billion cubic meters to be split between Egypt and North and South Sudan.

The Minister of Water Resources also formed a technical committee to re-evaluate the necessary investments to execute the West Delta projects to establish an agriculture canal from the Al-Nasser water channel to the lower Bahiri water channel and the railroad. ... The land west of the Cairo-Alexandria desert road depends entirely on groundwater irrigation. However, the groundwater table in this region has begun decreasing drastically and many wells have shown signs of salinization.

In Upper Egypt, the Minister of Water Resources referred to a massive ongoing project to build a new Assiut barrage. The new Assiut Barrage project will help increase the gross national product and agricultural production of 20% of the national agricultural lands....

It will also provide clean electric energy ... and boost commercial shipping So far, 30% of the construction has been completed.

The ministry is currently considering feasibility studies from the governorates to determine priority irrigation projects, specifically the construction of pumping stations and drilling ground wells. ... The [Ministry] seeks to dig a number of wells in the New Valley Governorate in the south-west region of the country by 2014 at a cost of EGP 40m.... The ministry also hopes to complete lining the waterways from oases in the Bahari region ... as well as waterways in the Dakhla Oasis and Farafra ... by mid-2014.

The minister considers the security breakdown the country has faced to be the main reason behind the postponement of many irrigation development projects



Map of Nile Basin. Image Source: <http://ees.lanl.gov/news/images/08/08-07-14.png>

Is it Time to Panic about Venezuela?

18 October 2013

OE Watch Commentary: *Not quite yet. However, if one is interested in places that slip into violent chaos, it might be a good time to request a classified briefing from someone. Unclassified sources have been abuzz with strange information. The Panamanians stop a ship filled with hidden weapons bound for Ecuador, and some of the weapons were part of a geopolitical set-up? The Venezuelan Navy detains Guyanese research ships off the Venezuelan coast? Retired Venezuelan officers publicly call for a mutiny? Something might be afoot. If so, it somehow relates to Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's job as Hugo Chavez' apostle/president. It is also necessarily related to the FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the principal communist guerrilla insurgent organization), Colombia peace talks and Cuban regional strategy.*

Amid all the sloppy actions, confusion, and haphazard interpretations, it is hard to discern exactly what is going on in northern South America right now. We are compelled to consider the economic and public morale trends in Venezuela. They have been on a long downward slide. Whether the Venezuelan public mood is one of fatalism or urgency, it seems that outsiders (read the Cuban government and the Forum of Sao Paulo) may be considering some flamboyant high risk plays. It behooves them not to lose influence over the central government in Venezuela, whatever happens to the country's general economic performance. Venezuela is the continent's primary exporter of two highly profitable commodities – oil and cocaine.

Some Colombians opine that the international machinations are also linked to the coming 2014 Colombian elections. The South American left does not like the prospect of a return to power of an Uribe-esque government (Alvaro Uribe is a former president who is aggressively anti-FARC). With Colombian elections on the horizon and the prospect



Former Colombian President (2002-2010) Alvaro Uribe
Source: http://miradoroeste.blogspot.com/2013_05_03_archive.html



Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro
Source: <http://www.radiorebelde.cu>

Source: Ricardo Puentes Melo. “El barco coreano y el atentado contra Uribe Vélez” (The Korean Ship and the Uribe Vélez Assassination Attempt), *Periodismo Sin Fronteras*, 7 Oct 2013. <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/el-barco-coreano-atentado-contra-uribe.html> (accessed October 2013)

“The reality is that the North Korean flagged Chong Chong Gang had the mission of carrying arms from Cuba to Ecuador. Part of the weaponry, as has already been said, would go to the FARC, but another part of the shipment, like the aircraft, were going to be ‘discovered’ by the Colombian government, which would confirm in one way or another that the accusations made by Maduro (about how Uribe and the Venezuelan opposition were buying airplanes to try to assassinate Maduro, were true. The aircraft in the ship were destined for a fabricated conspiracy that Uribe and the Venezuelan opposition would find hard to disprove. Rafael Correa was to personally direct the part that corresponded to him.” (Demarest translation)

Source: Antonio María Delgado. “Militares retirados: la sublevación está justificada en Venezuela” (Retired Military Officers: Mutiny Justified in Venezuela), *El Nuevo Herald*, Miami, 14 Oct 2013. <http://www.elnuevoherald.com/2013/10/14/1590125/militares-retirados-la-sublevacion.html#storylink=cpy> (accessed October 2013).

“Forty Five retired officers – including more than a dozen generals and admirals and an exMinister of Defense – accuse the party (Chavismo) of having broken the country's constitutional thread in order to install a de-facto regime, and assert that a military uprising would be justified under the current Constitution in order to recover democracy.” (Demarest translation)

(continued)

Continued: Is it Time to Panic about Venezuela?

of a more resolutely anti-FARC administration coming to power, the Cubans and their suite of allies and instruments may be looking to take some dramatic action. Venezuela has been slowly falling apart, and Cuban leaders may think that if Venezuela were to suffer a more precipitous social collapse, Cuban influence there could be jeopardized. On the other hand, they could exploit such a crisis. We can reasonably assume that one of the Venezuelan regime's options for staying in power is to inflame a broader international conflict in which Venezuela is seen as the victim.

*The situation in Venezuela does not appear to be improving at all. It is not farfetched to imagine a moment in which major elements of infrastructure grind to a complete halt, lawlessness sweeps through the major cities, and desperate columns of refugees move to seek basic needs in Colombia. This probably will not happen, but if it were to pass, it is harder to imagine a timely multinational response to the chaos. The nearest capable (and the most interested) external force would indeed be Colombian, so perhaps the Colombians are compelled to consider intervention in the case of a Venezuelan socio-economic disaster. It is hard to know if FARC units now enjoying Venezuelan sanctuary would be specific targets during such an intervention, or if they would just be in the way. So, has the moment arrived to gear up for expanded armed conflict in northern South America? No, but it might be time to give Venezuela a more vivid color on the worries chart. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Source: Fanny Kertzman. “¿Habrá golpe de Estado en Venezuela?” (Will There Be a Coup d’etat in Venezuela?), *Semana*, 10 Oct 2013. <http://www.semana.com/mundo/articulo/habra-golpe-de-estado-en-venezuela/360429-3> (accessed October 2013)

“Rumors increase that in a matter of days Diosdado Cabello will oust Nicolás Maduro in a coup.” (Demarest translation)

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie. “¿Con quien negocia Santos?” *Webarticulista*, 18 Oct 2013. <http://webarticulista.wordpress.com/2013/10/17/con-quien-negocia-santos-eduardo-mackenzie/> (accessed October 2013)

“...the FARC and its allies, and the international galaxy revolving around the Cuban dictatorship; the Forum of Sao Paulo, wherein the FARC and the ELN have had established places since 1990, see that the escapade in Havana between Santos and Timochenko opens a crack, uniquely, to put the Colombian political system in disarray from within, and thus be able to drag a key continental country into the Cuban orbit.” (Demarest translation)

Source: *El Espectador*. “Mindefensa recibió puentes militares de China y equipos antiexplosivos” (Ministry of Defense Receives Military Bridges and Anti-explosives Equipment from China), *El Espectador*, Bogotá, 12 Oct 2013. <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/mindefensa-recibio-puentes-militares-de-china-avaluados-articulo-452101> (accessed October 2013)

“The Ministry indicated that these structures will allow military engineers to count on better tools to execute Works in zones of the country made incommunicado by natural disasters, a lack of infrastructure or terrorist acts.” (Demarest translation)

Source: Alek Boyd. “Venezuela: narco-Estado” (Venezuela: Narco-State), *Blog Frente Patriótico*, Miami, 12 Oct 2013. <http://www.frentepatriotico.com/inicio/2013/10/12/venezuela-narcoestado/#sthash.e1kgF7pr.dpuf> (accessed October 2013)

“Ever since the cartels have been shipping the contraband it hasn’t been Colombia, but rather Venezuela. The deceased Hugo Chavez, with the incessant flow of scandals that he generated, contributed significantly to drowning out news about how Venezuela had become the country from which the bulk of cocaine produced in the region entered international markets.” (Demarest translation)

Source: Favclub noticias, “Llega a Margarita el buque contratado por Guyana e interceptado por Venezuela” (Ship Contracted by Guyana and Intercepted by Venezuela Arrives at Margarita), 13 Oct 2013. <http://favclub.powweb.com/blog/2013/10/13/llega-a-margarita-el-buque-contratado-por-guyana-e-interceptado-por-venezuela/> (accessed October 2013)

“Ship Contracted by Guyana and Intercepted by Venezuela Arrives at Margarita” (Demarest translation)

Latin America: The Beautiful Child of China and the United States

OE Watch Commentary: *A geographic barrier in the form of the Pacific Ocean separates China and Latin America, but in no way has this factor blunted the burgeoning relationship between the two over the last ten years. In fact, since 2005 the Chinese Development Bank has loaned Latin American countries an estimated \$75 billion dollars, 91% of which was given to Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina.*

Chinese interest in Latin America is directly correlated with the region's wealth of copper, iron ore, petroleum, and soybeans. In fact, 77% of Brazil's exports to China in 2009 consisted of raw materials, while the majority of imports received from China were manufactured goods. In response to this, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff made the following comment regarding trade between Brazil and China in 2011: "There is a misbalance in our relations with China. Brazil exports commodities and imports too many knick-knacks. I'm told that 80 percent of this year's Carnival costumes came from China." This trade misbalance is also evident in other resource-rich Latin American countries, including Chile, Peru, and Argentina.

In the last three years the Chinese Development Bank has also invested heavily in Central America. In Costa Rica, China financed a state-of-the-art soccer stadium and helped to build roads in remote areas of the country. In exchange, the Costa Rican government is considering partnering with China to build an oil refinery along its Caribbean Coast, despite the environmental damage it could inflict.

*In Nicaragua, China is working out the details to finance a \$40 billion dollar inter-oceanic canal, a project worth four times more than Nicaragua's 2011 gross domestic product. As with China's oil refinery project in Costa Rica, the canal in Nicaragua could potentially environmentally damage Lake Nicaragua, which serves as a primary source of freshwater. Chinese companies are also financing dry canals costing a combined total of \$30 billion in Honduras and Guatemala. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)***

Source: "Latinoamérica: la "niña bonita" de China y Estados Unidos," America Economía, Accessed on 01 October 2013 from <http://www.americaeconomia.com/economia-mercados/finanzas/latinoamerica-la-nina-bonita-de-china-y-estados-unidos>

Latin America: The Beautiful Child of China and the United States

Economic reforms in many Latin American countries have created a new middle class in a region already rich in commodities and energy. These same economic reforms have resulted in the rapid and stable growth of Latin America and the Caribbean during the US recession and have awakened the interest of China and the United States. This idea is evidenced by recent trips of US and Chinese leaders to the region. In June 2013, Vice-president Joe Biden visited Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil, and Colombia while Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica, and Mexico.

The Latin American View of China

In the eyes of the countries visited, China is firmly focused on making trade happen but poses environmental concerns to Latin America such as excessive extraction of natural resources. In Nicaragua, the Chinese backed construction of a proposed inter-oceanic canal has raised concerns about the environmental impact this project could have on Lake Nicaragua. Large loans made to some Latin American countries in exchange for copper and petroleum has also created a public outcry from citizens to rethink relations with China. Despite these environmental concerns, Latin American leaders are aware that China that has increased trade in the region by 660% over the last 10 years; not the United States. They are also aware the China has stimulated growth by investing an estimated \$75 billion in the region since 2005.

The Latin American View of the US

Regarding the Latin American view on Biden's visit and the US in general, it has been argued that the US has virtually ignored the region in recent years given that its focus has been in the Middle East and on expansion in Asia. Latin American leaders also feel that the US is still intent on exerting pressure on its trading partners instead of forming mutually cooperative agreements. Finally, despite environmental concerns voiced by Latin American countries regarding Chinese disregard for the environment, it is the Chinese who have been willing to finance large scale infrastructure projects that the US has not.

The Future of China and the US in Latin America

It is apparent that both China and the US want a piece of the growth occurring in Latin America, but can two superpowers court Latin America without stepping on each other's toes? It seems likely that it is possible as China and the US have increased their level of cooperation during 2013. In June 2013 Chinese President Xi Jinping met with President Barack Obama in southern California. They then met a second time in September 2013 for the G20 summit. On both occasions, the world leaders proposed practical cooperation and a plan to work out their differences. For China, this means never striving for or claiming hegemony. For the US, it is important for China to create an environment suitable for peaceful development without supplanting the US. What does this mean for Latin America? According to Niu Haibin, a researcher at the Center for International Studies in Beijing, it means that Latin America will never have to choose between the US and China; a factor that will benefit the region economically. Dealing with two superpowers will also allow Latin American countries to distance themselves from what they have traditionally viewed as American imperialism.

Two Terrorist Groups with Ties to Hezbollah are Operational in Latin America

13 June 2013

OE Watch Commentary: Hezbollah presence in Latin America dates back to the mid-1980s, when the group began sending operatives to the tri-border area (TBA) of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. The TBA is known as a “terrorist safe haven,” given the wide range of illicit activities conducted within it, including money laundering, counterfeiting, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. Data provided by the U.S. Treasury Department indicate that since 2006 over a dozen individuals and several businesses in the TBA have been sanctioned for providing financial support to Hezbollah leadership in Lebanon.

Hezbollah also has significant presence in Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela. In Brazil and Argentina a Hezbollah operator known as Hojjat al-Eslam Mohsen Rabbani runs the Rabbani Network, which is responsible for recruitment, training, and dissemination of extremist propaganda in Latin America. Brazilian intelligence organizations have also indicated that at least twenty terrorists with ties to Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and the Islamic Jihad are using Brazil as a hub for terrorist activities.

In Venezuela the Nassereddine network is run by Ghazi Nassereddine and at least two of his brothers. The goal of this network is to expand Hezbollah influence in Venezuela and throughout Latin America. Nassereddine is a high-ranking Venezuelan diplomat who has used his position to build relationships with key contacts in Lebanon and Syria. Nassereddine also maintains a close relationship with Nicolas Maduro, the current Venezuelan President, as it was Maduro who promoted him to the position of second-in-command at the Venezuelan embassy in Syria. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)**

Source: “Dos redes terroristas ligadas a Hezbollah operan en América Latina.” Infobae. Accessed on 14 October 2013 from <http://www.infobae.com/2013/06/01/1072460-dos-redes-terroristas-ligadas-hezbollah-operan-america-latina>

Two Terrorist Groups with Ties to Hezbollah are Operational in Latin America

In the last 2 to 3 years, recruitment, training, and indoctrination efforts of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah (based in Lebanon) have increased in Latin America. In February 2013, El Universal, a Venezuelan news media source citing Mohammed Razza Hidari, the former Iranian ambassador to Venezuela, indicated that multiple Latin American Hezbollah groups travel to Qom, Iran (religious capital) following completion of their training in Venezuela. The trip to Iran represents the culmination point of initial training and religious conversion of Latin American recruits.



Ghazi Nassereddine.
Source: <http://2.bp.blogspot.com>

Once in Qom, recruits receive additional political, religious, military training. Following completion of this training, Latin American recruits are sent back to their home countries to conduct cultural missions which are aimed at recruiting new members. Traditional targets are socialists, Bolivarian Revolution party members, indigenous persons, and marginalized sectors of society.

Ties between Hezbollah and Latin America: The Case of Venezuela

According to Robert Noriega, a former US ambassador and the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Hezbollah is not a lone wolf and has actively sought out support in Latin America. He further argues that Hezbollah receives political, diplomatic, and material/logistic support from both Venezuela and Iran. In Venezuela, financial institutions, commercial and industrial businesses, and Islamic centers have made it possible for Hezbollah operators to maintain presence in Latin America all while maintaining relative proximity to the United States.

Financial Support

To create a financial network in Venezuela, Hezbollah initially opened a chain of businesses. In the last seven years, this type of activity has expanded, and today, Iran is said to have illegally laundered billions of dollars via these businesses through the Venezuelan financial sector.

Venezuela has also been known to give Hezbollah cash as evidenced by the following example: On 21 January 2013, Tahmasb Mazaheri, the former Central Bank President of Iran, was arrested in Germany after Customs Agents discovered he was in possession of a 300 million Bolivar check (equivalent to \$USD 70 million). This check was issued by the Bank of Venezuela.

Logistical Support

Venezuela also supports Iran through Conviasa; a state-run airline with regular flights between Caracas and Tehran. These flights allow Hezbollah to move personnel, weapons, and contraband.

(continued)

Continued: Two Terrorist Groups with Ties to Hezbollah are Operational in Latin America

Safe Havens

In many instances, meetings between Hezbollah operators and their Latin American associates take place on Margarita Island; a paradise for illegal activities. Hezbollah operators are also known to maintain multiple businesses and safe houses on the island.

The Case of Argentina:

In Argentina, Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman has accused Iran and Hezbollah of being responsible for the 1994 AMIA bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina. He later wrote a 500-page document that provides information regarding a vast network of Hezbollah sleeper cells in Latin America. In this reported, he claims Hezbollah is “conducting activities in Latin America you wouldn’t imagine.” In response to Nisman’s claims, the United States invited him to testify about Iran’s influence in the Western Hemisphere. This request was denied by the Argentinean government.

Who Runs Hezbollah Operations in Latin America?

Robert Noriega has identified at least two parallel yet collaborative terrorist networks that he claims are growing at an alarming rate in Latin America: the Nassereddine Network and the Rabbani Network. These networks encompass more than eighty operatives in at least twelve countries throughout the region. Those countries with the highest presence of operatives are Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, and Chile.

The Nassereddine Network:

The Nassereddine network is run by Ghazi Nassereddine, a Lebanese national who became a Venezuelan citizen approximately 10 years ago. Nassereddine is Venezuela’s second-ranking diplomat in Syria and is the most prominent Hezbollah supporter in Venezuela. Using his diplomatic status, Nassereddine has built and consolidated relationships with Hezbollah officials; first in Lebanon and now in Syria. He is currently working with his two brothers to expand Hezbollah influence in Venezuela and throughout Latin America. Using his diplomatic status, Nassereddine’s brother Abdallah lives on Margarita Island where he runs various money-laundering operations and manages much of Hezbollah’s business dealings in Latin America.

Nassereddine’s younger brother Oday is responsible for building and maintaining paramilitary training centers on Margarita Island. He currently lives in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, he is actively recruiting Venezuelans through local Bolivian Circles (a radical political/social network loyal to Hugo Chávez).

The Rabbani Network:

This network is run by Hojjat al-Eslam Mohsen Rabbani, the former cultural attaché at the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He has been referred to as the “Terrorist Professor” and is said to be a die-hard defender of the Iranian revolution. He primarily operates out of Argentina, Chile and Brazil. In fact, two mosques in Buenos Aires, the Al Imam and the At-Tauhid, are run by Rabbani followers. In Brazil, Rabbani’s brother, Mohammad Baquer Rabbani Razavi, founded the Iranian Association.

“... those commenting questioned how an organized crime group could mobilize ... when the federal and state governments were unable to do so.”

OE Watch Commentary: Hurricane Ingrid's mid-September landfall in northeast Mexico coincided with Tropical Storm Manuel in the southwest, creating challenging environmental crises. The first article illustrates how the Gulf Cartel took advantage of the opportunity to conduct shadow governance through humanitarian assistance directed at its cartel plazas. The Los Zetas organization, as described in the second article, shortly followed suit with a humanitarian operation in one of its own plazas.

The perceived effectiveness of the cartels, in light of the perceived ineffectiveness of the Mexican government, represents a blow to the credibility of the Pena administration's civil response capabilities.

By conducting operations within their respective plazas, the cartels were able to take advantage of their emplaced logistic and manpower resources. Delivering assistance, especially when the authorities are perceived as inept, helps them to foster loyalty within the plaza so that the local populace will be more inclined to support, or at least ignore their illicit activities, as well as report actions by rival groups within their respective territories. **End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)**



Image: Introduction to Gulf Cartel YouTube video depicting humanitarian aid
Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YaFqh2WebXA

Source: Staff Author(s), “Cártel del Golfo reparte toneladas de despensas a afectados por ‘Ingrid’ en Tamaulipas [Gulf Cartel Distributes Tons of Supplies to Those in Tamaulipas Affected by ‘Ingrid’],” *Proceso*, 22 September 2013, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=353468>

Article #1:

In the face of the federal and state governments' failure to help Tamaulipas communities affected by Hurricane Ingrid, the Gulf Cartel mobilized and delivered several tons of supplies to hundreds of residents of Aldama and municipalities in the southern part of the state. The Gulf Cartel presented ... a video on social networks depicting the assistance The video was animated with legends such as, “They have been good people in Aldama, in good times and bad.” The video was uploaded to the YouTube website and copied on various social networks such as Facebook, where those commenting questioned how an organized crime group could mobilize ... when the federal and state governments were unable to do so.

Source: Staff Author(s), “Los Zetas’ reparten despensas a damnificados en Tamaulipas [‘Los Zetas’ Deliver Provisions to Flood Victims in Tamaulipas],” *Proceso*, 10 October 2013, <http://www.proceso.com.mx/?p=354980>

Article #2:

Alleged members the criminal group “Los Zetas” delivered provisions to various districts of [Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas] that had been ravaged by Tropical Storm Ingrid. The provisions were wrapped in plastic bags, each marked with the letter “Z”. The aid was delivered ... near primary schools in neighborhoods affected by the floods. The assistance supplied by the criminal group “Los Zetas” ... was in addition to that provided by the Gulf Cartel days earlier in Altamira, Madero, and Tampico. The Gulf Cartel was even faster than the federal and state governments

(continued)

Continued: Drug Cartels Conduct Humanitarian Operations



Image: Gulf cartel vehicles loaded with food and supplies for storm victims. Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YaFqh2WebXA



Image: Los Zetas distributing food aid to storm victims
Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otnqtX0aAow>



Image: Storm victims in Aldama receiving aid from Gulf Cartel
Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=YaFqh2WebXA



Image: Storm victims receiving food aid from Los Zetas outside primary school
Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otnqtX0aAow>



Image: Bags of food from Los Zetas were marked with the letter "Z"
Source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otnqtX0aAow>

“...Zamboanga City Mayor ... said the MNLF fighters were holding 38 people and were demanding to be allowed to march to city hall and hoist their flag there...”

OE Watch Commentary: The latest significant step toward possible peace in Mindanao, Philippines, was made when the Bangsamoro Peace Agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine government was signed on 15 October 2012. Despite the on-going process for the Bangsamoro Framework Agreement, there is still much uncertainty regarding continuing negotiations. Personalities and politics continue to dominate the effort. Past agreements between the Government of the Philippines and Bangsamoro movement leadership, such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), have been overturned by the national Supreme Court. Thus, questions about executive power and potential constitutional amendments required to devolve power to the proposed Bangsamoro government remain outstanding.

Some leaders of the MNLF, particularly Habib Mujahab Hashim of the MNLF Islamic Command Council and Nur Misuari, former head of MNLF, state that the current agreement is a betrayal. This discord turned violent recently with hostage taking by MNLF faction. The military rescue that ensued resulted in a number of deaths. The intention of the MNLF leadership and its factions remains unclear.

As pointed out in the excerpted article from Inquirer News, a faction of MNLF attacked the city of Zamboanga and took hostages. This seems to be a follow-on to the statements in August from former leaders of the MNLF regarding the current peace negotiations. Violence is still very much in the lexicon of these splinter groups. The SunStar reports

Source: Inquirer News, “MNLF storms Zamboanga City, leaves 6 dead” September 10, 2013, <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/484401/mnlf-storms-zamboanga-city-leaves-6-dead>



ZAMBOANGA CITY—Government forces were locked in a standoff with rebels who were holding 35 hostages in a village here on Monday following a failed attack by a faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) opposed to peace talks between the administration of President Aquino and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The attacks by members of the MNLF faction led by Nur Misuari appeared to have been timed for the resumption of talks between the government and the MILF peace panels in Kuala Lumpur...

Between 200 and 300 followers of Misuari entered coastal villages on the outskirts of Zamboanga City by boat at dawn, triggering clashes with government forces that left at least one Navy Special Forces soldier and four civilians killed and six other Navy soldiers, including an officer, and 14 civilians wounded, the military said...

Fighting later spread to the city itself, with Misuari’s followers taking civilian hostages in Sta. Catalina village here to thwart an attack by government forces...

... “We seized them by the roadside so the soldiers won’t shoot when they see us.”

City shut down

Aviation authorities suspended all commercial flights to Zamboanga International Airport and ferry services to the Port of Zamboanga as government troops secured points of entry to prevent the entry of more followers of Misuari.

... (Mayor) Salazar said the city grandstand had been converted into an emergency center for more than 300 people who had been evacuated from their homes on the coast.

(continued)

Continued: Bangsamoro Homeland in the Philippines

how the Philippine military ended the crisis and lays out the civil impact and humanitarian tragedy.

*In the piece from The Rappler Nation we see how neighbor nations such as Indonesia are involved with the peace process. The Bangsamoro Liberation Movement has long concerned Malaysia and the Sultanate of Brunei. The region is increasingly focused on the success of the current peace initiative between the MILF and the Government of the Philippines. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)***

“Everything is being done to resolve the crisis as soon as possible with minimal damage to life and property,” Salazar said.

Attack denounced

The government denounced the attack, which appeared to have been designed to sabotage peace talks between the state and the MILF.

“We condemn the attack on Zamboanga City in the strongest possible terms,” presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda said in a statement issued by Malacañang...

... President Aquino had ordered Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin, AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Emmanuel Bautista and Interior Secretary Mar Roxas to go to Zamboanga City to deal with the situation...

Sema group not joining

The attack of Misuari’s group on Zamboanga City came as a surprise to the other MNLF faction led by former Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema.

Sema told the Inquirer by phone that his group had directed its ground commanders in Central Mindanao, Western Mindanao and Lanao del Norte “to stay put and not be swayed” by the ongoing situation in Zamboanga City...



HOSTAGES Moro rebels take hostage 35 residents of Barangay Sta. Catalina in Zamboanga City—10 women, 23 men and two children.

More troops deployed

The military’s Western Mindanao Command (Wesmincom) deployed additional troops to Zamboanga City and other parts of the region where other MNLF forces might try to enter.

...The MNLF signed a peace agreement with the government in 1996, but hundreds of its fighters held on to their arms, accusing the government of renegeing on a promise to develop an autonomous region for Muslims in Mindanao.

The group later split into factions and faded in the background as its largest breakaway guerrilla bloc, the MILF, gained strength and continued fighting.

(continued)

Continued: Bangsamoro Homeland in the Philippines

Peace talks

The 11,000-strong MILF has engaged the administration of President Aquino in Malaysian-brokered peace negotiations, which have progressed and led to the signing of a preliminary peace deal in October last year...

They hope to sign a final peace agreement before President Aquino's term ends in 2016.

Misuari opposes any peace deal between the government and the MILF, insisting on the full implementation of the 1996 accord.

With the negotiations between the government and the MILF pointing to a successful deal that will establish a new autonomous region for the Bangsamoro people in Mindanao, the aging Misuari, the first governor of the ARMM (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), has been saber-rattling since July, declaring an "independent Bangsamoro Republik" and appointing himself chief of the "Bangsamoro Armed Forces..."



MNLF FLAG Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) members, led by its founder, Nur Misuari, display the group's flag in rites held in Indanan town, Sulu province, sometime in July. The MNLF said Misuari declared an independent "Bangsamoro Republik" on Aug. 12, appointing himself chief of the Bangsamoro Armed Forces. Source: <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/484401/mnlf-storms-zamboanga-city-leaves-6-dead>

Stand down

The MILF called on the MNLF to stand down and "take the path of peace."

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF vice chair for political affairs, said armed and unarmed MILF members in Zamboanga City and the island provinces of the ARMM had been advised by the leadership to stay neutral.

"If there is any MILF involvement, our role is to secure innocent civilians who may be caught in the crossfire. As much as possible, there will be no aggression or violent participation from our end," Jaafar said....



(continued)

"...More than 200 people were killed in the clashes, including 166 rebels, in one of the bloodiest and longest-running attacks by a Muslim group in the south, scene of decades-long Muslim rebellion for self-rule in the largely Roman Catholic country."

Continued: Bangsamoro Homeland in the Philippines

Source: Sun Star, "Palace: Zamboanga crisis is over" "September 28, 2013, <http://www.sunstar.com.ph/breaking-news/2013/09/28/palace-zamboanga-crisis-over-305739>

MANILA - A deadly three-week standoff between government troops and the followers of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader Nur Misuari, who held nearly 200 people hostage in the Zamboanga City, has ended with all of the captives safe, Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin said Saturday.

"I can say that the crisis is over. We have accomplished the mission," Gazmin told The Associated Press by telephone from Zamboanga, where he helped oversee a government offensive and hostage rescue mission by about 4,500 government troops and police.

Gazmin said only a handful of MNLF rebels remained in hiding and are being hunted by troops in the coastal outskirts of Zamboanga city, adding authorities were trying to determine if rebel commander Habier Malik, who led the September 9 siege, was dead.

More than 200 people were killed in the clashes, including 166 rebels, in one of the bloodiest and longest-running attacks by a Muslim group in the south, scene of decades-long Muslim rebellion for self-rule in the largely Roman Catholic country...

The gun battles, including exchanges of grenade and mortar fire, forced more than 100,000 residents — nearly 10 percent of the population of the bustling port city — to flee their homes to emergency shelters, including Zamboanga's main sports complex. Thousands of houses were destroyed in the fighting...

...Valte also said President Benigno Simeon Aquino III has allocated P3.89 billion for the reconstruction of Zamboanga City after the widespread devastation.

...The siege began when heavily armed insurgents arrived by boat from outlying islands but were blocked by troops and policemen, who discovered what authorities said was a rebel plan to occupy and hoist their flag at Zamboanga's City Hall. The rebels then stormed five coastal communities and took residents hostage and were surrounded by troops.

President Benigno Aquino III, who flew to Zamboanga, ordered an offensive after the rebels refused to surrender and free their hostages.

The rebel faction involved in the fighting dropped its demand for a separate Muslim state and signed an autonomy deal with the government in 1996, but the rebels did not lay down their arms and later accused the government of renegeing on a promise to develop long-neglected Muslim regions.

"...Indonesia brokered the successful peace talks between the Ramos administration and the MNLF, which led to the signing of a peace deal in Jakarta in September 1996...."

Source: Rappler Nation, "Indonesia vows help in dealing with MNLF" "October 8, 2013, <http://www.rappler.com/nation/40873-aquino-yudhoyono-mnlf-agreement>

MANILA, Philippines – Described as a "constant friend" by the Philippine president, Indonesia vowed to help the Philippine government resolve its issues with the rebel group Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

Philippine President Benigno Aquino III, in turn, invited Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to visit the Philippines. Yudhoyono proposed visiting the Philippines in 2014, Aquino told reporters Monday, October 7.

"They have been a very constant friend. I can even attest to the fact that Indonesia as a people, during my mother's time, was helping us already address the issue with MNLF," said Aquino, the son of former president Corazon Aquino...

PH, Indonesia on MNLF

Indonesia brokered the successful peace talks between the Ramos administration and the MNLF, which led to the signing of a peace deal in Jakarta in September 1996.

It is currently hosting talks to review the agreement's implementation.

Indonesia, in fact, called for a peaceful resolution of the MNLF's Zamboanga siege last September.

Emmanuel Fontanilla, spokesman of MNLF founding chair Nur Misuari, had repeatedly said Indonesia should serve as a 3rd-party mediator to resolve the Zamboanga conflict. The Philippine government, however, had clarified the MNLF didn't formally request Indonesia to intervene in the crisis.

Indonesia also heads the peace committee of the Organization on Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The OIC also condemned the violence in Zamboanga City.



"Constant Friend" Philippine President Benigno Aquino III (left) is greeted by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono during the gala dinner at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation CEO Summit in Bali, Indonesia October 7, 2013.

Source: <http://www.rappler.com/nation/40873-aquino-yudhoyono-mnlf-agreement>

“...if the deal is completed, it would be the first time that a Chinese defense weapon is sold to a NATO member.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Turkish government has started negotiations with the China Precision Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CPMIEC) for the co-production of a \$3.4 billion missile defense system. This move has reportedly triggered serious concerns from NATO, particularly in the United States.*

The first article, which comes from a Taiwan-based news source, calls the sale “a victory for China’s defense industry,” even if the sale does not come to fruition. The article argues that the possible sale is a step toward China expanding its international defense industry. The second report is an interview with Zhang Junshe, Vice President of China’s Naval Research Institute. Zhang feels that the United States and NATO want to stop the sale because they want to maintain a “monopoly in the military trade market.” Zhang also feels that the United States and NATO still hold a “Cold War mentality.” The third article stresses that if the deal goes through, it would be the “first time that a Chinese defense weapon is sold to a NATO member.” The fourth article, which is a commentary by Wu Zurong, Executive Director at the Center for American Studies, China Foundation for International Studies, argues that the move is “beneficial for world peace and stability,” and that U.S. interference will only be harmful to U.S.-China relations.

The last two articles originate from Turkish sources. In the fifth article, a commentary that examines some of the reasons for choosing China’s missile system, Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, Associate Professor of International Relations-Turkish Foreign Policy at Gazi University, discusses the problem of trust between Turkey and Western nations by citing historical issues between both sides. Finally, in the sixth article the author points out some of the issues with Turkey going through with this purchase. For one thing, the author reminds us that CPMIEC is under U.S. sanctions, which complicates the situation.

The Turkish government is clearly interested in China’s missile system for the reasons given. However, the question remains, how will it affect the country’s relations within NATO if it



An FD-2000 missile. Source: <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20131009000071>

Source: “Turkey Missile Deal a Victory for China Even If It Doesn’t Happen,” Want China Times, October 9, 2013, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20131009000071>

Article 1:

...the sale symbolizes a victory for China’s defense industry even if it does not go through...

... the FD-2000 is expected to become a popular choice for developing nations, which are not NATO members with its cheaper price and technology transfer. The Chinese defense industry will now be able to use the indirect support of NATO member Turkey to expand into the overseas market, the paper said.

Professor Zhang Zhaozhong from the PLA National Defense University in Beijing echoed this view, saying it is an important deal for both China and Turkey, and the sale may open the door for China to sell J-10 fighters to other NATO nations in future.

Source: “Interview: China’s Bid for Defense System Likely to be Derailed by US,” CNTV, October 11, 2013, <http://english.cntv.cn/program/china24/20131011/101736.shtml>

Article 2:

Zhang Junshe: ... I think, first, the United States and NATO are afraid of leaking military secrets to China, if their Turkish government uses the Chinese air defense system. Such concern is unreasonable, unnecessary, and ridiculous. Second, the United States wants to maintain its monopoly in the military trade market in the world, especially in the Western world. We know the lower price and the technology transfer are the main reasons why the Turkish government chose a Chinese firm. The United States is afraid this will threaten its monopoly in the military trade market. Third, the United States and NATO still hold Cold War mentality. They are politicizing this normal military trade cooperation just because they still regard China as their potential adversary. They are trying their best to contain China’s rights... but I don’t think they will succeed.

(continued)

Continued: China and Turkey: Reflections on Military Sales to Turkey

does carry through with the sale? Additionally, will such a sale give China a leg up in the military weapons industry? End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)

Source: “US, NATO Oppose China’s Military Sale to Turkey,” CNTV, October 11, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/video/2013-10/11/c_132789152.htm

US, NATO Oppose China’s Military Sale to Turkey

...if the deal is completed, it would be the first time that a Chinese defense weapon is sold to a NATO member. And this is the last thing that the US and NATO would like to see. In fact, over the past years, military deals between China and Israel have been called off several times due to US interference.

Source: Wu Zurong: “吴祖荣：美干扰中土军事关系，有害中美互信 (U.S. Interference in China-Turkey Military Relations Harms U.S.-China Mutual Trust),” Huangqiu Wang (Chinese), October 8, 2013, http://opinion.huanqiu.com/opinion_world/2013-10/4421703.html

Article 4:

US Interference in China-Turkey Military Relations Harms US-China Mutual Trust

China and NATO member countries carrying out arms trade and other types of military exchanges and cooperation suits world trends and is extremely beneficial for world peace and stability. Therefore, the United States should give support and encouragement.

U.S. interference and obstruction of China’s military relations is extremely harmful for the enhancement of US-China strategic mutual trust.

U.S. hegemony and power politics harms the building of an international counter-proliferation system.

Source: Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, “Füze Krizi’nin Arka Planı... (Background of the Missile Crisis),” Milli Gazete (Turkish), October 10, 2013, http://www.milligazete.com.tr/koseyazisi/Fuze_Krizinin_Arka_Planı/16925#.U12gcSbnaM9

Article 5:

Background of the Missile Crisis

A “Choice” Or An “Act of Defiance”?

...The problem of trust in Turkish-Western relations and the West’s attitude that ignores Turkey’s national security concerns and interests within the scope of its unilateral understanding of allegiance (as was seen in such cases as the United States using its Jupiter missiles in Turkey as a bargaining chip with the USSR particularly during the Cuba missile crisis and pulling these missiles out without consulting its ally, the crisis caused by the use of NATO weapons in the Cyprus problem and the arms embargo imposed on Turkey, the handful of problems experienced in operations carried out against the PKK [Kurdistan People’s Congress, KGK]; b) The fact that some of these problems are experienced with fellow NATO members with these weapons systems unable to be used against these countries for political and technical reasons (and current developments indicate that the regional disputes between Turkey and NATO are going to become broader and deeper particularly in the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean regions); c) The period of “precious loneliness” that Turkey has begun to experience in foreign policy recently and the policies conducted here by the United States, the West and some “neighboring countries” against Turkey; d) The overly meaningful “symbolic” message that is being given by way of response to this (the step taken as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Dialogue Partnership can be seen as a part of this process); e) Turkey’s quest for “a New World” and its efforts to strengthen its infrastructure to this end.

Source: Serkan Demirtas, “Turkey’s China Deal in NATO Questioning,” Turkish Daily, October 11, 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-china-deal-in-nato-questioning.aspx?pageID=238&nid=56049&NewsCatID=338>

Article 6:

Turkey’s China Deal in NATO Questioning

The fact that the Chinese company, China Precision Machinery Import and Export Corp’s (CPMIEC), is under U.S. sanctions also complicates the situation...

Innovation: A Driving Force in China's Military and Economy



“...let us not fool ourselves — the true objective behind the Chinese Dream is to make China a dominant, self-reliant superpower.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping began implementing his economic reforms in December 1978, China has been on a steep uphill drive to build up its military and economy. Today, the country's growth is being fueled, in part, by China's efforts in research and development. The following excerpts demonstrate that China's innovative efforts continue to grow, fueled by a strong economy.

The first article, published by an India-based news website, compares China's progress in defense technology to that of India. The author points out that innovation in China is experiencing a renewed fervor since the country's new leadership took office earlier this year. Much of China's push is in the research and development of military-based technologies, or at least technologies that have significance to China's military, such as quantum communications and the creation of a high-performance jet engine “that could drastically improve the capacity of its indigenous fighter jets.” Meanwhile, according to the article, India is “still saddled with old-world equipment.”

The second article, published by China's state-owned Xinhua, highlights a British report that gives a new spin on what is known as “Shanzhai” – China's pirating and copying of foreign technologies. While China has long been criticized for “Shanzhai,” the report offers a new angle, finding that “some Chinese companies have gone beyond simply imitating them, adding value through re-innovation.” Part of this idea is that while China has taken foreign technologies, it then uses Chinese characteristic to make them its own.

Perceptions differ, depending on the viewpoint. In the first article the author is

Source: Claude Arpi, “China's Dreams Real, We Only Fantasize,” The Pioneer, October 10, 2013, <http://www.dailypioneer.com/columnists/edit/china-dreams-real-we-only-fantasise.html>

Article 1: China's Dreams Real, We Only Fantasize

Beijing is pushing ahead forcefully with a series of programmes that will give it a technological edge in defence needs, for now and for the future. Sadly, India is still saddled with old-world equipment.

...let us not fool ourselves — the true objective behind the Chinese Dream is to make China a dominant, self-reliant superpower.

Very early in its history, the Chinese Communist leadership realized that the great renaissance of the Chinese nation was dependent on ‘innovation with Chinese characteristics.’ Beijing has now taken decisive actions to remedy some of the nation's deficiencies in this field...

On June 22, 2013, The South China Morning Post affirmed: “China's top science advisers have listed 19 projects as the research priorities of the next decade. They include quantum telecommunications and a high-performance jet engine that could drastically improve the capacity of its indigenous fighter jets.”

According to the Hong Kong-based newspaper, the report was prepared by the Chinese Academy of Sciences as a roadmap for breaking into the American dominance in domains as diverse as military, space, new materials, energy and agriculture.

Though not all the projects have a direct military implication, ultimately, all of them will have a dual use. The South China Morning Post mentioned: “The most eye-catching one is a new jet engine that promises to deliver thrust equivalent to 15 times its own weight.”

... Further, the Chinese Dream goes hand in hand with military modernization. ...despite the bureaucratic deficiencies, the leadership in Beijing has a tremendous political will...

Source: “Making Indigo From Blue: New Perspective on China's Indigenous Innovation,” Xinhua, October 15, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-10/15/c_132801301.htm

Article 2: Making Indigo From Blue: New Perspective on China's Indigenous Innovation

China is becoming increasingly adept at attracting and profiting from global knowledge and networks alongside its more supportive environment for indigenous research and development...

The report offers a new angle to look at “Shanzhai” -- a Chinese catchphrase referring to substandard knock-offs, as it finds some Chinese companies have gone beyond simply imitating to adding value through re-innovation.

The report cites some of China's leading tech companies as examples of copying

(continued)

Continued: Innovation: A Driving Force in China's Military and Economy

concerned about China's growing might. There is a sense that the author wrote the article in an effort to try to prompt India to step up its own innovative efforts. In the second article the cited British report paints China's efforts in a more positive light. The article goes on to push for deeper engagement between China and the British in research and innovation projects."

*By all indications China continues to grow stronger, which can be both good and bad, depending on the viewpoint. China as a partner in research and development could have its benefits as the country continues to build up its own pool of experts and technologies. On the other hand, China as a formidable military force gives reason for concern. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)***

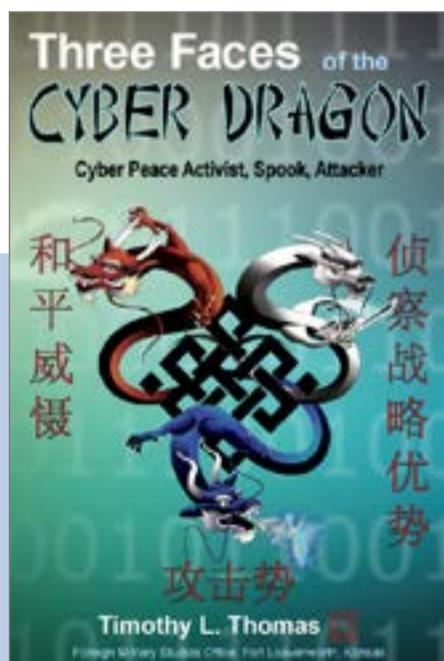
existing products and constantly improving and tailoring to local consumers' needs.

... Chinese companies have begun to boost their own research strength, as more companies have made the lists of world's most innovative companies evaluated against various measuring matrices.

China's total R&D expenditure exceeded 1 trillion yuan (163.7 billion U.S. dollars) in 2012 while the nation accounts for 25 percent of the world's R&D workforce, study finds...

The (British) report came at a time when several high-ranking British politicians are visiting China this week to boost ties from trade and finance to technologies and education.

While recognizing the value of China's indigenous innovation, the report urges deeper engagement with China in research and innovation projects.



China's cyber policy has become partly visible to foreign nations through observation, tracking, and interference. The policy appears to have three vectors. *Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon* is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors. It attempts to provide context to the unfolding nature of China's cyber policy, and gives the analyst a more penetrating look into unconsidered, under "advertised" aspects of Chinese security thinking.

“The most backward army is not the poorly equipped one, but the one filled up with old thinking.”

OE Watch Commentary: There have been considerable exchanges between China and the US over the past several years regarding the use of cyber capabilities for political purposes. For China this is a real problem, since there is little if any criticism of China's leadership allowed in the open press or online. The regime fears the backlash that might accompany such criticism, since it could easily get out of control and produce a deluge of discussions and accusations aimed against Party activities.

Recently, in an interview with the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) outspoken General Liu Yazhou, the Chinese press once again raised the issue of new media capabilities that could potentially be used for anti-government purposes. Liu, who is the political commissar at the PLA's National Defense University, has a key stake in the political stability of public opinion. He has spoken out often on this issue, and in this case he noted that the West is trying to “overturn the Party's rule.” Liu stated that the distribution of information could now be considered as one of the most important strategies of all nations, and he equated it with the attainment of air and naval superiority. This clearly shows the concern associated with the spread of political information in China. In the recent past the PLA has developed a policy known as the “three warfares” (psychological, public opinion, legal), which must be won in order to achieve superiority in the information arena. Yazhou, according to the PLA Daily on 15 October, noted that Armed Forces committees of the Communist Party of China (CPC) at all levels should step up their ideological and political education of CPC members, especially their work among officers and soldiers growing up in this new digital era. In this sense Liu is echoing a call made by CPC Central Committee General Secretary, State President, and Central Military Commission Chairman Xi Jinping. Coming just weeks before the opening of the third plenary session of the 18th Central Committee, Liu's commentary could be designed to send a message to the Party's soldiers that they should be aware of Western ideological and political goals, especially those on the Internet, during the sessions. Liu recommended coming up with innovative ideas to defend mainstream political positions. His warning for caution and desire for innovation supported a July 2013 article he authored in the influential Communist Party magazine, Qiushi Journal, where he noted, “The most backward army is not the poorly equipped one, but the one filled up with old thinking.” He called on the party to remove barriers to innovation. **End of OE Commentary (Thomas)**



General Liu Yazhou (2012). Source: http://thefragrant harbour.blogspot.com/2012_08_01_archive.html

Source: Minnie Chan, “Communist Party told to innovate online to thwart West,” South China Morning Post Online, 16 October 2013

General Liu Yazhou Warns about the Use of Political Rumors

The Communist Party should come up with innovative ideas to defend its mainstream political position via the internet because hostile Western forces are trying to use multiple new media sources to “overturn the party's rule”, outspoken PLA General Liu Yazhou has warned. The Communist Party's capability was weak and outdated in dealing with ideological attacks by Western countries, which are skilled at creating new topics and “political rumors” via the internet, Liu, political commissar of the People's Liberation Army National Defense University, wrote in a commentary in the army's mouthpiece, the PLA Daily.

The commentary is a departure from Liu's previous statements. In July, he published an article in the party's influential magazine Qiushi Journal to warn the PLA that it must embrace change or risk losing out to its international rivals. “All kinds of anti-mainstream ideological opinions have been mixed in with political rumors or even spiritual publications that are widely circulated on the internet and have a strong demagogic power,” Liu wrote in yesterday's PLA Daily commentary page. Liu said that the ability to control the distribution of information had become one of the three most important strategies of all nations, regimes and armies in sustaining their military capabilities. The other two are maintaining air and naval superiority.

“All kinds of anti-mainstream ideological opinions have been mixed in with political rumors or even spiritual publications that are widely circulated on the Internet and have a strong demagogic power,”

- Liu wrote in the 15 October PLA Daily commentary page

Calling for a “de-Americanized” World: Careful What You Wish For

13 October 2013

“several corner stones should be laid to underpin a de-Americanized world”

OE Watch Commentary: *Earlier this month a Xinhua news commentary called for a smaller U.S. role in managing the global system. Beijing is by no means alone in this position, but China is likely to be the main beneficiary of a diminution of the U.S. role. Beyond creating a catchy new verb – “de-Americanize” – if we exclude the political polemic and focus on the economic, what is the Xinhua writer (and, by extension, those in Beijing who share this view) really asking for?*

“...economic disaster thanks to the voracious Wall Street elites.” While the author blames U.S.-based capital allocators for underestimating their investment risks, the position ignores the role of \$1.3 trillion dollars the Chinese government holds in U.S. government-backed securities. Beijing is far from a standard financial-returns-motivated investor, as its earnings on its U.S. financial system positions are relatively tiny. Rather, China invests in U.S.-backed securities because it is the only market in the world with sufficient liquidity to absorb this amount of capital and because China has no choice but to buy dollar-denominated assets. Why no choice?

“...approval for raising debt ceiling has again left many nations’ tremendous dollar assets in jeopardy.” The trail of causation for why many nations (e.g., China, Japan) have tremendous dollar assets starts with those nations’ trade surpluses. By selling abroad more goods than they buy, these countries generate tremendous dollar earnings that, if left in their national currencies, would either lead to domestic inflation, or an appreciation in their currencies, or both. Through their banks they recirculate their dollar earnings back into the U.S. financial system to avoid endangering their export-oriented economic development models. So, who enjoys the greatest benefit from this system and who should bear the risk?

*“...new international reserve currency that is to be created to replace the dominant U.S. dollar.” The U.S. dollar’s dominance as a global reserve currency is referred to as an “exorbitant privilege” because it insulates the U.S. from a balance of payments crisis by insuring that its imports can always be paid for in its own currency. As part of its national industrial policy, China strictly manages its currency (RMB) and does not want to incur the obligations of a global reserve currency. However, it does seek incremental advantage through reforms intended to capture some of the insulating prerogatives associated with a reserve currency. To achieve this goal China must progressively loosen its capital account controls, thereby directly challenging its economic development model of the past thirty years. The world will be a different place based on how Beijing proceeds. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)***

Source: “Commentary: U.S. Fiscal Failure Warrants a de-Americanized World”, Xinhua, 13 October 2013. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/indepth/2013-10/13/c_132794246.htm

Article: A Vision of a “de-Americanized” World

As U.S. politicians of both political parties are still shuffling back and forth between the White House and the Capitol Hill without striking a viable deal to bring normality to the body politic they brag about, it is perhaps a good time for the befuddled world to start considering building a de-Americanized world.

Moreover, instead of honoring its duties as a responsible leading power, a self-serving Washington has abused its superpower status and introduced even more chaos into the world by shifting financial risks overseas, instigating regional tensions amid territorial disputes, and fighting unwarranted wars under the cover of outright lies. As a result, the world is still crawling its way out of an economic disaster thanks to the voracious Wall Street elites, while bombings and killings have become virtually daily routines in Iraq years after Washington claimed it has liberated its people from tyrannical rule. Most recently, the cyclical stagnation in Washington for a viable bipartisan solution over a federal budget and an approval for raising debt ceiling has again left many nations’ tremendous dollar assets in jeopardy and the international community highly agonized. Such alarming days when the destinies of others are in the hands of a hypocritical nation have to be terminated, and a new world order should be put in place, according to which all nations, big or small, poor or rich, can have their key interests respected and protected on an equal footing. To that end, several corner stones should be laid to underpin a de-Americanized world. For starters, all nations need to hew to the basic principles of the international law, including respect for sovereignty, and keeping hands off domestic affairs of others.

Apart from that, the world’s financial system also has to embrace some substantial reforms. The developing and emerging market economies need to have more say in major international financial institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, so that they could better reflect the transformations of the global economic and political landscape. What may also be included as a key part of an effective reform is the introduction of a new international reserve currency that is to be created to replace the dominant U.S. dollar, so that the international community could permanently stay away from the spillover of the intensifying domestic political turmoil in the United States. Of course, the purpose of promoting these changes is not to completely toss the United States aside, which is also impossible. Rather, it is to encourage Washington to play a much more constructive role in addressing global affairs.

“This is a dangerous move that may spark off new stand-off and arms race not only in the region but the rest of the world in the future. Historically, theories of “threats” raised by the U.S. were no more than excuses to justify its aggression and interference in the internal affairs of other countries.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The USSR's unexpected collapse and China's economic reform made the North Korean leadership feel like an international outsider. These former nominal allies had adopted a new course, with greater engagement with former Cold War foes. Given its severe domestic challenges, North Korea also needed to embrace a new strategy. During the extreme famine in the 1990s, North Korea received considerable international help and began to initiate economic reform, including elements of private property and the market system. In the late 1990s, in an attempt to glean additional support, former North Korean leader Kim Jong Il invited the Japanese Prime Minister, the South Korean President and the US Secretary of State for high-level talks. While it remains doubtful that Pyongyang would ever give up its nuclear weapons program, attempts were made at greater dialogue with the global community.*

The leadership in Pyongyang felt a sense of betrayal after the change of administrations in the US and South Korea in 2000, when more conservative governments took over in both these countries. Since North Korea had no experience with elections, it was not anticipating a drastic change in South Korean or American policies. North Korea was truly surprised when the new Bush administration labeled North Korea as part of the “axis of evil” with Iran and Iraq. They were doubly alarmed at the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent removal of the Hussein regime.

Since then and after the repeated failed diplomacy with the US and the South Korean governments, North Korea has become ever more adamant in its belief that nuclear weapons and missile development remain the lynchpin of its sovereignty. Shortly before he died, in his final will, former North Korean leader Kim Jong Il urged his followers never to give up nuclear weapons.



In this Aug. 4, 2009 file photo released by Korean Central News Agency via Korea News Service in Tokyo, former U.S. President Bill Clinton, seated left, meets with former North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, seated right, in Pyongyang, North Korea. Source: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2009/08/04/us-korea-north-idUSSP47880420090804>

Source: “KCNA Commentary Decries US Claims of DPRK Missile Threat,” KCNA, 24 September 2013. <http://www.kcna.kp>

KCNA Commentary Decries US Claims of DPRK Missile Threat as ‘Product of New Cold War Strategy’

The U.S. is putting spurs to the establishment of missile defense system in the Asia-Pacific. As part of this move it recently staged again interceptor missile tests on an island of Marshallese and the area near it.

The U.S. is claiming that the tests were to cope with “missile threat from North Korea” but no one will believe it. This was apparently prompted by its design to contain China and Russia, nuclear powers in the Asia-Pacific, and maintain and strengthen its military supremacy.

The tests arouse greater concern of Asian countries as they were conducted after the deployment of a new missile shield on Guam. The U.S. escalated moves for missile shield provoke serious backlash and prompt vigilance against the outbreak of the new Cold War in the region.

This is a dangerous move that may spark off new stand-off and arms race not only in the region but the rest of the world in the future. Historically, theories of “threats” raised by the U.S. were no more than excuses to justify its aggression and interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

After the Second World War the U.S. persistently pursued the Cold War strategy relying on anti-Soviet Union and anti-communist forces under the pretext of holding back the “threat of spread of communism.” After the Cold War the U.S. cried out for a uni-polar world, boasting of being the world’s only superpower. Later, it launched the “war

(continued)

Continued: North Korea's Press' Take on a New Cold War Strategy

*To buttress its argument to retain these weapons and hopefully regain the support of its former Cold War allies, the Pyongyang leadership now argues that US ballistic missile defense plans are aimed less at North Korea than at China and Russia. As the excerpted article illustrates, by claiming that missile defense is merely a US ruse in "its strategy for world supremacy," North Korea hopes to gain support from China and Russia. Having made the decision to retain its WMD program whatever the cost, the North Korean leadership hopes to provoke a new Cold War between former rivals. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kim and Finch)***

on terrorism" while resorting to highhanded and arbitrary practices under the signboard of "threat of terrorism." The arrogant U.S. got increasingly crippled, being saddled with enormous state debt, troubled with economic decline and mired in "anti-terrorism war" while the Asia-Pacific rapidly rose as a center of world development in the 21st century.

Upset by the rise of the region, home to a half of the world population and nuclear and economic powers and newly-emerging economies with rich natural resources and markets, the U.S. raised the pivot to Asia-Pacific strategy. To carry out its strategy for world supremacy the U.S. again designated its rivals and "states posing threat to it" as in the period of Cold War and grappled with forming an encirclement ring.

It mounted pressure offensive while covertly using the phrase of "potential rival" by taking into consideration the failed uni-polar world strategy, changed structure of forces caused by the world trend of multipolarization and international rebuff. The "potential rival" designated by the U.S. meant China rapidly emerging as an economic power in Asia and Russia which retook its position as power.

In order to establish the U.S.-led domination order in the Asia-Pacific and take control of the world by containing the two big powers the U.S. is pushing ahead with the formation of big missile shield covering vast areas from Alaska to Australia through South Korea, Japan and the Philippines. The U.S. insists that the tests were to "provide against the missile development of North Korea," not meant to target the powers in surrounding areas. But this is a base deception of the international community.

The Washington Post disclosed the fact that the CIA defined already in the 1990s China and Russia as "potential rivals" that can challenge the U.S. interests and put the DPRK and Iran on the list of "states posing threat to the U.S." in a bid to secure the pretext for establishing the missile shield in Asia.

Victor Yesin, former chief of the General Staff of the Strategic Rocket Forces of Russia, said that U.S. response to the DPRK is asymmetric, adding the former is establishing the theatre missile defense system to deter nuclear potentials of China and Russia.

The U.S. schemes to put military pressure on those countries through new missile shield and inveigle them into new arms race so that they may use up their national capabilities and plunge into an economic turmoil. As seen above, the U.S. theory of "missile threat from North Korea" is no more than sophism to cover up its criminal nature as it is a product of its new strategy for world supremacy, Cold War strategy of the Asian version.

The U.S. should never be allowed to turn the Asia-Pacific into a springboard for world domination and theater of new Cold War as the countries in the region aspire after peace and development. The anachronistic attempt of the U.S. is bound to fail.

Infantry Innovations in Insurgencies: Sri Lanka's Experience

By LTC (Retired) Ivan Welch

How do you defeat a rebel army? An army that grew from the smallest insurgent cells, using terror as its prime tactic, to a fully manned force with artillery, an air wing, naval units, and elite suicide cadres? How do you remake yourself during a conflict in a way that leads from stalemate to victory? Look to the Infantry.

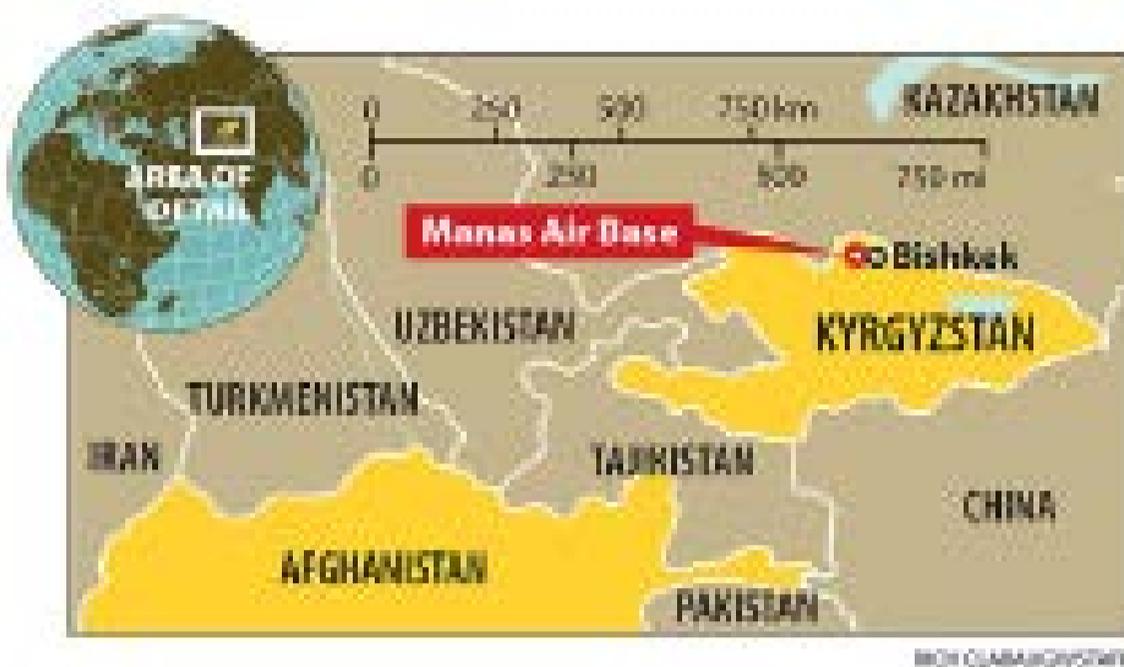
The Sri Lankan army had just such an experience. They fought for many years against a separatist movement that had evolved into an insurgent state. Facing an impasse on the battlefield, leaders and men rethought their tactics and revived infantry fundamentals.

<http://fms.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/innovation-in-insurgencies.pdf>

OE Watch Commentary: In this excerpted article Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev discusses the growing economic cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation. This cooperation is not surprising for a number of reasons. First, the economy of the Kyrgyz Republic has been shaky ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many of Kyrgyzstan's industries relied on synergistic relationships with industries in other Soviet Republics – for instance, cotton grown in Uzbekistan was turned into textiles in Kyrgyz factories. When the political geography of Central Asia was reconfigured after 1991, new international borders and diverging national agendas meant that old economic patterns were no longer sustainable. The Kyrgyz Republic's economy now relies, to a large extent, on raw materials extraction. Unemployment has grown steadily since the mid-1990s, which has helped to fuel domestic unrest in the country, while government corruption remains an endemic problem.

The second major reason for increased economic cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan is geopolitical. The siting of the American Transit Center at Manas Airport, near Bishkek, was a major windfall for the Kyrgyz economy. Between 2009 and 2011 alone, the United States paid Kyrgyzstan nearly \$400 million dollars to operate the base, and local firms also benefitted from lucrative contracts associated with the facility. From a Russian perspective, an American presence in its “near abroad” was unacceptable. Russia has its own airbase at Kant, only a few kilometers away. Moreover, Russia has promised to forgive a significant portion of Kyrgyzstan's loans, refit the Kyrgyz military, and, perhaps most importantly, to begin investing in hydroelectric projects in the country. Moreover, as Abdyldaev notes, Russia has also offered its assistance in redeveloping the Manas International Airport as a major civilian transit center. All of these promises, however, are conditional on the Kyrgyz government evicting the United States from Manas.

The control that dams would give over upstream water resources would provide Kyrgyzstan significant geopolitical leverage over downstream users. Furthermore, it is



Location of Manas Air Base.

Source: Yelena Chernenko, “I Would Not Say That There Is An Unstable Situation in Kyrgyzstan.” Kyrgyzstani Foreign Minister on the Security of Russian Investments,” Kommersant Online, 17 Sep 2013

Kyrgyzstani Foreign Minister on the Security of Russian Investments

Last Friday a meeting between Russian Federation President Vladimir Putin and Kyrgyzstani President Almazbek Atambaev took place on the margins of the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. They discussed the economy and military-technical cooperation. Kyrgyzstani Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev told Kommersant's correspondent Yelena Chernenko about the kind of investment projects to which Bishkek would like to attract Moscow and whether Russia will lose the funds it has already invested in Kyrgyzstan.

...[Chernenko] How is the cooperation between the Russian Federation and Kyrgyzstan on the Kambarata-1 and Verkhne-Narynsk Falls hydroelectric power stations progressing? When will construction begin?

[Abdyldaev] The opening ceremony of the building of the Verkhne-Narynsk Falls Hydroelectric Power Station with the participation of Kyrgyzstani President Almazbek Atambaev and Yevgeniy Dod, chairman of the RusGidro Open Joint-Stock Company, took place in June. The first hydraulic units are due to come into service as early as in 2016. The building of the hydroelectric power station will create thousands of jobs, give an impetus to the development of the services sphere and the building materials market, and also guarantee the country's energy security and increase its export potential. For Kambarata-1, the preparation of the feasibility study is being completed and will be presented to the sides for agreement in the near future....

... [Chernenko] At the end of last year Kommersant reported that Russia is prepared to spend \$1.1 billion reequipping the Kyrgyzstani Army. Have Moscow and Bishkek agreed the list of items that the program will cover?

[Abdyldaev] Active work is currently under way in this area among specialists of the Kyrgyzstani and Russian defense ministries to determine the list of military equipment that the Kyrgyzstani side needs. Specifics are being clarified and talks are being conducted....

...[Chernenko] What can you say about Russia's possible participation in the transformation of Manas into a civilian port?

[Abdyldaev] In July a law was signed on the denunciation of the Cooperation Agreement between Kyrgyzstan and the United States from 11 July 2014 and also concerning the Transit Center at Manas International Airport. Work is now being carried

(continued)

Continued: Kyrgyz Relations with Russia, Closure of US Base

*clear that the Kyrgyz government perceives that continued cooperation with Russia will more than make up for the revenue associated with the American Transit Center. Indeed, as the interview with Foreign Minister Abdyldaev makes clear, the “considerable dynamism” of the relationship between Russia and the Kyrgyz Republic in recent years derives from the fact that both parties believe that they have something to gain from their ongoing cooperation. Russia achieves the eviction of the United States from its “backyard” and tightens its political and economic grip on a former Soviet republic. Kyrgyzstan’s economy, meanwhile, will benefit from increased investment from Russia. On a different plane, the Kyrgyzstan’s regional geopolitical power will be enhanced through increased control over water resources in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Artman)***

out to draw up the relevant accords.

Kyrgyzstan is interested in creating a major logistics center at Manas International Airport. On this plane, Russian-Kyrgyzstani meetings at expert levels have been held several times this year. Questions pertaining to the creation of a civilian logistics center and the elaboration of a business plan for the project have been discussed.

[Chernenko] According to the information of the US State Department, the Kyrgyzstani economy received more than \$200 million from the functioning of the Transit Center in 2012 alone. With what do you plan to replace this income after the Americans’ departure from Manas, and how?

[Abdyldaev] In connection with the forthcoming expiry of the agreements on the Transit Center, no provision was made in the country’s budget for the next few years for receiving any funds from this source. The formation of the republic’s budget in connection with the forthcoming removal of the transit center will be accomplished through the utilization of available reserves. Namely -- by implementing projects in the framework of the national strategy for the stable development of Kyrgyzstan.

Moreover, we hope that the transformation of Manas Airport into an international aviation hub will attract major investment projects to the country.

A Central Asian Perspective of Security in Afghanistan

By Matthew Stein

In the ten years since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) contributed support for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations by granting over-flight rights and use of airfields for transit or search and rescue operations, and allowing overland logistics of non-lethal supplies. The drawdown of forces in 2014 from Afghanistan will affect the conduct of regional affairs and regional security, particularly for the countries of Central Asia.

However, Central Asian perspectives of the future of Afghanistan are often overlooked. There are a number of articles by security analysts and academics in Central Asia that offer detailed and candid perspectives of ISAF operations and security in Afghanistan, though these may not be noticed or well received by policy-makers in the United States. A brief examination of articles by one such author,

Dr. Viktor Dubovitsky, can help better understand the Central Asian perspective of security in Afghanistan.



<http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/CA-Perspective-of-Security-in-Afghanistan.pdf>

“This was carried out by the Antiterrorist Center of the Commonwealth of Independent States (ATC CIS)...this event is held against the background of a very difficult operational and political-military situation in the countries close to the Commonwealth...”

OE Watch Commentary: *There are several joint military exercises that take place in Central Asia in a given year, and, as the accompanying article shows, the focus of regional security organizations continues to be on scenarios of what might happen in 2014 following a withdrawal of forces from Afghanistan. The “Ala-Too Antiterror-2013” exercise was not much different than other exercises that have taken place, but there are a couple of points that are not expanded upon in the accompanying article.*

First, the Antiterrorist Center of the Commonwealth of Independent States (ATC CIS) conducted the exercise at around the same time that three other similar exercises involving forces of members of the CIS were taking place. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) held “Cooperation-2013,” which drilled the organization’s Collective Operational Reaction Force (CORF), from September 19-26 in Belarus, while Belarus and Russia held a two-part exercise, “Zapad-2013,” in Belarus and Russia. This is in addition to the CSTO’s “Grom-2013” held in September in Kyrgyzstan. An article in Red Star mentioned the significance of “Cooperation-2013” and “Zapad-2013” taking place at the same time, but there is no mention of “Ala-Too Antiterror-2013” or “Grom-2013.” It does not appear that there was any coordination among these exercises.

The article also mentions the possibility of having to deal with refugees from a conflict in the region. The most recent example of this happened during the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, when tens of thousands of refugees fled into Uzbekistan. It is worth considering what capacity these countries have to accept refugees fleeing from a conflict, or even a disaster. It was noted that in June 2010 government agencies in Uzbekistan performed quite well in responding to the number of refugees, but that eventually they reached the limit of their capabilities. The involvement

Source: Tikhonov, Alexander. “Антитеррористический сбор в Бишкеке (Antiterrorist assembly in Bishkek),” *Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star)*, 25 September 2013. <http://www.redstar.ru/index.php/news-menu/v-armiyakh-sng/kyrgyzstanarmy/item/11717-antiterroristicheskij-sbor-v-bishkeke>

Antiterrorist assembly in Bishkek

On September 25 antiterrorist units from security services and law enforcement agencies of the CIS began a two day assembly. This was carried out by the Antiterrorist Center of the Commonwealth of Independent States (ATC CIS)...this event is held against the background of a very difficult operational and political-military situation in the countries close to the Commonwealth...“The withdrawal of International Security Assistance Forces from Afghanistan would inevitably lead to an escalation of the internal struggle for control of the state,” said Colonel-General Novikov...

This increases the risks of destabilization of the situation in Central Asian states through the activation of the extremist underground and the possible flow of refugees, who will pour into these countries from Afghanistan in event of an armed conflict... These and other important aspects of the complications of the operational situation, and the likely scenarios for the situation in Afghanistan were taken into account by the exercise organizers...

(continued)



Kyrgyz and Russian special forces units conduct exercise in a school near Kant.

Continued: Joint Exercises in Central Asia

*of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Kyrgyzstan could signal that the ATC CIS is planning for more than just combating an extremist group, but is also considering other aspects of the operational environment. Part of the exercise also took place at a school near the Kant Airbase. Ultimately, the article shows that regional security organizations are preparing for possible security threats in 2014, but it is difficult to determine which organization will respond in the event of a conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)***

...the first phase of the joint antiterrorist exercise “Ala-Too Antiterror-2013,” held from September 4-13 this year with operational and operational-search units of the security and intelligence services of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine participating in the ATC CIS...Special forces units from the Russian Defense Ministry and the National Security Committee of Kyrgyzstan will perform tasks in a counterterrorism training operation to rescue hostages and neutralize terrorists on transport and areas with large numbers of people (around the territory of the Russian airbase at Kant)...after which units from the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Kyrgyzstan will demonstrate their ability to respond to the aftermath of a terrorist attack...

Fergana as FATA?

Central Asia after 2014 – Outcomes and Strategic Options

By Ted Donnelly

The analysis presented in this essay describes the most likely effects of the 2014 U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan on the Central Asian States, focusing on the Fergana Valley – the strategic center of gravity of the region.



<http://FMSO.leavenworth.army.mil/products.html#Europe>

“In the president’s view the 16,000 Tajik border guards – covering the 1400 kilometer border – will meet threats with courage, but be poorly armed...”

OE Watch Commentary: *There has been criticism directed at the Russian government in the past year that its agreement to supply \$200 million worth of equipment to Tajikistan’s military would never materialize or that this amount would not be enough to make an impact. The accompanying article discusses possible security assistance for Tajikistan through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), specifically for the Tajik Border Guards; however, there is no mention if this is part of the previous agreement or an additional deal. Regardless if the security assistance is separate from the previous deal, the announcement could be an important move by the CSTO.*

The author mentions that the CSTO (not strictly Russia) has received a lot of criticism in the past few years, in short, that it has not taken enough action to provide collective security for its member states. This was the main complaint of the CSTO during the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, though an intervention by the organization at the time would have gone against its charter. CSTO assistance to Tajikistan’s Border Guards might be a move to branch out from working mainly with member states’ Ministries of Defense and provide support for other security forces.

Perhaps the most significant part of the article is the author mentioning that the main threats to future stability are related to the drug trade, though it is not the first time that this has been singled out as a major threat. The CSTO held the exercise “Grom” (Thunder) in September 2012 and 2013, which dealt with combating criminal groups involved with drug trafficking; however, these exercises appeared to be similar to previous ones of combating (through a combined arms assault) an extremist group that had conducted an incursion into Central Asia. The exercises did not include training on aspects of day-to-day border security or take into consideration that the various criminal groups involved in drug trafficking do not have the same dynamic as a heavily armed extremist group with large numbers. The commander of the Tajik Border Guards talks about equipment his forces need to conduct effective surveillance and patrol the border. It will be worth watching to see how assistance from the CSTO is allocated to Tajikistan.

End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)



Tajik Border Guards on patrol near the Afghan-Tajik border.
Source: http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan_russia_afghanistan_border/2313307.html

Source: Niyazov, Alisher. “ОДКБ вооружит Таджикистан (The CSTO will arm Tajikistan),” Asia-Plus, 26 September 2013. <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/odkb-vooruzhit-tadzhikistan>

The CSTO will arm Tajikistan

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which has been mercilessly criticized in recent years by politicians and experts as an abstract and ineffective organization, finally received its first combat mission. Within its framework the organization will render military-technical assistance for the Tajik Border Guards...this was promised to President Rahmon at the recent CSTO summit in Sochi...

...At the summit Emomali Rahmon said something to the effect that the Tajik forces are preparing for the coming hot year of 2014. In the president’s view the 16,000 Tajik border guards – covering the 1400 kilometer border – will meet threats with courage, but be poorly armed...The commander of the border forces Sherali Mirzo told Asia-Plus about the content of the list (of necessary military equipment). According to him, they require resources for surveillance, tracking, thermal imaging, and so on...“We need aircraft, considering that most of the border runs through high terrain,” said Mirzo, “Unmanned aerial vehicles would be very useful.”...

...In discussing the nature of threats connected with the topic of “Afghanistan 2014” the majority of experts, politicians, and heads of security services are unanimous in their evaluation. It is unknown if the Taliban will breakthrough, but there is little doubt that in the coming years the region will face increasing drug trafficking from Afghanistan...Alexander Zelichenko, a former officer of the international counter narcotic project “Osh Knot”, which was carried out in the region in the mid-90s, said that “In any scenario in Afghanistan it’s easy to predict a new turn of drug trafficking – the financial basis of any local wars and terrorist activities”...“The sad experience of the past is well known: the Taliban, coming to power in the early 2000s, reduced the area of opium crops while creating a number of stock piles, which for a long time fed transnational criminal groups at high prices”...

“Saruu has become the main site of the protest of those unsatisfied with the existing agreement between Kyrgyz authorities and the Centerra”

OE Watch Commentary: *The dispute over the Kumtor gold mine continues to make headlines in Kyrgyzstan, and, as the accompanying article shows, it has caused more civil unrest in the surrounding cities and towns (see also: June 2013 OE Watch, “The Effects of Civil Unrest in Kyrgyzstan”). The article contains a chronology of events that took place on 8 October 2013 in the town of Saruu (which straddles the Bishkek-Karakol Highway), in addition to a brief summary of the protest in the city of Karakol on 7 October. The sequence of events over the two days is fairly similar to what happened in May/June this year in the town of Barskoon near the mine, and the article includes pictures and videos of what took place.*

The people involved (on both days) took various measures to stage their protests. Their actions were similar to what has happened before in other parts of the country, such as spreading debris to block the road and attempting to seize administration buildings. The major difference with these protests is that the protestors were prepared (and threatened) to use violence against the authorities, and even took a member of the government hostage in Karakol on 7 October. This is not typical of protests that take place in Kyrgyzstan. A previous instance of a government official being taken hostage happened during the April 2010 revolution in the city of Talas. Public frustration with the government played an important part in that incident and the revolution.

It has been reported that people in Kyrgyzstan will hire themselves out to work as protestors for someone else’s interests, and that they may only take action up to a certain point. The video of the protest in Karakol embedded in the chronology (below the entry for 11:13) offers some insight into what the protestors wanted. The video is only eight minutes of footage from the whole day, but the argument between the protestors and one of the commanders of the security force (starting at the 3:14 mark through the end) appears to be more than just an act. The unit eventually withdrew without



A view of the roadblock in the village of Saruu on October 8, 2013.
Source: <http://www.barakelde.org/news:57040/>

Source: Ayshoola Aysaeva, Ulan Myrza, Nurmukhammed Atambayev, and Shakhida Dyusheeva. “Хроника: Трасса Балыкчы-Каракол окончательно разблокирована (Chronicle: The Balykchy-Karakol highway is finally unblocked),” Kloop, 8 October 2013. <http://kloop.kg/blog/2013/10/08/hronika-v-karakole-spokojno-na-sleduyushhij-den-posle-besporjadkov/>

Chronicle: The Balykchy-Karakol highway is finally unblocked

...The villagers of Saruu of the Jeti-Oguz District opened the Balykchy-Karakol highway that passes through their village, after the government promised to release 21 of the 23 arrested yesterday after the riots in Karakol. The villagers blocked the road twice on October 8, for about five hours total...Saruu has become the main site of the protest of those unsatisfied with the existing agreement between Kyrgyz authorities and the Centerra...The residents of this village is made up the majority of the people that went to the rally yesterday in Karakol...There will be a proposal this week in parliament that will increase Kyrgyzstan’s share in Kumtor up to 70 percent.

...The rally in Karakol on October 7 developed into a series of acts of violence. At first, the protestors took Emilbek Kaptagayev (the envoy of the governor of Issyk-Kul Province) hostage and twice tried to storm the provincial administration building. After the second attempt police dispersed the protestors, released Kaptagayev, and later in the night arrested 23. This, in turn, caused today’s protest in Saruu...

Chronicle of events:

- 19:07** 8 Oct 2013 According to journalist on the scene, most of the protestors have been dispersed.
- 18:10** The selected (protest) leaders just arrived from talks with authorities; there will not be an order for OMON (special purpose police unit) to attack...
- 17:45** According to the journalist at the scene, protestors have again blocked the road near Saruu. “The road is closed, tires are burning. They think that authorities will attack in the evening. They have prepared bottles with

(continued)

Continued: Patterns of Protest in Kyrgyzstan

any altercation, but the protest was dispersed at some point later in the day. It is difficult to determine if the protestors on 8 October would have followed through on their threats of violence, but, as the article shows, protests in Kyrgyzstan continue to follow a similar pattern, and the issue of the Kumtor gold mine remains unsolved. End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)

gasoline.”

16:49 The highway is open...this was possible because Saruu residents made an agreement with authorities to release protestors detained yesterday.

14:40 Journalist Kunduz Syrdybayeva, in Saruu, said that around 150 people are at the closed road and generally calm. Prior to this they overturned a Honda Accord, which has blocked the road...For now, the protestors have threatened the following:

- They are irritated by the helicopter flying above them. Some have threatened to open fire if it does not leave
- If yesterday's detainees will not be released, they promise to attack the Jetti-Oguz District department of internal affairs

14:25 Emilbek Kaptagayev told Kloop that protestors have firearms. “As far as I know, they are ready to use firearms.”

12:51 ...“They are saying that people have now completely blocked the road to the village of Saruu, collapsing trees and preparing gasoline...,” said former a ombudsman

11:07 For the first time since the start of the unrest in Karakol President Almazbek Atambayev spoke on the topic. He instructed the heads of law enforcement agencies to provide an objective investigation and bring the protest organizers and participants to justice...

11:02 At the moment 23 participants of yesterday's protest in Karakol are detained...“They promised to carry out a peaceful protest, but they came to Karakol yesterday with cars of stones, combustible materials, and gasoline...,” said spokesman of the Interior Ministry of the Issyk-Kul Province.



A view of the roadblock in the village of Saruu on October 8, 2013.
Source: <http://news.mail.ru/inworld/kyrgyzstan/society/15098607/>

Zapad 2013: The Russian Armed Forces Flexes its Muscles

OE Watch Commentary: *The existential threat from Russia remains fresh in the minds of the Polish people. Moreover, post-Soviet Belarus continually proves to be an unpredictable neighbor prone to adopt stances which are not friendly to Poland or its interests.*

Exercises like Zapad (West) 2013 are of particular concern for several reasons. First, they signal that the West and its potential influence on Russia's "sphere of privileged influence" are significant concerns to Moscow. Moreover, the exercises indicate Minsk's readiness to align with Russia in its anti-Western stance. The exercise scenario, as stated in the article excerpt, is "based on the blockade and destruction of the hypothetical enemy's units" (referred to in official communiqués as illegal armed formations or terrorists). However, based on the number of troops and type of units employed - clearly greater in size and composition than one would expect to engage with "illegal armed formations or terrorists" - the scenario resembled a full-scale joint operation.

Second, the Zapad 2013 exercise highlighted the disparity in military readiness – particularly in the context of Eastern Europe. Currently, the Russian Armed Forces are undergoing a massive, well publicized modernization program. Meanwhile, the Polish military budget suffered a 10% cut in 2013 (approximately \$990M), which will clearly affect training and modernization processes. Poland's participation in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan caused shifts in the training of its forces. As such, domestic training focused on asymmetric threats rather than high-intensity warfare against a conventional enemy. From 2014 Polish training will revert to a conventional warfare focus; however, it will require some time to reinstall the "conventional" mindset. At the same time, the military component of the Polish defense command and control subsystem is under reconstruction until January 2014, which will force many experienced Polish officers into retirement, thereby degrading the experience level of the personnel overseeing C2 systems.



Russian soldiers participating in the exercise, Zapad 2013. <http://en.ria.ru/images/18365/86/183658634.jpg>

Source: Andrzej Wilk, „Zachód 2013” – ćwiczenia z antynatowskiej integracji armii białoruskiej i rosyjskiej, Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich, Warszawa 25 wrzesień 2013 <http://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/tydzien-na-wschodzie/2013-09-25/zachod-2013-cwiczenia-z-antynatowskiej-integracji-armii-b>

On 20-26 September, the armed forces of Russia and Belarus conducted a major exercise entitled 'West 2013'. To date, this was the largest joint exercise both militaries had ever carried out, spanning the western part of Belarus, Kaliningrad and the Baltic Sea. Over 22,000 soldiers participated in the bilateral exercise.

'West 2013' was designed to enhance the interoperability of the Belarusian and Russian armies, particularly the former's ability to operate within the structure and procedural construct of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The exercise scenarios focused on the interdiction and destruction of a hypothetical enemy's units, referred to in official communiqués as "illegal armed formations" or "terrorists." However, the composition of the Russian-Belarusian response forces (such as artillery and rocket units, aircraft bombers, and large ships) indicated that 'illegal armed formations' were actually veiled references to a potential opponent's regular armed forces.

It is worth noting that the exercise involved the navies – operating both in the Baltic and the Barents Sea – as well as assets in the Kaliningrad and Murmansk regions. In all areas, the exercise included strikes on assaulting amphibious forces during ship-to-shore approaches and repelling seaborne attacks. The Barents Sea region also included operations aimed at neutralizing submarine attacks by the so-called 'terrorists'. A final noteworthy element of the exercise involved taking and holding towns and fighting in urban areas, particularly in the Kaliningrad region.



Logo of the exercise "Zapad 2013"

(continued)

Continued: Zapad 2013: The Russian Armed Forces Flexes its Muscles

Thus, massive exercises like Zapad 2013 along Poland's border are unnerving and are therefore being carefully observed in Warsaw.

Third, Warsaw is deeply concerned about the future and seeks strong, reliable commitments from its NATO partners. Thus, for Poland it is paramount that other NATO nations stand ready to fulfill Article V commitments of the Washington Treaty. To date, Poland's most vital strategic partner has been the United States; however, some experts express uncertainties about the endurance of such a security umbrella. These reservations stem from the "Pacific shift" and the withdrawal of US units from Europe. These concerns about the trans-Atlantic resolve have forced Warsaw to look for additional security guarantees. For example, Poland has become increasingly active with the European Union, regional entities like the Visegrad Group, and the Eastern Partnership, and in the creation of international units such as the Lithuanian–Polish–Ukrainian Brigade.

The reform of the Russian Armed Forces remains problematic, thus downgrading the probability of any major challenge for Eastern Europe. Still, Zapad 2013 is an example of Kremlin muscle flexing, designed to escalate concerns of NATO and especially Eastern Europe and the three Baltic States. Although the threat of high-intensity conventional warfare is low in this post-Soviet era, it cannot be fully excluded. As such, the response should be strong both politically and militarily, by presenting robust defense capabilities within planned and future exercises. **End OE Watch Commentary (Sliwa)**



Selected locations of the Exercise "Zapad 2013". Source: Map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/easterneurope.jpg>



Russian Marine-Infantry storming a beach in Kaliningrad during the Zapad 2013 exercise. Source: <http://defence.pk/threads/russian-photos.53441/page-16>

“The word internationalism {multiculturalism} has become a swear word in our country and in our army. Multi-ethnicity in the army is not welcomed to make it possible for men from the North Caucasus to serve in the army hand in hand with ethnic Russians.”

- Unnamed Russian MOD Officer

OE Watch Commentary: *Although the Russian military has instituted a partial contract manning system that now comprises nearly 250,000 service personnel, the bulk of Russia’s military manpower lies with the approximately 300,000 conscripts serving in the ranks of its military formations. Conscripting has traditionally been the method of staffing the military in the Tsarist and Soviet eras. It was an excellent way of utilizing manpower, a resource that was in abundance, to economize on financial means, a resource that was always in short supply. Today’s Russia still has challenges finding sufficient financial resources, but now must deal additionally with a decline in human capital.*

*By all accounts, the population of the Russian Federation is shrinking and becoming older. In addition, the ethnically diverse Russian Federation is experiencing low birth rates for ethnic Russians and significantly higher birthrates for other nationalities. Russia’s shrinking and aging population could make filling the military ranks significantly more difficult in the years to come. Russia’s population of males 18-27 (the Russian draft ages) has dropped by approximately 200,000 from the 2002 to 2010 census. These changes in demographics have been troubling to a Russian military that relies on a semi-annual call-up of approximately 150,000 fresh conscripts to fill its ranks. In addition, Russia has not been welcoming of certain non-Slavic populations into the Armed Forces. This fact is especially troubling in the North Caucasus, where there has been an exodus of a significant portion of the Slavic population. As the accompanying article relates, Russia and its conscript pool are becoming more ethnically diverse, while the military is becoming less so. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

Source: “Russia Raises Conscript Quota for North Caucasus,” Regnum (Russian news agency), 4 October 2013, <http://www.regnum.ru/>, accessed 18 October 2013

Russia Raises Conscript Quota for North Caucasus

The Russian army has increased the number of conscripts drafted from the country’s North Caucasus region.

About 200 men will be conscripted to the Russian army from Ingushetia in autumn 2013 which is double the number of those called up during the spring draft call up, Regnum news agency quoted a local Ingushetia newspaper as saying on 4 October.

The number of men to be drafted into the Russian armed forces from Dagestan will also double in the 2013 autumn conscription campaign to reach 1,300 people, Regnum said in a separate report on 4 October.

Some 500 men will be conscripted from Kabardino-Balkaria but the number of those wishing to do military service is much higher, local Kabardino-Balkaria TV said on 1 October.

In neighboring Karachayev-Cherkessia and North Ossetia, 400 and 755 draftees will respectively join the Russian army this autumn, Regnum said on 3 October.

Meanwhile, in Chechnya local men will not be called up to the Russian army, this situation has been in place for the past 20 years. However, the regional head Ramzan Kadyrov issued an instruction in late September to conduct a call-up in the republic this autumn, the official website of the Chechen president and government reported. Kavkazskiy Uzel recalled that 120 men were conscripted in Chechnya in spring 2013 but they went to do military service in the Yug and Sever battalions of the Interior Troops stationed in Chechnya.

Some 150,000 men will be conscripted to the Russian army during the 2013 autumn conscription campaign.

Over the past few years, Russia has reduced the conscription from its North Caucasus Federal District. The violation of the army regulations by conscripts from the North Caucasus was quoted as possible reason. The move was very unpopular in the region where military service is seen as prestigious and in addition helps local men get employed at the police and other security agencies.

“Many in the Russian army and in the Russian society are afraid of people from the North Caucasus. This sort of Caucasus-phobia indicates the weakness of the state and its leadership,” Kavkazskaya Politika website quoted Col Eduard Rodyukov, a member of Russia’s Academy of Military Sciences, as saying. He added that this approach “demoralizes the Russian society, makes it amorphous and disintegrated”.

“The word internationalism {multiculturalism} has become a swear word in our country and in our army. Multi-ethnicity in the army is not welcomed to make it possible for men from the North Caucasus to serve in the army hand in hand with ethnic Russians,” Kavkazskaya Politika website quoted a Defense Ministry officer, who requested anonymity, as saying. The man added that “the rule is in use not only in low-level military units but also at the Defense Ministry’s central office which almost has no officers from Dagestan and Chechnya”.

U.S.-Russia Relations and Middle East Policy as US Energy Production Grows

18 October 2013

“The word internationalism {multiculturalism} has become a swear word in our country and in our army. Multi-ethnicity in the army is not welcomed to make it possible for men from the North Caucasus to serve in the army hand in hand with ethnic Russians.”

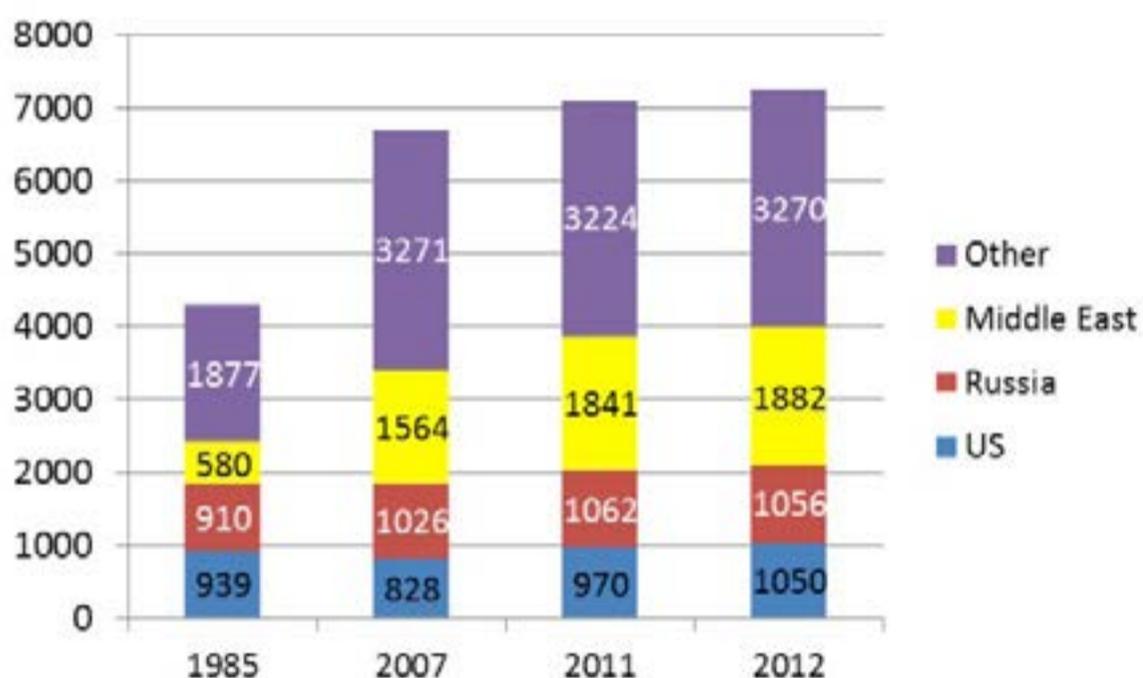
OE Watch Commentary: Energy dependence in the context of the US-Russian relationship, particularly U.S. policy in the Middle East, is important to consider. The two accompanying article excerpts present interesting reactions in the context of recent reports on growing US energy production.

On 4 October 2013 Russian political scientist, historian, and novelist Kirill Benediktov wrote an opinion in the “Leaders and Losers” section of Russia’s mainstream Izvestia (News). Benediktov comments on a Wall Street Journal article of 2 October 2013, “US is Overtaking Russia as Largest Oil-and-Gas Producer.”

Although Benediktov believes the Wall Street Journal article carries anti-Russian sentiment, he feels Washington is not competing with Moscow, but is only seeking energy independence. Such independence, he believes, would lead to a more “balanced” US policy in the Middle East. For example, this shift in US position, from his perspective, is already evident in President Obama’s reluctance to militarily intervene in the current Syrian crisis and his outreach to the new Iranian leadership. Benediktov also argues that feeding Russia’s “addiction” to energy hampers the development of Russia’s “industrial and scientific potential.” This opinion is particularly interesting because it is a relatively rare one in Russia.

Yet, paradoxically, Benediktov concludes that US energy independence could lead to US isolationism. For Russia this would mean buying more US Treasury securities and supplementing its budget with petrodollars. “Under such rules of the game,” he concludes, “we lose in any scenario – while surpassing America, and trailing behind it.”

On 7 October 2013 InoPress.ru (Foreign Press), which tracks and translates foreign media coverage of Russia, posted a translation with commentary of an article in Italy’s major newspaper, Corriere della Sera



Production of oil and gas combined (MTOE). The Middle East but also ‘Other’ have expanded at the expense of comparatively static US and Russia, though recent NCP trends in the US have arrested a pre-existing decline. ‘Other’ includes states like China, Turkmenistan, Norway, Australia, Indonesia. Source: B.P. Energy Statistics, 2013

Source: Kirill Benediktov, “Политолог Кирилл Бенедиктов — о том, нужно ли России лидерство в сырьевой гонке (On Whether or Not Russia Needs Leadership in the Resource Race),” Izvestiya (News), 4 October 2013. <http://izvestia.ru/news/558210>

On Whether or Not Russia Needs Leadership in the Resource Race

Against the backdrop of the ongoing budget crisis in the U.S., the voice of America’s conservative financial elite - the newspaper The Wall Street Journal published a very optimistic article “U.S. becomes number 1 energy producer in the world.” The pathos of the entire article is revealed in its subheading, “The United States Surpass Russia in the global production of oil and natural gas - a dramatic shift, changing markets and undermining the influence of governments - the largest importers of energy.”...

“Countries that rely on oil trade as a source of its economic power and political influence may face a weakening of their position in the market”, concluded [Wall Street Journal] authors. They present the opinion of Tatiana Mitrova, head of the Centre for Global Energy Markets, “Russia looks as the main loser in the global market.” Coincidentally or not, this insulting description - main loser - literally repeats the definition Newsweek reporter Owen Matthews gave our country.

I have no desire to argue that all this is nonsense. Russia – and not only Russia, but also other countries - exporters of hydrocarbons really have come across a very serious problem. However, its other side is that the “oil abundance” is not always a blessing....

Should we turn the Siberian taiga to Mordor [the author used earlier an analogy to Mordor in “The Lord of the Rings] only to “catch up to and surpass” America on the production of hydrocarbons? I doubt very much this. It would be much wiser to use the changed situation on the world energy market to break off the addicted dependence on

(continued)

Continued: U.S.-Russia Relations and Middle East Policy as US Energy Production Grows

(Evening Courier), by American political scientist Ian Bremmer. He cites growing US energy superiority among major reasons for antagonism between the US and Russia. He ties the current situation in Syria with the growing US-Russian energy competition. He writes that Russia has proved that it can block US decisions through the United Nations Security Council, but, at the same time, Russia is not powerful enough to do anything else. This is why, he concludes, the situation in Syria may only get worse before any tangible solution ever materializes.

Benediktov and Bremmer have a seemingly different take on the growing US energy production capability: Bremmer emphasizes antagonism and competing interests while Benediktov emphasizes lack of competition between Washington and Moscow, the need for Russia to move away from overdependence on energy production, and a positive shift, from his perspective, in US foreign policy in the Middle East in this context. Yet Benediktov too concludes that Russia is ultimately losing to the US, though his reasons differ from Bremmer's. These two authors' opinions are interesting to consider in the context of current US Middle East policy, especially as the Syrian conflict continues to unravel. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**

1. Russell Gold and Daniel Gilbert, "U.S. Is Overtaking Russia as Largest Oil-and-Gas Producer," Wall Street Journal, October 2, 2013. <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303492504579111360245276476>

the export of hydrocarbons, which prevents the development of Russia's industrial and scientific potential.

In the end you have to realize: Despite the anti-Russian pathos seeping through these articles, U.S. competition is not with us. Washington does not aim to conquer the world market of hydrocarbons but is trying to reach energy independence. And this independence will inevitably lead to a change of priorities in foreign policy - especially in the Middle East. The neoconservative Bush Junior Doctrine: full support of Israel and the increased American military presence in the region - are giving way to a much more balanced policy in relations with Jerusalem and attempts to establish contacts with Tehran. The "New Course" has already manifested itself in Obama's reluctance to bomb Syria and in resumption of relations with the Iranian leadership, has been possible precisely by the "shale revolution" and the transformation of the U.S. from a country importing energy resources in the country - into the largest producer of hydrocarbons. Now the Saudis have a much harder time dictating their terms to Washington, and that means that America now has more room for maneuvering between Sunni and Shiite states in the region.

It is paradoxical, but U.S. energy independence could potentially lead to increased isolationist tendencies and reduce general U.S. presence in the world. In America, the increasing volume production of oil and gas leads to industrial growth and the return of production from Southeast Asia and China, and for us - filling the budget with petrodollars and buying next U.S. Treasury securities. Under such rules of the game we lose in any scenario - while surpassing America, and trailing behind it.

Source: Ian Bremmer, "В противостоянии США - Россия победу одержит тот, у кого больше энергетических источников (In U.S. - Russia Competition, The One with More Energy Sources Will Win), Inopressa (Foreign Press), 7 October 2013, InoPressa.ru (Foreign Press) http://www.inopressa.ru/article/07Oct2013/corriere/us_rus2.html

In U.S. - Russia Competition, the One with More Energy Sources Will Win

Despite the fact that the two superpowers talk about a reset often and with pleasure, competing interests are constantly pushing them towards antagonism, creating situations that pose a threat or provide benefits to third countries, says Ian Bremmer in the newspaper Corriere della Sera.

....
 "[T]wo reasons remain to fear deterioration of relations. The first: staying in power for over 10 years, Putin has lost much of its popularity....

"The second reason is the gaining momentum energy revolution in America....By 2020, the United States may be the largest oil producer in the world and achieve energy self-sufficiency by 2035. This future is the best card that can be played in foreign policy, since the U.S. can export energy commodities to strengthen ties with allies such as Japan, and destroy the dominance of petroleum exporters-opponents - the article says - Washington may also reduce European dependence on Russian energy supplies. Also,

the growth of U.S. oil production would lead to a decrease in oil prices, putting exporters such as Russia in a difficult position."

"For Putin, we're talking about a serious threat. More than half of Russia's budget is funded by energy exports. Reduced demand for hydrocarbons in the United States and Europe will gradually undermine Russian finances - says the author of the article. In addition, the Obama administration intends to transfer new shale gas technologies to friendly countries to help them develop new energy fields. Ukraine and Poland are still dependent on Russian supplies at tolerable prices, but it is safe to say that both countries have significant reserves of shale gas to partially cover their needs. And this will certainly serve as another reason for the new tensions U.S. - Russia relations.

"Russia has once again proved, together with China, that it has the ability to interfere with U.S. plans through diplomatic pressure and veto in the UN Security Council - recognizes the author. At the same time, Russia is not powerful and authoritative to pursue realization of other goals, while China is overly fixated on itself. "

That is why the problem such as Syria also risks escalation before a solution begins to take shape, concludes the author of the article.

Russia and Lebanon Sign Energy Cooperation Agreement - And Russia Gains Access to the Mediterranean

October 2013

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpts discuss the recent signing of a cooperation agreement between Russia and Lebanon in the field of energy. The excerpt from BusinessTass.ru on 10 October reports that Lebanon Energy and Water Resources Minister Gibran Bassil made this announcement at a press conference in Moscow earlier this month.

BusinessTass.ru further reports that, according to Bassil, four Russian companies are already participating in the tenders in the Lebanese market: Gazprom, Rosneft, Lukoil, and Novatek. Other Russian companies are planning to develop the Lebanese shelf, some in alliance with American or European companies.

The second excerpt is from the 9 October edition of Neftegas.ru (Oil and Gas). The article discusses Bassil's trip to Moscow, where he met with Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak. The accompanying excerpt provides more context for this increased Russia-Lebanon cooperation.

In September 2013 Lebanon published conditions for a tender to conduct exploration of five blocks in its territorial waters. Following this announcement, according to the article, energy companies and foreign government officials increased their interest in exploration of the Lebanese shelf. The field in Lebanon is large enough to significantly affect competition. According to the article, "56 companies from 25 countries had applied to participate in the first round of the competition to search for oil and gas in Lebanon's EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone]."

According to Neftegas.ru, Lebanon is happy about increased cooperation with Russia for both economic and political reasons. For Lebanon, Russia is a powerful ally to gain in the region. Russia, for its part, also wins, not only strengthening its position in the Middle East, but also gaining increased access to the Mediterranean Sea—something the Kremlin has been trying to get for months now. The article suggests that this could allow Russia to potentially station its fleet in the Mediterranean through Lebanon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**



Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and Lebanese President Michel Suleiman in Moscow in January 2013 [AP] Source: <http://thebricspost.com/russia-lebanon-ink-energy-cooperation-deal/#.UmqpSFM4HKY>

Source: "Россия и Ливан подписали рамочное соглашение о сотрудничестве в области энергетики (Russia and Lebanon Signed a Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Energy Field)," BusinessTass.ru, 10 October 2013 <http://www.biztass.ru/mainnews/id/1552>

Russia and Lebanon Signed a Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Energy Field

Against the backdrop of the ongoing budget crisis in the U.S., the voice of America's conservative financial elite - the newspaper The Wall Street Journal published a very optimistic article "U.S. becomes number 1 energy producer in the world." The pathos of the entire article is revealed in its subheading, "The United States Surpass Russia in the global production of oil and natural gas - a dramatic shift, changing markets and undermining the influence of governments - the largest importers of energy..."

"Countries that rely on oil trade as a source of its economic power and political influence may face a weakening of their position in the market", concluded [Wall Street Journal] authors. They present the opinion of Tatiana Mitrova, head of the Centre for Global Energy Markets, "Russia looks as the main loser in the global market." Coincidentally or not, this insulting description - main loser - literally repeats the definition Newsweek reporter Owen Matthews gave our country.

I have no desire to argue that all this is nonsense. Russia - and not only Russia, but also other countries - exporters of hydrocarbons really have come across a very serious problem. However, its other side is that the "oil abundance" is not always a blessing...

Should we turn the Siberian taiga to Mordor [the author used earlier an analogy to Mordor in "The Lord of the Rings] only to "catch up to and surpass" America on the production of hydrocarbons? I doubt very much this. It would be much wiser to use the changed situation on the world energy market to break off the addicted dependence on the export of hydrocarbons, which prevents the development of Russia's industrial and scientific potential.

In the end you have to realize: Despite the anti-Russian pathos seeping through these articles, U.S. competition is not with us. Washington does not aim to conquer the world

(continued)

Continued: Russia and Lebanon Sign Energy Cooperation Agreement - And Russia Gains Access to the Mediterranean

market of hydrocarbons but is trying to reach energy independence. And this independence will inevitably lead to a change of priorities in foreign policy - especially in the Middle East. The neoconservative Bush Junior Doctrine: full support of Israel and the increased American military presence in the region - are giving way to a much more balanced policy in relations with Jerusalem and attempts to establish contacts with Tehran. The “New Course “ has already manifested itself in Obama’s reluctance to bomb Syria and in resumption of relations with the Iranian leadership, has been possible precisely by the “shale revolution” and the transformation of the U.S. from a country importing energy resources in the country – into the largest producer of hydrocarbons. Now the Saudis have a much harder time dictating their terms to Washington, and that means that America now has more room for maneuvering between Sunni and Shiite states in the region.

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Source: “А.Новак & Д.Бассиль. Россия может получить доступ к ливанскому шельфу. А может и не получить (A. Novak and D. Bassil. Russia May Get Access to Lebanese Shelf. And it May Not) Neftegaz.ru (Oil and Gas) 9 October 2013. <http://neftegaz.ru/news/view/114652>

In U.S. - Russia Competition, the One with More Energy Sources Will Win

October 9, 2013 in Moscow Russia’s Energy Minister Alexander Novak met with the Minister of Energy of the Republic of Lebanon D. Bassil...

Following Lebanon’s publication in early September 2013 of conditions for the tender to conduct exploration on five blocks in its territorial waters, interest in the country has increased significantly from energy companies and officials of relevant ministries of different countries.

Judging by the fact that A.Novak is meeting already a month after the announcement of the tender with his colleague from Lebanon, the topic of Lebanon’s offshore exploration is close to Russia, and Lebanon considers Russia an important partner...

Following the meeting, Russian Minister of Energy A.Novak signed with his colleague from Lebanon D.Bassil memorandum on strengthening bilateral cooperation, or, in the language of the protocol, on the establishment of a joint working group to monitor the prospects for bilateral interaction.

Competition for the right to participate in the development of the Lebanese shelf is serious.

56 companies from 25 countries had applied to participate in the 1st round of the competition to search for oil and gas in Lebanon’s EEZ [Exclusive Economic Zone].

Rosneft, Lukoil and Novatek have already been pre-selected to participate in this tender. Ended up on the shortlist...

The field in Lebanon is so large that it can greatly affect the situation on the gas market.

Lack of Gazprom in this tender is curious, but explainable. Gazprom is stronger in pipeline gas, and has a sufficient gas supply.

While Rosneft, Novatek, and the adjoined Lukoil, by contrast, are rapidly trying to enter LNG area of development and export....

Lebanon is happy about energy cooperation with Russia.

This means the support and patronage of Russia, and perhaps not only with regard to oil and gas.

If to the north Lebanon borders Syria, then to the south adjacent to Lebanon is the far from friendly Israel, which, by the way, just recently, in early October 2013, announced the purchase of warships Super Dvora Mark III, explaining the purchase with the need to protect natural gas fields, located in the disputed waters on the border between Israel and Lebanon.

With such a neighborhood Lebanon won’t be hurt with a friendship with the Mediterranean fleet-possessing Russia.

While Russia will gain another friendly state, which has access to the Mediterranean Sea, and Russia will also gain the prospect of another 1st area where it could park its Mediterranean fleet.

OE Watch Commentary: According to Russian press accounts, the recent joint military exercises with Belarus (Zapad 2013) were a resounding success. According to the first excerpt which describes the exercise scenario, Russian and Belarusian forces were able to identify, isolate and destroy invading insurgent forces that were intent upon invading the union state and “settling a territorial dispute by the use of force.” These choreographed exercises received considerable media publicity, and the outcome of this “conflict” was never in doubt.

As the second excerpt points out, alongside the political dividends such exercises provide, the Zapad 2013 war games helped to train basic military skills, refine logistic operations, improve interoperability issues and fine-tune command and control between Russian and Belarusian military forces. However, even with a nominal enemy, such exercises often lack realism, including the essential fog of war. To address this training deficiency Russia is now in the process of constructing major combat training centers in each of its four military districts. According to the third excerpt, the first of these training centers is scheduled to open in December 2013, although it will not be fully functional until mid-2014.

The creation of this training center is significant for a variety of reasons. First, once completed, this facility will be able to accommodate and train up to an entire brigade and associated support staff. Using a combination of both simulations and live-fire/maneuver, units will rotate through a series of exercises to test their combat readiness. Second, while the Russian OPFOR will not conform to any particular enemy profile, units who undergo training will confront an “enemy” that is not preprogrammed. Finally, and perhaps most important, the center is developing a lessons-learned system whereby units “undergoing training will immediately receive the necessary suggestions and evaluations of their work.”

There is no question that the Russian military is capable of conducting training exercises in front of TV cameras. Indeed,



Image of simulation control room at Mulino training area. Source: <http://vg-news.ru/news/20130449380.html>

Source: “Putin and Lukashenko inspect Zapad-2013 war games,” ITAR-TASS, 26 September 2013 <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c154/892406.html>

Article #1: Putin and Lukashenko Inspect Zapad-2013 War Games

As U.S. politicians of both political parties are still shuffling back and forth between the White House and the Capitol Hill without striking a viable deal to bring normality to the body politic they brag about, it is perhaps a good time for the befuddled world to start considering Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian counterpart Aleksander Lukashenko are inspecting the joint strategic war games Zapad-2013 at the Belarusian firing range Guzhsy.

...The leaders of the countries are reviewing the military exercise. According to the scenario an imaginary enemy, stating the intention to settle a territorial dispute by the use of force, began the preparation to unleashing an aggression against Belarus. According to the legend of the war games, the spying has been intensified against the Union State of Russia and Belarus and additional radioelectronic warfare is being deployed along its borders. The groups of terrorists and saboteurs are being dropped to commit acts of sabotage at the life-supporting facilities and information infrastructure sites.

The Belarusian armed forces are preparing to deploy the main defensive troops to rebuff a possible aggression and carry out an anti-terrorism operation in several regions of the country. Russia has deployed its strategic military force partially and has formed the armed group on the western strategic direction...

...The military force of the countries is drilling joint combat actions at the firing ranges Brestsky, Guzhsy and Obuz-Lesnovsky in Belarus. More than 22,000 servicemen, more than 530 armoured vehicles, including about 80 tanks, more than 50 artillery guns, about 90 warplanes and helicopters and up to ten warships of the Russian Baltic Fleet are participating in the war games. About 13,000 servicemen, 350 armoured vehicles, more than 50 artillery guns and more than 50 warplanes and helicopters are participating in the war games at the Belarusian firing ranges.

(continued)

Continued: Russian War Games and Training Centers

over the past decade the PR element of these military productions often appears to have taken precedent over the actual training or lessons learned. With the construction of these combat training centers, this approach may be changing, with the emphasis now placed on actual unit readiness. End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

Source: "Joint Russian-Belarusian Strategic Exercise Zapad-2013 Concluded," Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, 26 September 2013. <http://www.mil.ru>

Article #2: Putin Comments, Is Briefed on Results of Zapad-2013

...During the run-through of episodes, staffs and troops of armed forces of Russia and Belarus under the direction of defense ministers of Russia and the Republic of Belarus General of the Army Sergey Shoygu and Lieutenant-General Yuri Zhadobin rehearsed problems of sealing off and destroying simulated illegal armed force elements [formirovaniye] who had invaded the territory of the Union State.

Presidents of the Russian Federation and Republic of Belarus Vladimir Putin and Alyaksandr Lukashenka observed the troops' actions on Khmelevka Range in Kaliningrad Oblast, where inter-branch coordination of the Regional Grouping of Troops (Forces) of Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and Republic of Belarus with the involvement of Russian Navy forces was practiced for the first time, and on Belarusian Gozha Range.

Following the conclusion of the active phase, the President of Russia held a videoconference during which he gave positive marks to results of Russian-Belarusian Exercise Zapad-2013, describing it as another step toward ensuring interoperability of Armed Forces of the Union State.

"The troops demonstrated a rather high level of teamwork and coordination, and interworked precisely during execution of combat training missions. In fact it can be said they took one more step toward complete interoperability of Armed Forces of the Union State," the Supreme Commander of Russian Federation [RF] Armed Forces emphasized.

The President of Russia noted that new arms and military equipment had been broken in during the exercise, the proficiency and expertise of commanders and soldiers had improved, and a new approach had formed toward joint employment of the armed forces of Russia and Belarus. "I believe this exercise also will enable evaluating on the whole our long-range plans for upgrading the system of security of the Union State," the Supreme Commander of RF Armed Forces noted....

Source: Colonel Anatoliy Khromov, deputy chief of the Russian Ground Forces Combat Training Directorate: "Untrained Courage Is Useless. Regiments and Brigades Will Fight on the Battlefield Exactly the Way They Are Trained in Peacetime," VPK Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online, 25 September 2013.

Article #3: Armed Forces' Future Combat Training Center at Mulino to Open in December

Suvorov's "hard in training -- easy in combat" has not lost its relevance in the age of electronics, laser range finders, and robotics, which cannot be mastered without simulators. Unfortunately until recently by no means every troop unit could boast of modern training facilities. But now it seems the situation has begun to change. Soon the training center of the future will open near Nizhniy Novgorod; the German firm Rheinmetall took part in creating it.

The new Combat Training Center that is being created has no counterparts. It will be equipped with the very same training systems and facilities that are used for training at the Western armies' most up-to-date training centers. Up to and including the organizing of "live training" -- tactical exercises in a real locality with personnel, as well as exercises using training facilities in a single virtual space where the brigade commander can see and lead all his subordinates.

The construction of this center is currently nearing completion in the area of the population center of Mulino. And in Tver, in turn, based at the Air and Space Defense Academy, the technical systems for it are being developed and fine-tuned. The main purpose of these training centers is to train the specialist service member: the driver, the gun layer, the combat vehicle commander, and so forth. Here people learn to perform functional duties, so that subsequently, in the troops, a person can pass quickly through periods of adjustment within the section, team, or crew.

But the aim of the Combat Training Center is much broader. It is designed to train not just a single soldier but entire subunits, up to and including a formation, to perform the intended tasks, within a short space of time. Fine-tuning takes place with the use of information technologies and the simulation of any climatic or weather conditions. For instance, you do not have to wait for winter to come if you need to teach people how to operate in Arctic conditions, say.

(continued)

Continued: Russian War Games and Training Centers

In other words, the center will train formations to perform any tasks that may be set, practicing the entire spectrum of tactical operations. After all, a brigade comes to Mulino with its full complement of armaments. Every year up to nine multiservice brigades will pass through the Combat Training Center.

In total, up to 6,000 people will be able to train simultaneously within the center's territory. For a brigade, there will be a ready equipped camp where each tent provides accommodation for a company, equipped with air conditioning and heating systems, that is, everything necessary so that the service member feels no privations and can embark on training in the shortest possible time.

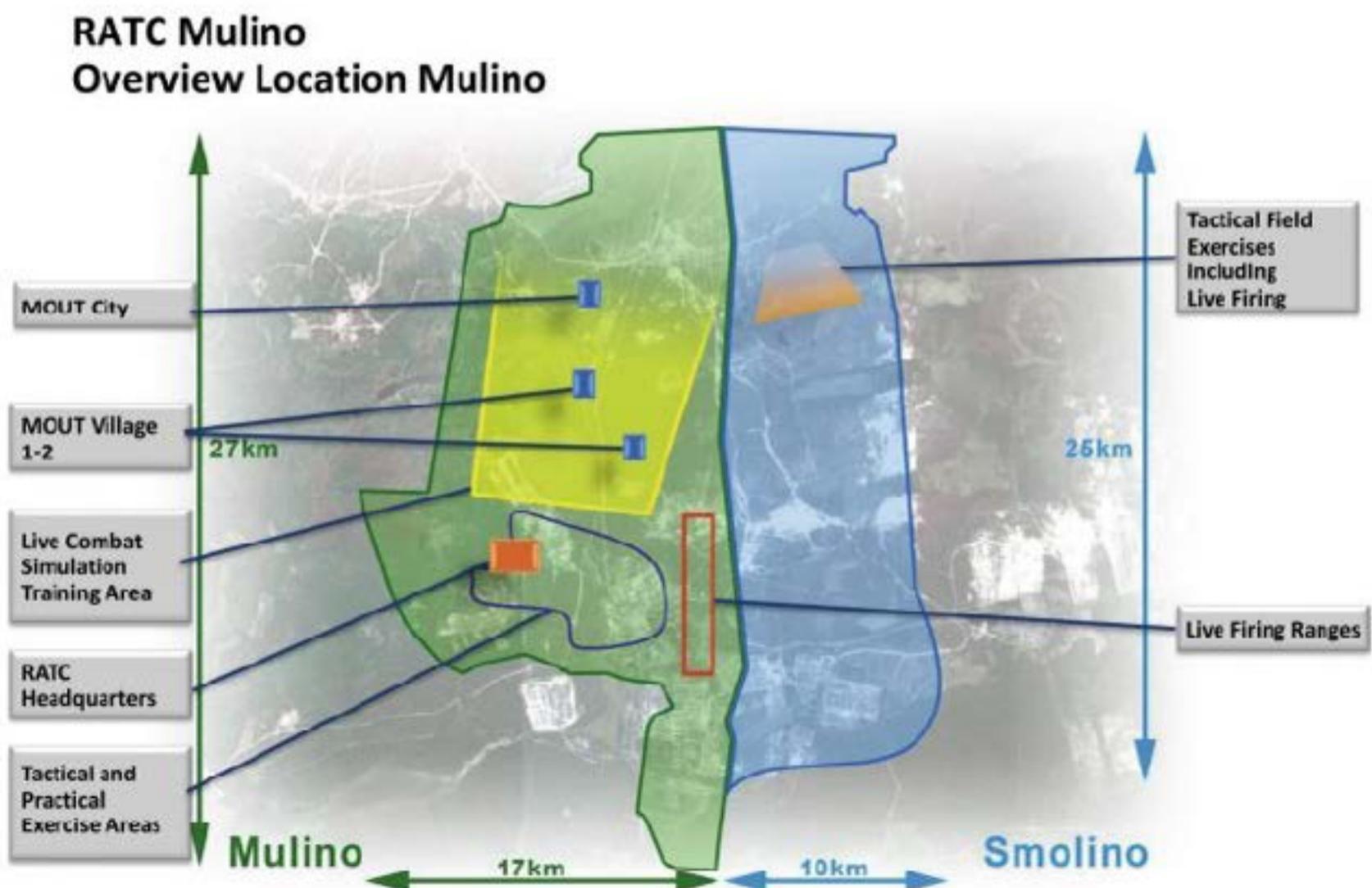
And finally, the simulators. The simulator complex incorporates a motorized rifle or tank battalion with all the reinforcing weaponry that might be attached to it: artillery, air defense subunits, an antitank subunit, Army aviation. It is a comprehensive system making it possible not only to fine-tune a company of troops within a branch of service, but also to carry out multiservice training...

...The US Army has experience of special brigades simulating the operations of a potential enemy, and a very concrete one at that. But then, NATO's armed forces have a concrete enemy. That is to say, in performing real missions at present, in Afghanistan, say, they are encountering a real enemy there. Accordingly, subunits are created on the model of that enemy. We have no real enemy at the moment. At our center, as already mentioned, the training support battalion will operate as the foe. I think that if necessary Russian industry is capable of producing the kind of uniform that the enemy wears, for people to change into. We will also be able to supply specimens of the arms and military equipment that are in his armory, in order to train soldiers to a real appreciation of combat...

...An entire subunit has been created at the center for "postmortems" -- the analysis and review team. It will be able in a short space of time to identify the most characteristic errors and positive aspects in the performance of missions and to prepare a high-quality analysis of the trainees' actions. To this end the complement of the Combat Training Center will include six special vehicles containing apparatus that can receive and display information. These data will be sent to the vehicles from the exercise commander and control center on a real-time basis. In this way the people undergoing training will immediately receive the necessary suggestions and evaluations of their work. At the moment the commanding officer, while conducting an exercise, has to remember how the personnel acted, in order subsequently to carry out a review. The center will record a video of the service members' actions and other statistical information. Subsequently this will all be collected in the review materials.

In view of the number of brigades in existence and the throughput capacity, a brigade will be trained at the Combat Training Center once every two years. In the future, if we develop the training methodology, we will be able to reduce that interval.

Schematic of Mulino training area. Source: <http://twower.livejournal.com/850646.html>





(Left) Dagestan map. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dagestan>

OE Watch Commentary: Throughout Russia the Fall 2013 draft campaign is in full swing. Between 1 October and 31 December Russian military authorities plan to conscript approximately 150,000 young Russian men for a mandatory one-year term of duty. As the first excerpt indicates, even with recently added incentives (e.g., tying completion of military service with higher education and government employment opportunities), Russian military commissariats are still having problems attracting a sufficient number of healthy new recruits.

Given these challenges, it is understandable why the Ministry of Defense has decided to increase slightly the number of new recruits from Dagestan. As opposed to many other Russian regions, not only do young men from Dagestan consider military service as a necessary step for future employment (often within local security forces), but they also regard it as an essential rite of passage to manhood. However, ethnic tension within the ranks is the military's primary rationale for not accessing even more Dagestani recruits. The potential pool is 40,000 young Dagestani men,



Image of Russian conscripts 'abused' by Dagestani soldier. Source: http://nmm.me/blogs/girlfriendHudo/prizyvnikam_iz_dagestana_obyavili_dembel/

Source: "Russian Military Short of Healthy Draftees – Defense Ministry," RIA Novosti, 4 October 2013. http://en.ria.ru/military_news/20131004/183935173/Russian-Military-Short-of-Healthy-Draftees--Defense-Ministry.html

Article #1: Russian Military Short of Healthy Draftees

The Russian military continues to experience shortage of conscripts physically fit to serve in the armed forces, a senior military official said commenting on the autumn draft period being held in Russia from October 1 to December 31.

"The fitness for military service does not meet our requirements yet," Maj. Gen.

(continued)

Continued: Fall 2013 Draft Challenges and Dagestan

but only 1,300 are being drafted. Over the past decade, there have been a number of incidents of ethnic-related violence in the military, many involving recruits from the North Caucasus. By limiting their numbers and, as the second excerpt points out, requiring Dagestani officials to vouch for these recruits, the Ministry of Defense hopes to reduce the potential for ethnic conflict in the military.

These draft limitations may help to maintain order within the military ranks, but they do little to address the underlying issue of chronic unemployment of young men from this region. In restricting young Dagestanis the opportunity to serve in the Russian military, Kremlin officials run the risk of transforming a large portion of this demographic into a future enemy. End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)

Yevgeny Burdinsky, the deputy head of the General Staff's Chief Organization and Mobilization Directorate, said on Thursday.

Speaking in an interview with Rossiya 24 television, Burdinsky said only 71 percent of the draftees had been deemed eligible to serve while 29 percent could not be drafted due to poor health.

"Some young men don't even know that they have health problems," the general said, adding that about 60,000 draftees were sent for additional medical check-ups during the spring 2013 draft.

The decade-long debate on the number of professional servicemen in Russia's armed forces remains unresolved, and the Defense Ministry still largely relies on conscription. All Russian men between the ages of 18 and 27 are obliged by law to perform one year of military service....

...The military needs to recruit about 300,000 men during each draft to keep the number of personnel at the required level of 1 million. However, the crisis in the conscript service caused by demographic decline and draft dodging has led the Defense Ministry to halve the number of conscripts in four consecutive draft periods since the autumn draft of 2011....

Source: "Russia ups conscription quota from North Caucasus," Regnum, 4 October 2013.



Image of Dagestan soldier with Russian conscripts. Source: <http://lenta.ru/news/2013/04/10/dagestan/>

Article #2: Agency notes 'insufficient' increase of number of Dagestanis in Russian army

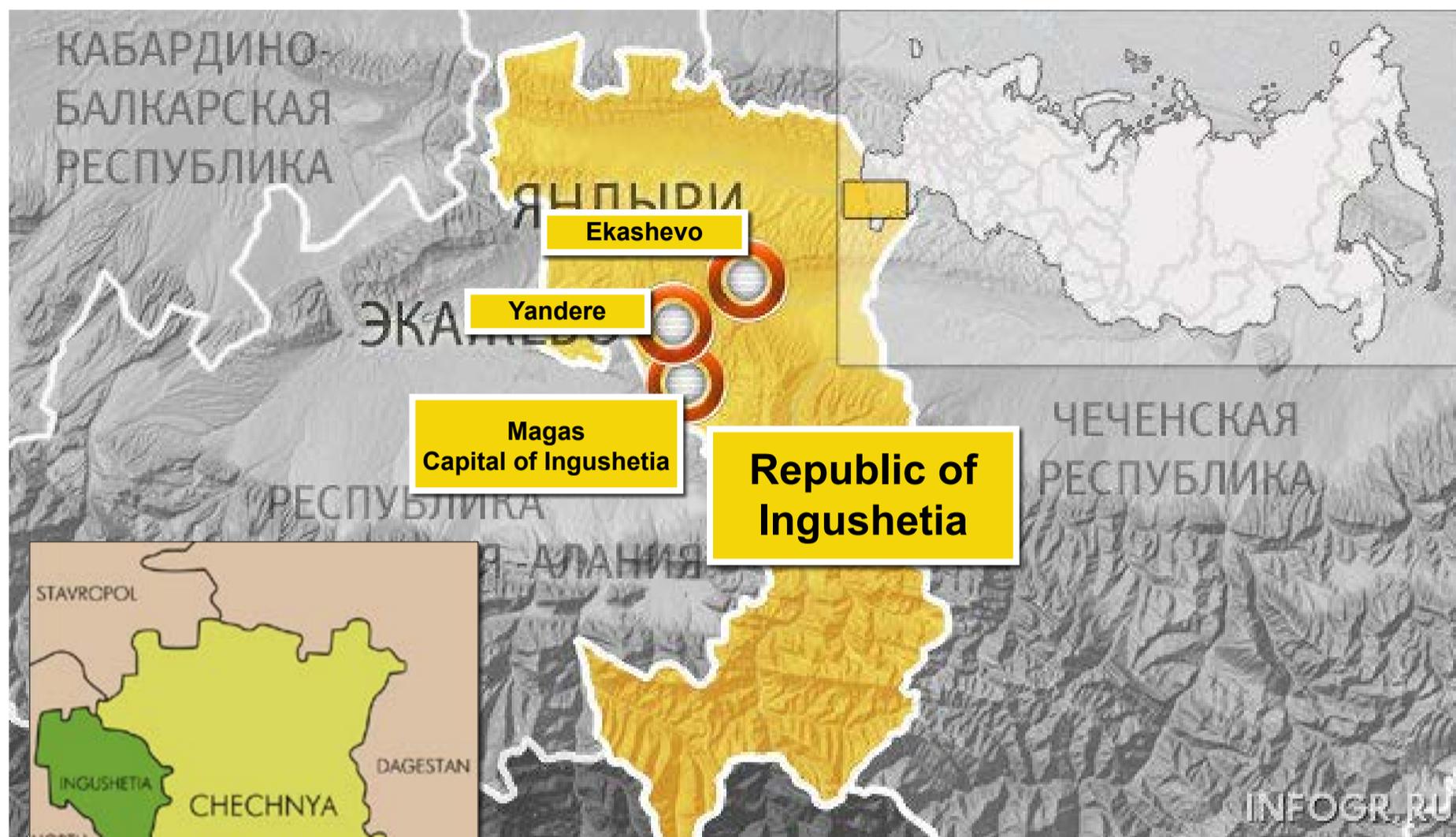
The number of young people from Dagestan to be drafted into the Russian armed forces will double during the autumn conscription campaign in 2013 compared to the spring conscription. This involves 1,300 people, the military commissariat of the republic told a Regnum correspondent on 4 October.

Despite the twofold increase, this is a small number for the republic where 40,000 people are of service age and the overwhelming majority of these people want to serve in the army. The leadership of the republic managed to increase the number of conscripts but this is insufficient, the source at the military commissariat said.

Only 680 people were drafted into the army from Dagestan this spring. Cases of the violation of the army regulations by some Dagestani conscripts and their refusal to obey officer commands were named as possible reasons for the drop in conscription.

The chairwoman of the committee for soldiers' mothers, Zulfiya Magomedova, said that it is possible that the quota of conscripts of the current drafting campaign may be increased immediately during the conscription.

She also said that the military commissariat this year introduced a warranty whereby well-respected people in the society, fellow villagers and relatives vouch in written form for the young people's preparedness to serve in line with the regulations both physically and morally. Candidates for the army service go through selection phases: on the municipal level and on the republican level at the military commissariat with the participation of the committee of soldiers' mothers and representatives of veteran organizations....



(Left) Map-Ingushetia-Chechnya.

Source: <http://newsinten.ru/politika/rossijskaya-politika/chechnya-i-ingusheniya-administrativnoj-granice-byt.html>

(Top) Ingushetia.

Source: http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20131016/970395690.html

OE Watch Commentary: A Russian special forces team detained four suspected terrorists in the Republic of Ingushetia while carrying out a counterterrorist operation on 16 October. As indicated by the accompanying article, the team enacted the operation in part of Magas, the capital of the Ingush Republic, and in surrounding villages. Officials decided to conduct the operation after receiving information regarding preparations for a terrorist attack during the celebration of Eid al-Adha, which began 14 October. The raid focused on seven addresses where terrorists or their supporters were suspected to be hiding. The team arrested and detained five men during the operation. The team also found a large quantity of arms and explosives, including improvised explosive devices. The counterterrorist operation reportedly went smoothly, with no complications.

Source: “В Ингушетии задержали 4 мужчин, причастных к планированию терактов,” [Four men involved in planning terrorist attacks detained in Ingushetia] RIA Novosti, 16 October 2013. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20131016/970395690.html

Special Forces detained four men, connected to preparations for terrorist attacks, and found large quantity of arms and explosives in Ingushetia, a source in the Republic reported to RIA Novosti.

“Currently, the active phase of the operation is finished. There were seven addresses of possible locations hiding illegal armed groups. Five men were detained,” said the agency.

After completing the necessary work, he said, one of the five was released from custody.

“These four have direct relations with the gangs. At various addresses a large quantity of arms and explosive were found, including improvised explosive devices.

(continued)

Continued: Suppressing Terror in the North Caucasus

*This counterterrorism operation is one of several conducted in 2013 as part of Russia's efforts to diminish the increasing threat of terrorist attacks in Ingushetia, a federal republic in Russia's North Caucasus. The heightened terrorism threat stems from the rise of a radical Islamist movement spreading from Chechnya to neighboring Dagestan and Ingushetia, known as the Caucasus Emirate. The group is led by its emir, Doku Umarov, who in July released a video calling for his followers to disrupt the 2014 Sochi Olympics through any means. To combat the group's attacks Russian security forces have carried out special operations missions in the region. For instance, one was conducted in May 2013, where, according to the article, the mission ended in a firefight with two rebels killed, one of them being Dzhamaleyl Mutaliev, the military emir of the Caucasus Emirate and right hand man to Umarov. The mission was considered a success, but the danger of terrorist attacks remains. This past August top Ingushetia security official Ahmed Kotiev, who worked to reduce and end the insurgency, was killed by a gunman. As ethnic and religious tensions in Russia continue to rise, and with the approach of the 2014 Sochi Olympics, Russian security officials will likely redouble their efforts to suppress the insurgency in the North Caucasus. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kangas)***

Source: "Режим КТО объявлен в Магасе и ряде сел в Ингушетии," [Counterterrorism Operation regime introduced in Magas and a number of villages in Ingushetia] RIA Novosti, 16 October 2013. <http://ria.ru/incidents/20131016/970323114.html>

A counterterrorist operation regime was introduced in parts Magas, the capital of Ingushetia, and nearby villages because of information received about preparations for a terrorist attack during the celebration of Eid al-Adha, a representative of operational headquarters of the republic reported to RIA Novosti Wednesday.

"The leader of the operational headquarters accepted the decision to introduce a counter-terrorist operation at 4:30 in the morning in the settlements of Yandar and Ekazhevo and parts of Magas, blocked streets in Zyaikov, Ekazhevo, Hautiev, and Gagiev. This decision was made because of the information from the citizens of the Republic about the preparation of a series of resonating terrorist attacks during the celebration of Eid al-Adha," said the agency.

Source: "Убитый в Ингушетии боевик был правой рукой Доку Умарова," [One of the rebels killed in Ingushetia was Doku Umarov's right hand man] RIA Novosti, 21 May 2013. http://ria.ru/defense_safety/20130521/938535476.html

One of the rebels killed in Ingushetia, Dzhamaleyl Mutaliev, was the right hand to Doku Umarov, leader of the terrorist organization "Caucasus Emirate," reported the president of Ingushetia, Yunus-Bek Yevkurov to RIA Novosti, commentating on the results of the special operation.

According to Yevkurov, the rebels offered to surrender at first, but they opened fired, which resulted in return fire and they were killed...

...Mutaliev was in the inner circle of Shamil Basaev. After the detention of Ali Taziev in 2010, Mutaliev was appointed to be the military emir of the "Caucasus Emirate" and leader of the rebels in Ingushetia. He was involved in carrying out terrorist attacks, including the September 2010 attack on the market in Vladikavkaz.

Africa's Other Enormous Cost from Extremism and Conflict: Polio

As Nigeria buries the 40 students slaughtered by Boko Haram and Kenya buries the 67 people massacred (a number likely to rise as many others are reported wounded or missing) from the mall attack by the Somali terrorist group al-Shabaab, the world is reminded of the extremism and conflicts present in parts of Africa. There is, however, another potential casualty in Nigeria and Somalia, two of Africa's bloodiest countries, that threatens to dwarf the numbers dead and disabled from the recent school and mall attacks - the polio eradication campaign.

For most Americans born after the advent of large-scale polio vaccination in the early 1960s, polio outbreaks such as the one in the U.S. in 1952, which left 3145 dead and 21,269 paralyzed, are historical events they have read about but never witnessed firsthand. The last cases of naturally occurring polio in the U.S. were recorded in 1979, when the disease broke out in several Amish communities where people were not vaccinated.¹ Therefore, what many say was at one time America's most feared childhood disease has by and large been vanquished in the U.S., as well as many other countries, through ongoing vaccination campaigns.

Eventually it was recognized that polio, as had earlier happened with smallpox, could be eradicated not from just some nations but worldwide. That would translate into not only a tremendous number of lives saved from death or disability, but also significant monetary savings from no longer having to treat polio, as well as eventually no longer needing to continue vaccination programs (this would be especially important for those many African countries with extremely limited healthcare budgets). Thus was born the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a public health endeavor involving the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rotary International and others.² For 23 years the battle has been waged to eliminate this terrible disease, and while there have been many successes, including a reduction of over 99.9% in the number of annual cases of polio, tremendous obstacles in the forms of extremism and conflict have hindered reaching the necessary 100%. If there is one area, even a small area, where people are still contracting polio because they were not vaccinated, then any future plans to stop global vaccination would have to be put on hold until that area was polio free. As WHO puts it, "As long as a single child remains infected, children in all countries are at risk of contracting polio. Failure to eradicate polio from these last remaining strongholds could result in as many as 200,000 new cases every year, within 10 years, all over the world."³

There have been successes in eliminating polio in many African countries. Unfortunately, however, Nigeria was never free of the disease, and a low vaccination rate in Somalia enabled the disease to reestablish itself there. In the latter case, genetic testing shows the polio strain to have been one circulating in northern Nigeria.⁴ It is not for lack of trying on the part of local authorities and international aid organizations that Nigeria and Somalia still harbor the disease.

Nigeria has encountered several obstacles in its eradication program, including weaknesses in its health infrastructure, but perhaps most daunting have been the rumors circulating in northern Nigeria that the vaccine causes severe side effects. Two quotes from 2003 demonstrate



Noko Haram propoganda image taken from the internet.

Source: <http://raadreeb.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/boko-HARAM-DIALOGUE.jpg>



Source: *NY Times*

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the strong religious undertones against the vaccination campaign.⁵ The first, by the governor of Kano, a northern Nigerian state, states, "Since September 11, the Muslim world is beginning to be suspicious of any move from the Western world... Our people have become really concerned about polio vaccine." Datti Ahmed, a Kano-based physician who headed the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, stated the polio vaccines were "corrupted and tainted by evildoers from America and their Western allies... We believe that modern-day Hitlers have deliberately adulterated the oral polio vaccines with anti-fertility drugs and... viruses which are known to cause HIV and AIDS." Ten years later the extremism would be bumped up a level. In February 2013 nine female polio vaccinators were shot in northern Nigeria.⁶ Indications are the killings were by Boko Haram, though this is uncertain. Still, with an organization whose name in English means "Western education is a sin," it would not be surprising to find that this militant Islamist group is indeed behind the murder of these health workers who were bringing modern day medicine to the people.

The effort to eradicate polio in Somalia has, as in Nigeria, run afoul of extremists. The present scale of conflict in Somalia, where foreign armies in conjunction with the Somali military are battling al-Shabaab, a militant Islamic group which controls large swaths of Somalia,⁷ includes violence against healthcare workers. In fact, vaccination campaign workers dare not enter those areas under al-Shabaab control. Besides blocking the vaccination campaign workers, al-Shabaab has tried to convince the locals that the vaccine is dangerous, blaring through loudspeakers that circle through towns and villages that it will cause sterility or AIDS, with an additional, "This vaccine is a Western agenda against Muslims" included to be sure the people know the West is targeting Muslims. Even those who do not believe the propaganda are frequently unable to be vaccinated as travelling to government-controlled areas is prohibitively expensive for the impoverished population.⁸ As Liban Nur, a 65 year old traditional elder in the al-Shabaab-controlled town of Bulo Burde said, "Polio cannot be eradicated without first eliminating al-Shabaab from Bulo Burde and anywhere else under the group's control." Unfortunately, eradicating al-Shabaab, like eradicating polio, is not proving easy.

al-Shabaab: heavily armed, extremist, and still in control of large areas of Somalia.
Source: <http://fotos.starmedia.com/2012/06/al-shabaab-en-somalia-186808.html>



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Somalia has paid a high price for al-Shabaab's intransigence regarding vaccination. Six years ago the country had no cases of polio; now it has over 100, more than the rest of the world combined.⁹ Reflecting how nervous healthcare workers are in Somalia, in August 2013 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) pulled out of the country after having been there for 22 years, citing attacks on its staff, including the murder in December 2011 of two of its workers in Mogadishu.¹⁰ MSF is an organization known for its willingness to provide medical care in many of the world's hotspots. For the indigent people of Somalia in desperate need of health care, their country was too dangerous even for MSF.

Though vaccination efforts continue in both Nigeria and Somalia, the setbacks in these countries have led to polio spreading to other countries which had previously eradicated the disease within their borders. Now it is present in Kenya, South Sudan, and the Somali region of Ethiopia.¹¹ Three other countries - Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Niger - have circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV). Before progressing to an explanation of cVDPV, at the risk of oversimplification it is important first to review some basic principles regarding polio. The disease is caused by a virus, of which there are three naturally occurring strains (or were three as one of the strains, type 2, is believed to have been eradicated). These are called wild types and are mainly transmitted via the fecal-oral route, meaning the viral strains, which replicate in a person's intestinal tract, are shed in the feces. People who ingest food or water contaminated with polio-laden feces can become infected and, in turn, further spread the disease. The oral polio vaccine is comprised of live but attenuated strains of the wild type strains, often but not always all three types. These weakened strains reproduce in the person's intestines, just like the wild type strains, and eventually produce an immune response. For approximately six to eight weeks the child excretes the attenuated strains in its feces, once again similar to what he or she would do if infected with the wild types. However, unlike the wild types, these attenuated viruses do not normally cause polio in people who ingest food or water contaminated with them. On rare occasions, though, when the immunization rate is extremely low in a community, such as is happening in parts of Africa because of extremism and conflict, attenuated viruses can circulate for a very long time, allowing them to undergo genetic mutations that eventually let them act as if they are wild types, capable of causing paralysis and death.¹² Whether wild type or vaccine-derived, it is necessary to immunize the population against polio in order to prevent its spread.

There are two other countries in the world where wild type polio remains endemic: Pakistan and Afghanistan. They suffer from some of the same religious intolerance and intransigence as Nigeria and Somalia. Conflict-laden areas, as well as violence against healthcare workers, draw additional parallels between these South Asian countries and their African counterparts. At least 22 polio workers have been murdered in Pakistan.¹³ Still the vast majority of new polio cases are in Africa. Thus, while the world certainly cannot take

"...to eradicate polio you first have to eradicate al-Shabaab."



A child receiving the oral polio vaccine in Mogadishu, Somalia.
Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/polio-spreads-to-ethiopia/1735218.html>

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its eyes off South Asia, Africa remains a key battleground to contain, if not eliminate, the disease.

Many in the international public health community remain optimistic that through perseverance, diplomacy, education, and other means it is still possible to eradicate polio. For them, to quit now, after all these years of effort and all the money spent, when it is down to a fraction of 1% of the world population that needs to be vaccinated in order to rid humankind of a terrible scourge forever, is unthinkable. Their optimism, however, is offset by a number of voices saying the world is losing ground in the fight against polio, especially in the Horn of Africa; that some areas are just too dangerous or too rabidly anti-vaccination for an eradication campaign to succeed.

There is an additional variable to factor in regarding the staying power of the polio campaign: money. Many countries, including the United States, are struggling with deficits. Though in the long run total eradication of polio would reap enormous cost savings, setbacks such as the ones occurring in Africa make donors doubtful that the goal of a polio-free world is attainable. Indeed, the campaign has already experienced funding shortages.¹⁴ Thus, without some success stories from Nigeria and Somalia, donations could dry up even further. Moreover, additional fallout may occur with attempts to eradicate other diseases being eliminated, as they might be considered unlikely to succeed based on the problems with the polio campaign.

Because a large part of the problem with the vaccination campaign in Africa is the inability of healthcare workers to reach conflict-ridden areas, military interventions can make a difference. This is already happening in Somalia. As an example, last year Kenyan forces were able to wrest control of the coastal city Kisumu from al-Shabaab, allowing health officials to vaccinate 13,000 children.¹⁵ On the outskirts of the city, considered to still be quite dangerous, children went unvaccinated.

It thus appears that it might not take just an army of healthcare workers to eradicate polio from areas such as Somalia and Nigeria, but an actual army. Well armed and entrenched extremists are obstructing this effort. In turn, as seen by the Kenyan example in Kisumu, it may take a well armed military to re-establish the vaccination initiative. Time, though, is working against the polio eradication campaign. The longer al-Shabaab controls areas of Somalia or Boko Haram areas of Nigeria, the more likely polio will spread to even more countries that are now polio free, making eradication that much harder. Though it is rarely stated as a means for justifying foreign intervention in Somalia, polio containment, if not eradication, could serve as a particularly strong one.

Thus, based on the situation on the ground, it appears reasonable to expect African militaries have a major role to play in eradicating polio by defeating extremists and eliminating conflict-ridden areas. That foreign assistance to these African forces, either direct or indirect, has a role, and perhaps even needs to have a role, also appears reasonable. Perhaps the best way to summarize the situation is to paraphrase Liban Nur, the traditional elder mentioned earlier, who lives in the Somali town of Bulo Burde: "to eradicate polio you first have to eradicate al-Shabaab."



When extremism and conflict impede polio vaccination campaigns, the result is often paralyzed children. Source: <http://kickpoliooutofafrica.wordpress.com/>

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