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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Operational Environment Watch provides translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.

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ON THE COVER:

Chinese Peacekeeping Battalion in South Sudan being awarded UN Medal for Service.

Source: UNMISS/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unmissmultimedia/36743053214/in/album-72157687458137433/> Attribution: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

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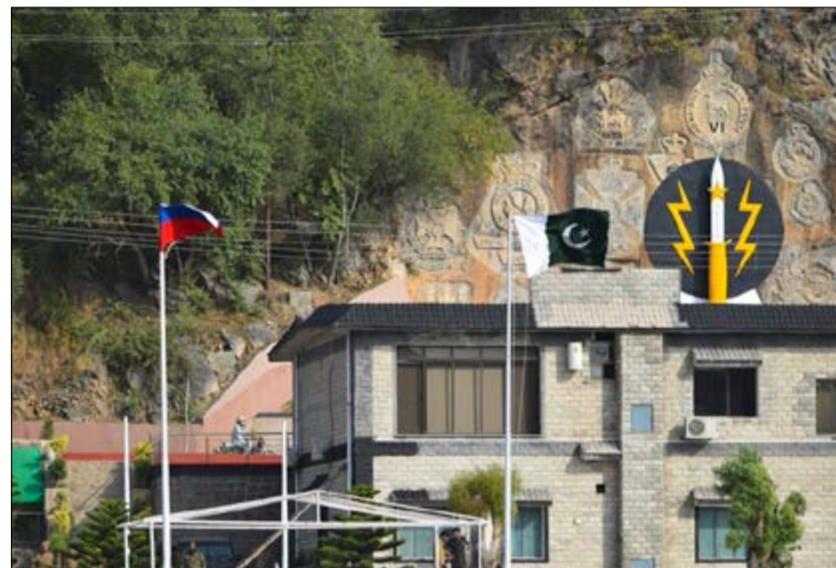
Thomas Tolare



Russia-Pakistan Security Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: After the governments of Pakistan and Russia established a security cooperation partnership several years ago, there were questions about what it would include, particularly since the Russian government could damage its relations with India depending on the level of cooperation with Pakistan. The accompanying excerpted article reports on a recent joint military exercise of Russian and Pakistani forces and it provides a look at how this security cooperation partnership continues to take shape.

The article comes from *The Frontier Post*, an independent English-language newspaper in Pakistan, and it reports how Russian “personnel of the Southern Military District arrived in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan aboard an Il-76 military transport plane to participate in the Friendship 2020 joint Russian-Pakistani drills” and that the Russian contingent included “over 70 servicemen of the special operations company of the Southern Military District’s 49th combined arms army.” The article also mentions how the exercise (also known as Druzhba-2020) will take place “at the Pakistani Army’s Tarbela special operations training ground and on the territory of the National Counterterrorism Center in Pabbi” and that the “Russian-Pakistani military drills have been held annually since 2016 alternately in each of the countries.”



Jump Training from helicopters of the service members of Russia and Pakistan at the exercise “Friendship-2016”.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Тренировка_по_десантированию_из_вертолетов_военнослужащих_России_и_Пакистана_на_учении_«Дружба-2016»_\(4\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Тренировка_по_десантированию_из_вертолетов_военнослужащих_России_и_Пакистана_на_учении_«Дружба-2016»_(4).jpg), CC BY 4.0

In July 2019, the Russian government notably declined a deal from Pakistan for the purchase of a large order of a new Kalashnikov variant. There were reports that the deal did not go through because of pressure from the Indian government; however, Pakistan did acquire several Mi-35 attack helicopters from Russia in 2017. According to the article, “in September, a contingent of the Pakistani armed forces participated in the opening ceremony of the multinational military exercise titled ‘Kavkaz-2020’ in Astrakhan, Russia.” The Indian government declined to participate in Kavkaz-2020, supposedly because of Pakistan’s involvement. Outside of the lone acquisition of helicopters in 2017, the latest exercise shows how far Russia-Pakistan security cooperation partnership extends. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Previously in September, a contingent of the Pakistani armed forces participated in the opening ceremony of the multinational military exercise titled “Kavkaz-2020” in Astrakhan, Russia”

Source: Bilal Afridi, “Russian commandos arrive in Pakistan for joint drills,” *The Frontier Post*, 5 November 2020.

<https://thefrontierpost.com/ispr-russian-forces-arrive-in-pakistan-for-fifth-joint-military-drill/>

...The official press statement remarked that, “The personnel of the Southern Military District arrived in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan aboard an Il-76 military transport plane for participating in the Friendship 2020 joint Russian-Pakistani drills. The international drills involve over 70 servicemen of the special operations company of the Southern Military District’s 49th combined arms army, and also officers of the command headquarters.”

...the drills will run at the Pakistani Army’s Tarbela special operations training ground and on the territory of the National Counterterrorism Center in Pabbi. In addition to this, the personnel from both countries will exchange experience and practice inter-operability in accomplishing a broad range of missions, in particular, eliminating illegal armed formations and conducting reconnaissance and search measures employing aircraft and technical reconnaissance capabilities...

The exercise was aimed at sharing both armies experiences in counter terrorism domain, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release... Friendship joint Russian-Pakistani military drills have been held annually since 2016 alternately in each of the countries, the Russian press office underscored. Previously in September, a contingent of the Pakistani armed forces participated in the opening ceremony of the multinational military exercise titled “Kavkaz-2020” in Astrakhan, Russia.



Russian Military Presence in Armenia and the Region

OE Watch Commentary: Even before the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed the ceasefire agreement on 9 November that included the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to Nagorno Karabakh, Russian forces were already deployed in Armenia in a couple of capacities. The accompanying excerpted articles report on Russian border guards in Armenia and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers to the region and provide a look at what the overall Russian presence in Armenia and the Caucasus will look like going forward.

The article from *News.am*, a news website based in Armenia, reports on how in late October “Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan confirmed that Russian border guards were situated on the border of Armenia with the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic” and that the prime minister stated “that there was nothing unusual about it.” The most notable Russian deployment of forces in Armenia has been the 102nd Military Base in Gyumri with a strength of around 3,000 personnel, including a rifle brigade, a squadron of MiG-29s and various air defense units. Prime Minister Pashinyan also notes in the article that “Russian border guards are on Armenia’s border with Turkey and Iran” and that they have been there for some time. As the article points out, his comments are in response to an article from a Spanish news outlet. That media source made it appear as though the Russian presence in Armenia was in response to the clashes with Azerbaijan on 27 September. Pashinyan did mention that “as a result of the recent events, Russian border guards are also on the southeastern and southwestern borders of Armenia.”

The article from *Novaya Gazeta*, an independent Russian newspaper, reports on some of the fallout from the ceasefire agreement, particularly that Armenian forces will withdraw from Nagorno Karabakh. It also states that in December, Armenian forces “will leave the Lachin region, but the city of Lachin itself and the highway running through it from Karabakh to Armenia (the “Lachin corridor”) will remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“Russian border guards are on Armenia’s border with Turkey and Iran. That is how it has always been”

Source: “Пашинян подтвердил, что на границе Армении с Арцахом размещены российские пограничники (Pashinyan confirmed that Russian border guards are situated on the border of Armenia with Artsakh),” *News.am*, 28 October 2020. <https://news.am/rus/news/610343.html>

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan confirmed that Russian border guards were situated on the border of Armenia with the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, but explained that there was nothing unusual about it...

...a journalist from the Spanish agency EFE asked the Armenian prime minister to comment on photos that appeared on social media of Russian forces on the Armenian border with the Karabakh region...“Russian border guards are on Armenia’s border with Turkey and Iran. That is how it has always been. And now, as a result of the recent events, Russian border guards are also on the southeastern and southwestern borders of Armenia...,” replied Pashinyan...

Source: Pavel Felgenhauer, “Армения проиграла? Как разделят Карабах? Зачем там наши миротворцы? Почему простили сбитый вертолет? (Did Armenia lost? How will Karabakh be divided? What are our peacekeepers there for? Why was the downed helicopter forgiven?),” *Novaya Gazeta*, 10 November 2020. <https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2020/11/10/87900-artsahskaya-mitrovitsa-v-stepanakerte>

...The Armenian armed forces will soon withdraw, with its weapons and banners, from the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and from the so-called security belt around NKR...By November 15, they will leave Kelbajar, by November 20 from Aghdam and part of the Gazakh region in the central sector of the front...On December 1, the Armenians will leave the Lachin region, but the city of Lachin itself and the highway running through it from Karabakh to Armenia (the “Lachin corridor”) will remain under the control of Russian peacekeepers.

According to (President of Azerbaijan) Aliyev, within three years a new highway will be built to bypass Lachin “for a connection between Stepanakert and Armenia” and this new road will be controlled by peacekeepers...

Immediately after the agreement was signed, around 2000 Russian peacekeepers from the 15th Separate Motorized Rifle (peacekeeping) Brigade started airlifting from Ulyanovsk. The peacekeepers will deploy to Karabakh without heavily armored vehicles, artillery or multiple rocket launchers...The Russian peacekeepers will be not in mountainous Shusha. The headquarters will be in Stepanakert...

The Russian peacekeepers will be in Karabakh for five years, with an extension for another five, if there is no objection...



Continued: Russian Military Presence in Armenia and the Region



A map of the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh ceasefire agreement.
 Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2020_Artsakh_ceasefire_map.svg, CC BY YA 4.0

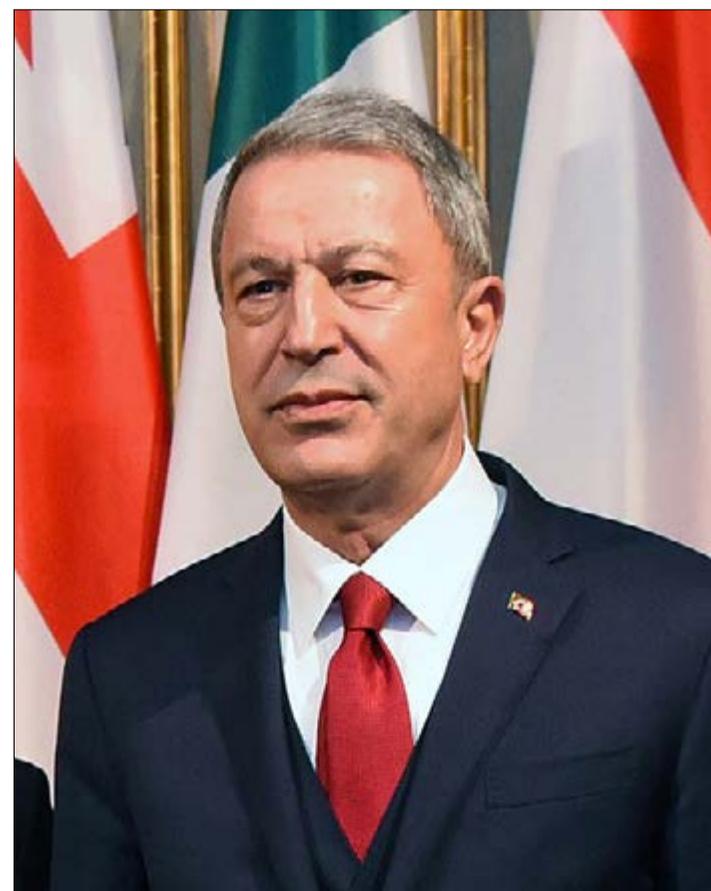


Turkey's Security Cooperation in Central Asia

OE Watch Commentary: The governments of Central Asia still consider Russia to be an important security cooperation partner even as China has increased its security cooperation with the region in recent years. While other security cooperation partnerships in the region do not receive as much attention, the accompanying excerpted articles report on a few of Turkey's recent efforts in the region and there are a couple of things worth noting.

The article from *Kloop*, a Russian-language independent news website in Kyrgyzstan, reports that in early November "Kyrgyzstan received military vehicles, medical equipment and mountain gear" from Turkey. Kyrgyzstan's General Staff mentioned in the article how "the first batch of military-technical equipment was delivered from Turkey to Kyrgyzstan in September of this year under an agreement on military-financial cooperation between the two governments." The Kyrgyz General Staff posted on social media that the equipment included a couple of fuel tankers and various field gear.

The article from *Eurasia Daily*, a Russian-language website based in Russia covering news on the region, reports on how the "Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited Tashkent and Nur-Sultan" and talked with the two governments about "prospects for military and military-technical cooperation." The article notes how the Turkish defense minister "met with the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev" and "his Kazakh counterpart Nurlan Yermekbayev." While Turkey's meeting with Uzbekistan included the "status and prospects of military and military-technical cooperation," the meeting with the Kazakh defense minister noted that cooperation would involve "training and military education, combat training and participating in exercises." This appears to be similar to past security cooperation between Kazakhstan and Turkey, but cooperation with Uzbekistan could pave new ground. Overall, Turkey's security cooperation offers the governments in the region an alternative partner, including another source of some equipment, but it remains to be seen how far Central Asian states will take it. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hulusi_Akar_\(cropped,_2019\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hulusi_Akar_(cropped,_2019).jpg), Public domain

“Against the background of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited Tashkent and Nur-Sultan and discussed the “prospects for military and military-technical cooperation.”

Source: “Кыргызстан получил от Турции военную технику и снаряжение (Kyrgyzstan received military equipment and gear from Turkey),” *Kloop*, 4 November 2020. <https://kloop.kg/blog/2020/11/04/kyrgyzstan-poluchil-ot-turtsii-voennuyu-tehniku-i-snaryazhenie/>

...Kyrgyzstan received military vehicles, medical equipment and mountain gear. The Turkish Ambassador Cengiz Kamil Firat and the Head of the General Staff Taalaibek Omuraliev participated in the ceremony...

The General Staff added that the first batch of military-technical equipment was delivered from Turkey to Kyrgyzstan in September of this year under an agreement on military-financial cooperation between the two governments.

Source: “Министр обороны Турции обсудил сотрудничество с Узбекистаном и Казахстаном (The defense minister of Turkey discussed cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan),” *Eurasia Daily*, 28 October 2020. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2020/10/28/ministr-oborony-turcii-obsudil-sotrudnichestvo-s-uzbekistanom-i-kazahstanom>

Against the background of the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited Tashkent and Nur-Sultan and discussed the “prospects for military and military-technical cooperation.”

...on 27 October, Akar met with the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent... According to the press service of the President of Uzbekistan, the two sides looked at the “status and prospects of military and military-technical cooperation” and also discussed “joint actions against modern challenges and threats to security in the region.”

The day prior, the head of the Turkish defense ministry visited Nur-Sultan, where he met his Kazakh counterpart Nurlan Yermekbayev. They also talked about “regional security, military and military-technical cooperation, including training and military education, combat training and participating in exercises.”



Dodging the Draft

OE Watch Commentary: Despite the Kremlin’s massive propaganda surrounding the honor and merit of military service, a significant portion of young Russian men still look for ways to avoid their one-year term of mandatory conscript duty. The first accompanying excerpt from the centrist *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye* describes some of the challenges facing “military commissariats and local executive authorities” who are responsible for conscripting unwilling young Russians.

The author, who “dealt...with conscription issues in one of the districts of Moscow,” asserts that “the massive desire of young people to avoid conscription shocked me.” He goes on to complain that “the law on military service has no real enforcement mechanism” since to impose the fine, “first, the violator must be found.” Local authorities remain responsible for delivering the draft summons to the potential conscript, which the author refers to as a “thankless job,” since some young men “are not eager to receive a summons and do not open doors,” while others “rent an apartment in another area.”

The author then describes how “draft evasion has become a special kind of business,” where a simple search of the Internet will show young Russians that “it is quite legal to dodge the army.” He asserts that such businesses are “aimed at undermining the country’s defense capability.” After listing other problems with the current conscript system, the author concludes by claiming that the “main problem is the absence of state ideology, the absence of patriotic education,” which has “allowed our enemies to raise from our children a generation of rootless cosmopolitans who do not know the history of the country, who do not have spiritual values and ideals for which they could sacrifice their lives.”

The second excerpt from the popular daily, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* describes how the local draft commission in Kursk came up with a novel way to help deliver the draft summons. Instead of a uniformed official knocking on doors of prospective conscripts, they enlisted the help of “a 17-year-old woman,” who “goes from door to door and hands the summons to the guys.” According to the headline, she has helped to bring “30 conscripts to the military registration and enlistment office.” Explaining her motive, the young woman remarked, “I respect the young men who serve in the army. I believe that this is an honorable duty, therefore I decided to help during the autumn conscription.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“... The massive desire of young people to avoid conscription shocked me....”



Army conscription commission during the COVID-19 pandemic in Russia, Samara region, May 2020.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7FZudc0AVA>, CCA 3.0 Unported



Continued: Dodging the Draft

Source: “Как вразумить уклониста (How to dissuade the draft dodger),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 29 October 2020. https://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2020-10-29/3_1115_army.html

On October 1, the autumn conscription of young people aged 18 to 27 began in the country's Armed Forces. In military commissariats and local executive authorities, a hot time has come. They are entrusted with the task of finding and informing conscripts about the need to visit the military registration and enlistment office of their area to undergo a medical commission.

Many young people are reluctant to do this.... At the end of September, the capital's councils received a plan to search for those unwilling to serve. How this happens, I know firsthand, since from 2010 to 2013 I myself was in the civil service in the Moscow government and dealt, in particular, with conscription issues in one of the districts of Moscow. The massive desire of young people to avoid conscription shocked me....

...Unfortunately, the law on military service has no real enforcement mechanism. After all, fines must be collected from someone and, first, the violator must be found... This is a thankless job. Residents are not eager to receive a summons and do not open doors. Some of the conscripts leave for the time of the call to relatives or rent an apartment in another area....

...Assisting draft evasion has become a special kind of business. Go to the network and type: “Draft evasion”, and you will get a lot of proposals “it is quite legal to dodge the army.” These assistants seek out conscripts for diseases that exclude conscription, according to the approved registry of diseases...

...Indeed, in fact, this business is aimed at undermining the country's defense capability....

...Our main problem is the absence of state ideology, the absence of patriotic education. Having eliminated the subject “Basic military training” in secondary school, our schools stopped training recruits ready to defend the Fatherland. By abolishing ideology, we allowed our enemies to raise from our children a generation of rootless cosmopolitans who do not know the history of the country, who do not have spiritual values and ideals for which they could sacrifice their lives.

Source: “Курская школьница привела в военкомат 30 призывников (Kursk schoolgirl brought 30 conscripts to the military registration and enlistment office),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda (Kursk)*, 20 October 2020. <https://www.kursk.kp.ru/daily/217193/4307361/>

...An original way of presenting summons to recruits to the military registration and enlistment office was invented in the Kursk region. If a nice girl rings a bell at the guy's door, then, most likely, he will be glad to see her and will open the door. And here - a summons from the military registration and enlistment office.

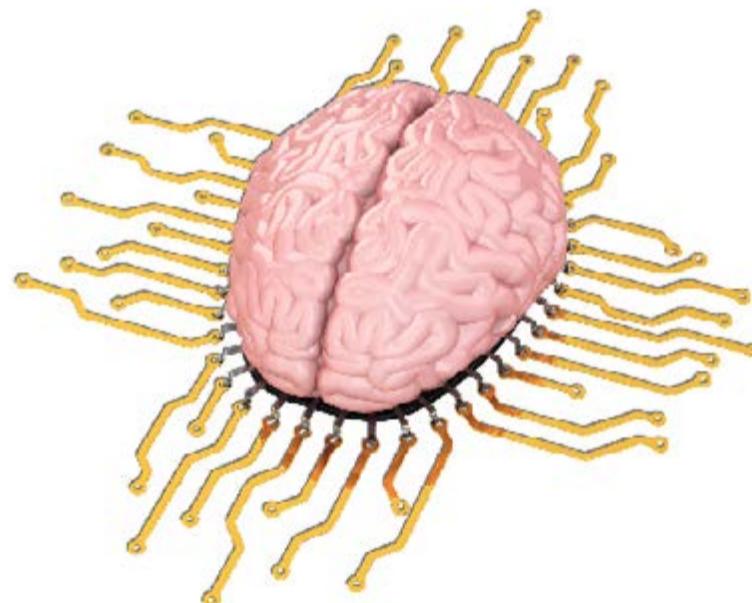
Anna Tselikova, a 17-year-old woman from Kursk, has successfully handed over several dozen summons to the conscripts of the “city of atomic workers” of Kurchatov, Kursk region. Anna in this autumn call, which started on October 1 in the country, decided to work as a “volunteer” in the military registration and enlistment office. The girl goes from door to door and hands the summons to the guys....

“I respect the young men who serve in the army. I believe that this is an honorable duty, therefore I decided to help during the autumn conscription,” said Anna when she was invited to the military registration and enlistment office to present her with a certificate for her excellent work....

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

<https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil/>

Mad Scientist Laboratory engages global innovators to report on the Operational Environment (OE), emergent disruptive technologies and their convergent impacts, and the changing character of warfare.





Improving the Officer Promotion System

OE Watch Commentary: Despite significant advances with incorporating digital technologies into the Russian military's command and control (C2), many aspects of the officer personnel system still rely upon traditional processes. As the accompanying excerpt from the Ministry of Defense (MoD) journal, *Voennaya Mysl'* (*Military Thought*) suggests, these bureaucratic and outdated practices have had a deleterious effect upon the officer promotion system. In this article, the author describes some of the drawbacks of the current promotion model and offers proposals to update the system to ensure that the “the most honest, strong-willed and talented officers [get] to the top of the military hierarchy.”

The author begins by reviewing some of the weaknesses of the current system, arguing that “it is impossible to fill the hierarchy of the Armed Forces by promoting officers only within the units where they serve,” pointing out that “the closed nature of information about vacancies in units reduces the number of potential candidates.” Today, the burden rests upon the aspiring officer to find a vacancy into which he might gain promotion. Moreover, as the author points out, for the junior officer to even be considered for promotion, he/she “is sometimes limited by the selfish motivation of the command of the military unit—the better the officer fulfills his duties, the less interest in his promotion.” Furthermore, since the status of the military has improved over the past decade, the author asserts that the promotion problem has become exacerbated by a reluctance “at the top level of the military hierarchy (lieutenant colonel - colonel)” to retire, thus not allowing junior officers the opportunity to advance. To rectify this problem, the author advocates the “establishment of deadlines for holding positions and the transfer of unpromising officers to the reserve.”

To both streamline and make the current officer promotion system more impartial, the author also proposes harnessing “the use of modern information technologies” to create a centralized system of promotion whereby every eligible officer will be competing for all vacant billets. These proposals have already gained some traction, since the author points out that the MoD is currently using the new National Center for Defense Management of the Russian Federation to test “an automated system for personnel selection of officers,” which has been dubbed “Centurion.” Though it is too early to draw any conclusion, it appears that the MoD is working to improve the overall quality of its officer corps by introducing greater competition into the promotion process. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



President Putin at officer promotion ceremony, 2018.

Source: www.kremlin.ru. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_with_military_people_\(2018-05-31\)_02.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_with_military_people_(2018-05-31)_02.jpg), CCA 4.0 Intl

“The effectiveness of its work is determined by the ‘system’ of numerous rules and procedures for personnel selection of officers, its ability to let the most honest, strong-willed and talented officers to the top of the military hierarchy...”

Source: “Кадровый отбор офицерского состава российской армии: содержание и перспективы (Personnel selection of officers within the Russian army: content and perspectives),” *Voennaya Mysl'*, October 2020. <http://vm.ric.mil.ru/upload/site178/iYRh6L46C2.pdf> (pp. 124-32)

...A high level of professionalism, competence and moral and volitional qualities of officers is increasingly becoming its goal from the means of military service.... The effectiveness of its work is determined by the “system” of numerous rules and procedures for personnel selection of officers, its ability to let the most honest, strong-willed and talented officers to the top of the military hierarchy....

...The functioning of the officer corps is based on a systemic contradiction caused by a sharp reduction in the number of posts at each level.... The promotion of officers in the service is the main incentive underlying the entire officer service....

...History shows that the effectiveness, fairness and transparency of promotion increases the moral and psychological climate of the officer corps, contributes to the improvement of the quality level of officers. The closed nature, unfairness of the advancement of officers leads to negative processes - the Armed Forces lose competition in the labor market, the ‘turnover’ of personnel and a decrease in the general level of the officer corps.

...Long years of low social status of servicemen have led to a certain deformation of personnel policy. At present, this policy is aimed, in particular, at motivating the retention of officers in military service. What happened in the last decade, the increase in the social status of servicemen has led to the fact that the outflow of officers at the top level of the military hierarchy (lieutenant colonel - colonel) has slowed down.... The solution to this problem is the establishment of deadlines for holding positions and the transfer of unpromising officers to the reserve....

...It is impossible to fill the hierarchy of the Armed Forces by promoting officers only within the units where they serve, therefore, starting from the senior level officers, most promotions are associated with transfer to another unit.... The current system for the promotion of officers has certain drawbacks at all stages of decision-making. First of all, the closed nature of information about vacancies in units reduces the number of potential candidates.... Further, in the military unit where the officer is serving, the effectiveness of decision-making is sometimes limited by the selfish motivation of the command of the military unit - the better the officer fulfills his duties, the less interest in his promotion...

...To increase the efficiency of the system for the promotion of officers, it is necessary to select simultaneously from many candidates (ideally from all possible candidates). The use of modern information technologies opens up the possibility of implementing this approach...

...The listed disadvantages can be eliminated by the implementation of certification of officers on the basis of modern information technologies. To this end, the National Center for Defense Management of the Russian Federation has developed and is testing an automated system for personnel selection of officers, ‘Centurion.’



Russian Media: Ukraine Considering Legislation Enabling Forced Relocation of Russians

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article from the Russian centrist source, *Gazeta.ru*, the government of Ukraine has submitted a bill to their parliament which would allow for the forcible resettlement of Russian people living in Ukraine during the current period of hostilities. If passed, this would make it the duty of the Armed Forces of Ukraine to ensure “the protection, collection, escort, and maintenance of prisoners of war and internees,” the latter of which, for the purposes of this law, are defined as “those who were forcibly resettled to places designated by the state.” Such foreign or stateless persons, if ordered to resettle, would not be allowed to leave the country until their internment is ended.

This proposed law comes at a time of increased tensions and hostilities between Ukraine and Russia. The article notes that Serhiy Krivonos, Deputy Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, predicted that an armed conflict with Russia would result in huge losses for Moscow, and the parliament has also recently registered another proposed bill prohibiting the denial of “the fact of Russia’s military aggression toward Ukraine.” Against Russian objections, the Ukrainian government maintains that Russia is an aggressor because of its involvement in the conflict in the Donbass and the seizure of the Crimean Peninsula.

For its part, Russia has returned the aggressive rhetoric. The article points out that Andrey Krasnov, First Deputy Head of the State Duma Defense Committee, has said that Ukraine’s military is not ready for hostilities with Russia. If Ukraine attempts to provoke hostilities, he said, “everything could end very badly for Ukraine.” In the midst of this rhetoric, this bill being proposed to the Ukrainian parliament could give the national government permission to gather up ethnic Russians and forcibly relocate them to state-designated locations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rodger)**



Verkhonva Rada (Ukrainian Parliament).

Source: Vadim Chuprina. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3_PARLIAMENT_OF_UKRAINE_2017_Vadim_Chuprina.jpg, CCA 4.0 Intl

“We are talking about persons who threaten to attack or carry out aggression against Ukraine, and Kiev considers Russia to be the aggressor country. Such persons, as the document suggests, will be evicted if the need arises to ensure national security.”

Source: “Отселение на время войны: в Киеве создали законопроект о россиянах (Resettlement During the War: In Kiev a Bill on Russians was Created),” *Gazeta.ru*, 11 October 2020. <https://www.gazeta.ru/army/2020/11/10/13354771.shtml>

The Ukrainian government has submitted a bill to the Verkhovna Rada, which allows, for the period of hostilities, to forcibly resettle Russian citizens to certain places. The text of the document was posted on the website of the country’s parliament.

The draft law “On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Streamlining of Issues Related to Prisoners of War and Internees in a Special Period,” sets for the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AF), law enforcement agencies, and local authorities the task of ensuring the protection, collection, escort, and maintenance of prisoners of war and internees.

The latter, as emphasized in the draft law, are those who were forcibly resettled to places designated by the state.

This refers to persons who threaten to attack or carry out aggression against Ukraine, and Kiev considers Russia to be the aggressor country. Such persons, as the document suggests, will be relocated if the need arises to ensure national security.



“Red Berets” University Chosen to Train Russian Military Police



Moscow Higher Military Command School on Red Square, 2015.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MVVKU_04.jpg, CCA 4.0 Intl

there was no specialized military police training; the recruits were taken from all corners of the military and all specializations. Only the military police have access to MosVOKU as their specific training school and the new specialized training. As the excerpt points out, this new training is a part of “a major reform of the structures for maintaining discipline and law and order in the troops.” Military police have had a high-profile role in Syria where they had functional and symbolic duties in contemporary development of Russian peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in operational art. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rodger)**

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying excerpt from the pro-Kremlin site, *Izvestiia*, “over the past few years, the Ministry of Defense has been undertaking a major reform of the structures for maintaining discipline and law and order in the troops.” As a part of this undertaking, the article reports that the Moscow Higher Combined Arms Command School (MosVOKU) will be the exclusive training site of Russian military police. This change was only recently finalized but had been in development since 2017.

MosVOKU has a history of prestige in Russia, and a tradition of being closely tied to the country’s leadership. It was founded in December 1917, roughly a month after the Bolshevik Revolution began. The article notes that graduates from the school were called “Kremlin Cadets” because they were often assigned to service in the Kremlin protecting Soviet state officials. Because of this, and their critical role in the defense of Moscow in World War II, cadets of MosVOKU are the only such cadets who are allowed to graduate on Red Square.

The military police, as a separate branch, is a fairly recent addition to the Russian Armed Forces. It was formed in 2011, and its shape and powers have developed over time. Initially,

“Starting next year, officers of the VP will begin to graduate from the Moscow Higher Combined Arms Command School (MosVOKU)... Graduates of the school disperse to military units throughout the country, but they are always proud that they received lieutenant shoulder straps at the walls of the Kremlin.”

Source: “«Кремлевские береты»: выбран вуз для подготовки военных полицейских (“Kremlin Berets”: Chosen University to Train Military Police),” *Izvestiia*, 26 October 2020. <https://iz.ru/1078381/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/kremlevskie-berety-vybran-vuz-dlia-podgotovki-voennykh-politceiskikh>

The Ministry of Defense has identified a training location for the military police. Starting next year, officers of the VP will begin to graduate from the Moscow Higher Combined Arms Command School (MosVOKU). Previously, lieutenants for this structure were trained in various educational institutions and even at the Military Institute of Physical Culture and Sports in St. Petersburg. MosVOKU is the most famous military school in Russia, which has the privilege of graduating right on Red Square, which is why its students are called “Kremlin cadets”. According to experts, such a choice will have a positive impact on the quality of the work of military police.

*The first recruitment of cadets for the specialty “Use of military police units” was held in MosVOKU in 2017 as an experiment. And although the release of these “red berets” will take place only next year, the experiment has already been recognized as a success. The past years have shown that the educational institution was chosen successfully, the sources of *Izvestia* in the military department told. And from next year the training of military police officers in MosVOKU will become permanent.*

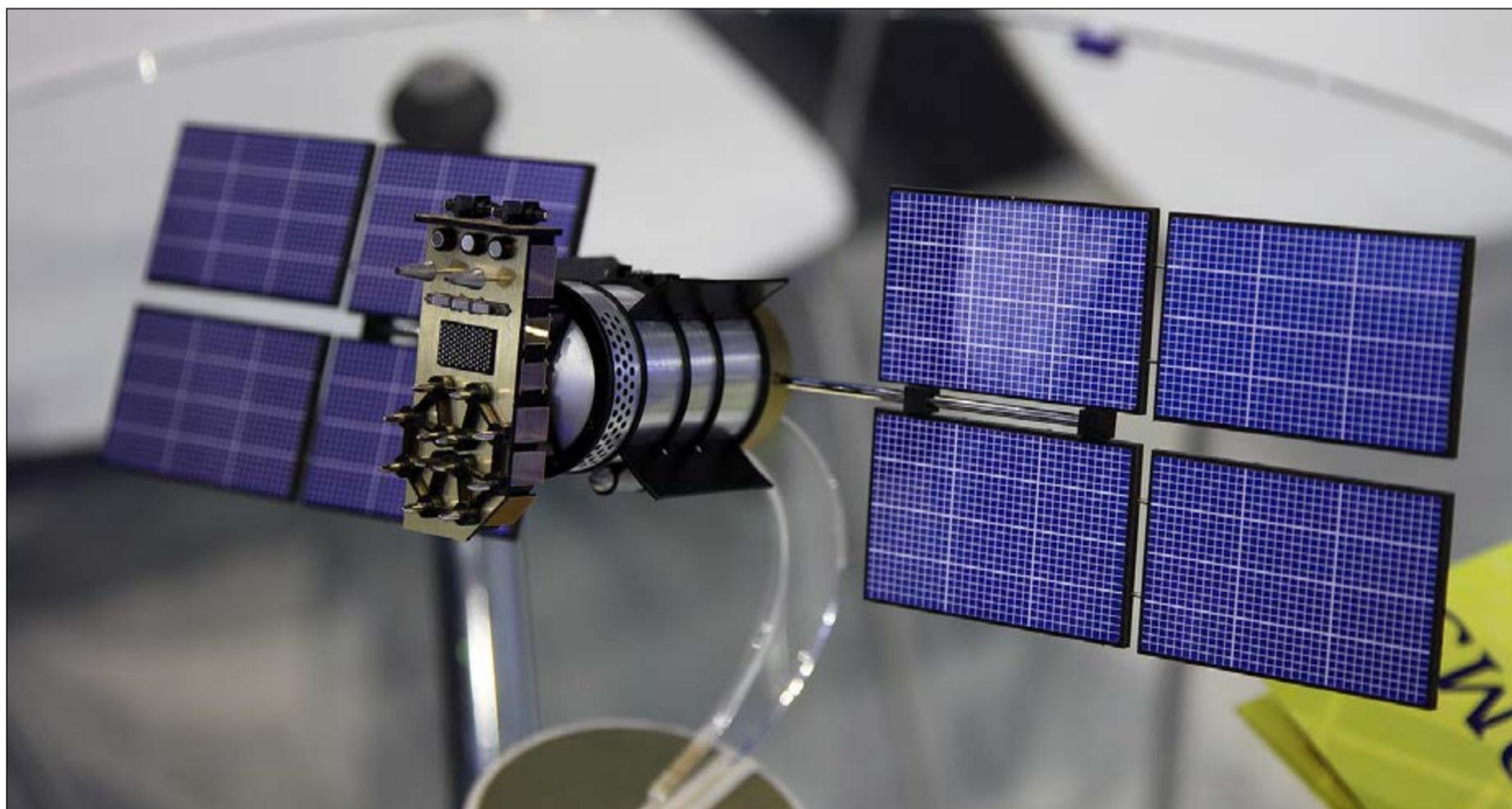


Russia Launches New GLONASS-K Satellite

OE Watch Commentary: According to multiple Russian and non-Russian open sources, Russia's GLONASS Global Navigation Satellite System employed its first satellites in 1982. Currently, the GLONASS constellation consists of 28 satellites, 24 of which are in service, with the other four as on-orbit spares, or are in servicing or testing. The 24 in-service satellites are situated in circular orbits at an altitude of 19,100 kilometers in three orbital planes of 8 satellites each. Of these 24 satellites, 23 are GLONASS-M variant (7-year service life), and only one is a newer-generation GLONASS-K (10-year service life). Although Russia still has older GLONASS-M satellites in ground storage, Russia plans to completely transition to the constellation GLONASS-K and GLONASS-K2 series satellites by 2025. Aside from a longer life span, the GLONASS-K reportedly has more power than the previous generation (1600 watts vs 1400 watts), and is unpressurized, thereby significantly reducing launch weight (1420 kg vs 990 kg) and therefore launch costs.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses the 25 October 2020 launch of a Soyuz-2, which put a third GLONASS-K satellite, Kosmos-2547, into orbit. Reportedly, Kosmos-2547 was launched into the second orbital plane, and will be placed between the constellation's 10th and 11th orbital positions. After 10-12 months of on-orbit testing, Kosmos-2547 is intended to replace the GLONASS-M satellite in the 10th position. According to the accompanying excerpted article from the *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, the first GLONASS-K prototype (Kosmos-2471) launched in 2011 and has only recently been "fully cleared for acceptance," despite the fact that the satellite is near the end of its service life. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Today the main orbital grouping of our satellite navigational system consists of the “Glonass-M” satellites, which are demonstrating high reliability. The replacement of the orbital grouping with “Glonass-K” satellites, which were created for unpressurized operations and which have a guaranteed life-cycle that has been increased to 10 years.”



Model of a GLONASS-K, Vitaly Kuzmin.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2015/i-tw4JprP/0/bdcc300d/X3/MAKS2015part8-13-X3.jpg> CC BY 4.0



Continued: Russia Launches New GLONASS-K Satellite

Source: “Программа летных испытаний КА «Глонасс-К» выполнена в полном объеме (Flight Test Program for ‘GLONASS-K’ Satellite Fully Completed),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation Online*, 10 October 2020. https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12318613@egNews

The GLONASS-K satellite, which was inserted into orbit on 26 February 2011 by a Soyuz-2 space launch vehicle from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome, has successfully undergone flight testing. The flight test program was fully completed. All noted discrepancies have been eliminated. Following a decision of the State Commission, the GLONASS-K satellite will be accepted for regular operations...

Command and control and the ensuring of uninterrupted functions of the GLONASS orbital grouping is accomplished by combat crews of the GLONASS System Command and Control Center of the Main Space Testing Center imeni G.S. Titov of the Space Troops of the Aerospace Forces.

Source: “ГЛОНАСС пополнил новый спутник (GLONASS Augmented with New Satellite),” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 28 October 2020. <http://redstar.ru/glonass-popolnil-novyj-sputnik/>

The launch of the space launch vehicle and the insertion of the satellite into the calculated orbit occurred normally. As early as within two minutes tracking of the “Soyuz-2” space launch vehicle was assumed by assets of the ground automated command and control complex of the Main Space Test Center imeni German Titov.

At the calculated time the “Glonass-K” satellite was inserted into the targeted orbit by the “Fregat” booster unit and control was accepted by ground assets of the Space Troops of the Aerospace Forces. Reliable telemetry communications were established and supported with the satellite. The on-board systems of the “Glonass-K” satellite are functioning normally.

The insertion of the satellite into orbit has augmented the orbital grouping of the GLONASS Global Navigation Satellite System. At the present time our orbital grouping numbers 28 satellites. Of these 24 are being used as designated, one is in orbital reserve, and one is undergoing flight testing. One more satellite is being temporarily withdrawn for technical servicing. And the newly launched “Glonass-K” is at the stage of being introduced into the system.

Today the main orbital grouping of our satellite navigational system consists of the “Glonass-M” satellites, which are demonstrating high reliability. The replacement of the orbital grouping with “Glonass-K” satellites, which were created for unpressurized operations and which have a guaranteed life-cycle that has been increased to 10 years of active existence in orbit with decreased energy requirements and significantly reduced weight, will ensure the stable operation of the GLONASS system and increase the accuracy of navigational positioning to tens of centimeters.

In contrast to its predecessors, the “Glonass-K” satellites will support two types of navigational signals, Frequency Division Multiple Access (FDMA) and Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA). Besides their main functions, they will forward information of the KOSPAS-SARSAT system providing international search and rescue services for those in distress.

Fangs of the Lone Wolf

Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars
1994-2009

Dodge Billingsley
with Lester Grau

Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195587/download>



GLONASS Ground Crew Operations

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted interview in the military-themed Russian periodical *Armeyskiy Standart* (Army Standard), of Lieutenant Colonel Rustam Yakhin, chief of the satellite testing and control section, discusses GLONASS ground crew operations. The GLONASS constellation is controlled by Space Troops of the Aerospace Forces (VKS) assigned to the Titov 153rd Main Space Test Center in the GLONASS command center. According to LTC Yakhin, his personnel conduct command-and-control sessions on GLONASS satellites when the satellites are within line-of-site of ground control stations. After the satellites' ephemeris (position) data are analyzed, the ground control crew executes commands to adjust the satellites' positions or conduct maintenance, if needed. The article indicates these command-and-control sessions are only conducted from ground control stations on Russian territory. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Our mission is to manage the GLONASS orbital group and its operation, and to maintain it in serviceable condition. That’s what we’re responsible for. So our specialists are on duty round the clock. Each satellite is under total control in every aspect. Our teams monitor the condition of the satellites and their onboard systems.”



11F654M Glonass-M spacecraft.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-tcvKps5/0/X3/i-tcvKps5-X3.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Continued: GLONASS Ground Crew Operations

Source: “Сердце ГЛОНАСС (Heart of GLONASS),” *Armeyskiy Standart Online*, 19 October 2020. <https://armystandard.ru/news/t/20201016108-7m6YN.html>

...One could say that the GLONASS control center in Krasnoznamensk is the heart of the system, and its brain. From here, Space Troops teams maintain round-the-clock and uninterrupted control of the entire orbital group of GLONASS satellites. *Armeyskiy Standart* was briefed on the status and future prospects of Russia's orbital group of navigation satellites by Lieutenant Colonel Rustam Yakhin, chief of the satellite testing and control section.

What are the main duties of your specialists?

Our center is the heart of the system. Combat crews of the G.S. Titov 153rd Main Space Test Center serve at the GLONASS command center. They ensure round-the-clock and uninterrupted control of the entire GLONASS orbital group. This is to where all the information flows, from all the tracking stations situated across the entire Russian Federation. The information is analyzed here. Incidents are identified. All the necessary decisions are made. Alongside the Space Troops combat crews, also taking part in this process are representatives from industry -- teams of specialists from the satellite manufacturer.

They are fully trained, all are graduates, and at their disposal are volumes of documentation on how to operate and control the satellites. It's impossible to commit all the documentation to memory, of course, but you need to know where to look. If need be, we can deal with incidents promptly without the industry representatives. About two hours is enough time for us to bring a satellite online.

How do you learn that something is going wrong with a satellite?

A satellite enters our radio visibility zone with a signal that it's malfunctioning. We download the telemetric data to analyze the status of the equipment on board. The telemetrics are encrypted, and the equipment is classified. The data team analyzes the parameters of the satellite's onboard equipment. Specialists identify the malfunctions and then compile a series of commands to rectify the situation.

Are issues resolved quickly?

There have been cases when we have needed 20-30 minutes. It all depends on the nature of the problem and the location of the satellite. The main thing is that the satellite should be within the radio visibility zone of our systems on the ground. Our command and tracking stations are only located on Russian Federation territory and the radio visibility zone, when we can run command-and-control sessions, is limited in duration to when satellites are above the country. When they come within our visibility, we have to quickly solve the problem.

So, your specialists are responsible for ensuring that each GLONASS satellite is in the right place and transmitting the right signal?

Our mission is to manage the GLONASS orbital group and its operation, and to maintain it in serviceable condition. That's what we're responsible for. So our specialists are on duty round the clock. Each satellite is under total control in every aspect. Our teams monitor the condition of the satellites and their onboard systems. They track the satellites to see they're in the right places, so that there are no dynamic processes, and to see that they're emitting "healthy" navigation signals.

We know the coordinates of each satellite and if it begins to move out of place, that impacts the accuracy of navigational devices. If a satellite is 100 meters out of place in orbit, the margin of error when plotting a location can be more than 10 meters on Earth. So everything is tracked and computed according to the program, and anything that goes wrong is quickly addressed. The serviceability of the ground-based resources is also monitored. They're located across the entire Russian Federation, from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka and from Vorkuta to the North Caucasus. We have several data communication channels to them, including backup and space comms. Anything can happen: bad weather, earthquake, and so on. If a station in Kamchatka is unable to carry out a planned command-and-control session with a GLONASS satellite, there are others that can step in. Command-and-control sessions can be rescheduled, or a station in, say, Ussuriysk, Komsomol'sk-na-Amure, Yeniseysk, or Ulan-Ude can quickly take over the session for itself.

Are the alert duty shifts round the clock?

Alert duty shifts run from 1000 in the morning to 1000 in the morning the next day. Most of our specialists, 95 percent of them, are graduates of the Mozhayskiy Military Space Academy, which is where how to control satellites is taught.

Are there career progression opportunities for the officers?

I can tell you about myself as an example. I graduated from the Academy as a lieutenant in 2006. I served in Yeniseysk. I was posted to Krasnoznamensk in late 2009 as a senior lieutenant. In 2016 I was appointed section head. That is, in six years I progressed from test engineer and senior lieutenant to section head and lieutenant colonel. On the pay scale, that's equivalent to brigade commander. I have 43 subordinate officers. There are no NCOs or enlisted men.



GLONASS General Designer on Improving Navigational Precision

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted interview of the General Designer of GLONASS, Sergei Karutin, conducted by the TASS news service, mentions future improvements to the GLONASS to increase navigational precision. In addition to improved hardware and software, Karutin also mentions plans to deploy the GLONASS high-altitude orbital system (VKK). This system essentially consists of a few modified GLONASS-K (sometimes referred to as GLONASS-V) satellites placed in a highly elliptical modified orbit to increase regional navigation precision. When operational, the VKK will reportedly improve location accuracy in urban canyons and increase satellite redundancy in longitudes between 20° and 160° east, which covers most of Russia.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* discusses Russian plans to use “state-of-the-art mathematical and software methods of processing satellite signals” to achieve three centimeter accuracy with the current GLONASS constellation. Although the article is sparse on the details of how this is to be accomplished, the improved precision apparently involves using data from existing and future ground measurement stations. If possible, this development would be remarkable, as GLONASS’s current navigational precision averages 3-3.5 meters, and precision to this higher level was not envisioned until the fielding of a new ground control segment and a constellation filled with new GLONASS-K2 satellites. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“Research has shown a growing demand for navigation services in challenging conditions, when a spacecraft is visible at angles greater than 25 degrees above the horizon. To meet the customer needs for high-quality services using new code signals, we will begin to create the GLONASS high-altitude orbital system (VKK) in 2021. With the launch of the first satellite in 2025, and the full deployment of the constellation of six spacecraft in three planes by the end of 2027, navigation accuracy in the Eastern Hemisphere will be improved by 25%.”

-The general designer of GLONASS, Sergei Karutin



11F654M Glonass-M spacecraft.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/photos/i-ctNmWxr/0/X3/i-ctNmWxr-X3.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Continued: GLONASS General Designer on Improving Navigational Precision

Source: Интервью генконструктора ГЛОНАСС Сергея Карутина (An Interview with the General Designer of GLONASS, Sergei Karutin),” Roscosmos Online, 2 October 2020. <http://www.roscosmos.ru/29340/>

...The General Designer [генконструктор] of GLONASS, Sergei Karutin, spoke with TASS about the development of GLONASS, the work to improve the accuracy of navigation, and about new electronic components added to certain satellites.

What main functions are performed by GLONASS?

2020 marks yet another decade of development of GLONASS, the Russian Global Navigation Satellite System. The retrofitting of the system, which began in 2006, is bringing visible results. Today, our everyday life is difficult to imagine without the permanent artificial radio navigation field, provided by the GLONASS orbital system since 2011 to customers on a global scale. The GLONASS signals are used to save lives during road accidents; to monitor and dispatch air, land, and water transportation systems; to synchronize mobile communication networks and energy systems; to manage transportation and agricultural equipment; and more...

To what extent has the accuracy of navigation improved?

In 2014, the error margin of the navigation equipment was 1.4 m. However, we are constantly working on improving the accuracy. This work does not stop even for a single day. On January 30 of this year, the error margin of these satellites has dropped to 0.9 m, and during a one-week period the error margin did not exceed 1.15 m.

In addition, the second to last GLONASS-M satellite, launched on March 16, demonstrated the accuracy of the baseline service of 0.38 m during a daily interval, and its best weekly result was 0.63 m. It should be noted that GLONASS-M satellites, in particular, allowed customers all over the world to receive navigation service in two frequency ranges for the first time, which reduced the influence of the ionosphere on navigation accuracy. Acquisition of signals in two ranges provides navigation under atmospheric turbulence in a layer during magnetic storms caused by solar activity. Turbulence in the ionosphere causes higher error margins of the navigation parameters and time synchronization by several times.

Previously, General Director of ISS Reshetnev (a Roscosmos company) Nikolai Testoedov announced the creation of a new segment of the GLONASS satellite system. When do you expect the first launch for this program?

We will maintain our traditional consumer focus. Research has shown a growing demand for navigation services in challenging conditions, when a spacecraft is visible at angles greater than 25 degrees above the horizon. To meet the customer needs for high-quality services using new code signals, we will begin to create the GLONASS high-altitude orbital system (VKK) [высокоорбитального космического комплекса (BKK)] in 2021. With the launch of the first satellite in 2025, and the full deployment of the constellation of six spacecraft in three planes by the end of 2027, navigation accuracy in the Eastern Hemisphere will be improved by 25%...The GLONASS-K satellite, which has a proven reliability track record, will become the foundation of the high-altitude orbital system (VKK)...

Is there a quality control procedure for navigation services?

We give much attention to the quality control of GLONASS navigation services. To achieve this goal, we created a system of monitoring and verification of the system's technical parameters. It includes a network of GLONASS signal monitoring stations abroad, as well as specialized radio telescopes capable of analyzing the structure and power of radio signals near the Earth's surface. The results of objective monitoring confirm the correctness of the selected technical solutions...

How do you plan to improve the accuracy of GLONASS navigation in the near future?

One of the most important tasks of 2020 is the harmonization of the GLONASS consumer interface. I have already described the environmental effects on the navigation accuracy, therefore, the new editions of the GLONASS interface control documents (ICD) are being prepared for publication, which will describe the parameters of interaction between the GLONASS satellites and the consumer's navigation equipment.

We believe that the accuracy of GLONASS will be increased as a result of introducing frames of navigation messages with additional information into the reserve categories. In particular, mathematical models for calculating ionospheric and tropospheric delays will be introduced. The parameters of the ionospheric model will be included in the navigation message, and the tropospheric model only needs information about the latitude of the navigation receiver and the season of the year...Changes to the ICD for signals with frequency and code division for the transmission of additional information will provide backward compatibility for the fault-free operation of the existing fleet of user navigation equipment and the transmission of troposphere and ionosphere parameters in additional bits...



Continued: GLONASS General Designer on Improving Navigational Precision

“The GLONASS military and civilian global satellite navigation system has acquired a new quality. The accuracy of the military segment of GLONASS increased by an order of magnitude -- to three centimeters -- thanks to state-of-the-art mathematical and software methods of processing satellite signals.”

Source: “Российские военные получили систему навигации сантиметровой точности, (The Russian Military Received a Navigational System with Centimeter Accuracy),” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets Online*, 22 October 2020. <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2020/10/22/rossiyskie-voennye-poluchili-sistemu-navigacii-santimetrovoy-tochnosti.html>

The GLONASS military and civilian global satellite navigation system has acquired a new quality. The accuracy of the military segment of GLONASS increased by an order of magnitude -- to three centimeters -- thanks to state-of-the-art mathematical and software methods of processing satellite signals. Moskovskiy Komsomolets (MK) asked an expert why ultraprecise satellite navigation is necessary.

“It is planned to bring the accuracy of determining position to three centimeters in a permanent mode,” a Center spokesman said. Autonomous tests have been conducted and the system is undergoing experimental operation. Legal issues remain before it is accepted into the Russian Army inventory.

The GLONASS orbital grouping has 24 satellites used for the targeted purpose. In addition, the system has around 200 ground measurement complexes that track the position and status of the satellites. This entire establishment ensures navigational accuracy of a little over a meter. Now GLONASS military users will be able to determine location with an accuracy to three centimeters.

Specialists explained that the system proposes an enormously greater number of ground measurement assets. While there are around 200 measurement stations in the existing system, there are around 400 in the Defense Ministry precision navigation system. Measurement assets have become more precise. They perform a more detailed assessment of the position of satellites in orbit and take advantage of more state-of-the-art mathematical models.

Here is what Aleksey Leonkov, military expert and editor of the journal Arsenal Otechestva (Arsenal of the Fatherland) said about the importance of ultra-precise military navigation: “The Defense Ministry precision navigation system is a high-precision navigation system. The parameters of military navigation accuracy must be higher than for civilian systems. Three centimeters is a good figure, no worse than for the military segment of the American GPS.”

Such navigation systems are needed for precision-guided munitions so that maneuvering missiles line up their flight along the route very accurately and hit the target “in the bull’s-eye,” as they say...

Thanks to our country’s vast territory, there is an opportunity to increase the number of ground measurement assets. Joined in a single network, these ground complexes together with GLONASS satellites are capable of making navigation very high-precision.



Russian Media: US Sanctions Hinder GLONASS Modernization

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Vedemosti* discusses how US sanctions are hindering Russian efforts to modernize and refurbish the GLONASS constellation. According to *Vedemosti*, US sanctions are hindering GLONASS by way of access to space-grade (radiation resistant) electrical, electronic, and electromechanical components, which are necessary for the construction of satellites. Due to the life span of Russia's GLONASS satellites (7-10 years), and US sanctions that have reportedly set back satellite production schedules, the GLONASS constellation now has 13 satellites that are serving past their designed life span. According to the Russian article, Russia is not keen on Chinese imports for this technology and so is trying to develop its own space-grade electrical, electronic, and electromechanical components, but due to economies of scale these efforts are much more expensive and result in little technological advancement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The hope now is that the existing GLONASS-M satellites will last longer than their seven-year warranty lifespan. If satellites start failing in the next year or two, there will be nothing to replace them with. In that case, the entire system will risk degradation...”



Spacecraft Navigation and Orientation System.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2015/i-hKTdrNw/0/acf4efc/X3/MAKS2015part8-14-X3.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0



Continued: Russian Media: US Sanctions Hinder GLONASS Modernization

Source: “Космический масштаб: импортозамещения Что происходит с «Глонасс» (Cosmic Scale of Import Substitution: What’s Going on with GLONASS),” *Vedemosti Online*, 27 September 2020. <https://www.vedomosti.ru/technology/articles/2020/09/27/841310-kosmicheskii-masshtab>

...At a government meeting in Novo-Ogarevo five years ago, on 28 October 2015, the then Deputy Premier Dmitriy Rogozin was in a confident mood. In the presence of the President Putin, he made a policy statement on the future of GLONASS. New satellites, Rogozin reported, are to have enhanced navigation signals, which, once the entire constellation has been replaced, will allow a signal accuracy higher than one meter to be reached by 2020, which is quite competitive when compared with GPS... The reality proved to be less impressive.... Thirteen of the satellites currently in operation are already past their seven-year warranty lifespan... Meanwhile, the target value of GLONASS accuracy in the federal targeted program was changed from 60 centimeters to 2.7 meters...

The reason why Russia has been unable to carry out the planned renewal of satellites in its navigation system is US technology sanctions, which prevent onboard equipment manufacturers from buying the necessary Space-grade electrical, electronic, and electromechanical (EEE) components, that are radiation resistant... Of course, this is not the first time Russian manufacturers have faced such restrictions. To overcome them, back in Soviet times, the intelligence services set up schemes making it possible for the requisite parts to be acquired. These schemes have not been abandoned, but they do not always work: It is very hard to cheat the system when this involves not just one item, but batches of microcircuits that are produced by just one or two developers in the entire world...

In 2015, the scientific and technical council of Roscosmos adopted a logical decision: GLONASS-K satellites were to be redesigned so that they would consist of Russian parts. But since not all the necessary parts could be made in Russia, building such satellites would have to be a long-term project. Roscosmos subsidiary OAO Rossiyskiye Kosmicheskiye Sistemy (Russian Space Systems), which was put in charge of import substitution in the space sector, said that Russian industry was capable of building such an apparatus within four or five years. Over time, these plans were proved to be unrealistic. Now we are talking about another time frame like that.

“Import substitution is a long and difficult road. We started it in 2014 and are planning to complete it in 2025. By that time, we will be able to source all components from Russian suppliers,” Nikolay Testoyedov, General Director of the Informatsionnyye Sputnikovyye Sistemy Imeni V.I. Reshetneva company (Reshetnev ISS [Information Satellite Systems]), which makes satellites for GLONASS. Testoyedov said that he is “optimistic” about the import substitution program.

With the arrival of an entirely Russian GLONASS satellite postponed, the constellation will be replenished with GLONASS-K and GLONASS-K2 satellites that are assembled from whatever is available. This has not been an easy process. In 2016, Reshetnev ISS was awarded a contract for the manufacture of nine GLONASS-K and two GLONASS-K2 satellites, worth a total of 62 billion rubles. It was assumed that the initial satellites would be completed in 2018 and that they would start being launched in 2019. Reshetnev ISS has so far sent only one GLONASS-K satellite to Plesetsk cosmodrome. Essentially, the hope now is that the existing GLONASS-M satellites will last longer than their seven-year warranty lifespan. If satellites start failing in the next year or two, there will be nothing to replace them with. In that case, the entire system will risk degradation...

Russian manufacturers of EEE components that use Western technology, such as Angstrom, Mikron, and NIIME, have also been sanctioned by the BIS, which, if not paralyzed, then greatly complicated their current activities. This means that the previously tested method of buying equipment abroad and launching it here is no longer relevant for Russia. In this situation, it is hard to think of anything other than creating your own industry. That is a costly, lengthy, and cumbersome process. Moreover, having paid for EEE component production facilities, the government will then be forced to support this industry.

The special feature of space instrumentation is that it brings together all the latest microelectronics know-how. “But at the same time, building satellites does not generate a lot of demand,” Pokrovskiy observes. “How many identical microcircuits could a spacecraft manufacturer buy? Tens, perhaps hundreds at most. For microelectronics, that is not the kind of demand that would enable technology to develop. It can develop when demand is measured in the millions of pieces.”

Parts from China could be used as a temporary alternative, although the manufacturer is not particularly keen on Chinese-made EEE components. “We are able to buy the requisite EEE components in China, but we give priority to Russian products,” says Testoyedov. “Only in cases where Russian or Western components cannot be bought would we be prepared to consider buying Chinese EEE components, while paying a great deal of attention to quality control and reliability.”



Contract Soldiers and AWOL

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian military's enlisted personnel system continues to evolve. While universal conscription remains in force, over the past several years, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has placed greater emphasis on attracting more contract soldiers, and today there are approximately 400,000 contract soldiers serving in the military. Data regarding re-enlistment rates among contract soldiers appears to be classified, but anecdotal evidence suggests that only a modest percentage elect to extend their terms of service. The accompanying excerpt from a new Russian investigative source, *Important History*, describes some of the reasons "why contractors flee the Russian army."

The article begins by describing the appeal of contract service, pointing out that "many young people, especially from the regions, perceive contract service as a social lift ... [where they] are promised stability and a decent standard of living: a salary of up to 75,000 rubles (approx. \$1,000 per month), an opportunity to choose a duty location and housing." Some discover, however, that "salaries can be two or three times lower than promised, a guaranteed apartment can be turned into a barracks, and hazing can be replaced by extortion and violence." The article goes on to assert that because of these broken promises and difficult circumstances, "every year, a thousand of them are tried for trying to leave their place of service."

The article describes a handful of concrete examples where contract soldiers went AWOL and the reasons behind their desertion. Besides the broken promises listed above, some contract soldiers chose to break their contract because of intimidation and deceit. The author describes how some draftees were induced to sign contracts (to meet the unit quota for contract soldiers) with the assurance that they could still depart the military once their mandatory one-year term of conscript duty was completed; others were prevented from quitting "before the probationary period" (3 months) ended, thus extending their tour for the full contract period. The article also describes the penalties a young soldier incurs after breaking the contract. Not only is a prison sentence likely (up to 5 years), but once released, the ex-contract soldier will have problems finding a job, especially with the "power structures." While the status of those serving in Russia's military has improved dramatically over the past decade, problems remain with attracting and keeping quality contract soldiers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“Almost 400,000 people serve in the military on contract in Russia. Every year, a thousand of them are tried for trying to leave their place of service.”

Source: “Был бы потом без вести пропавшим. Как и почему контрактники бегут из российской армии (Then I would have been missing. How and why contractors flee the Russian army),” *Важных историй [Important History]*, 29 October 2020. <https://stories.media/reportages/2020/10/29/bil-bi-potom-bez-vesti-propavshim-kak-i-pochemu-kontraktniki-begut-iz-rossiiskoi-armii/> A video that accompanied the story, can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/vmuZ7K8fimI>

Service under the contract is an opportunity “to consciously and professionally fulfill my duty to defend the Fatherland,” according to the website of the Ministry of Defense. Contractors are promised stability and a decent standard of living: a salary of up to 75,000 rubles, an opportunity to choose a duty location, and service housing. In August 2020, the Deputy Minister of Defense even spoke about the complete victory over bullying in the Russian army. Many young people, especially from the regions, perceive contract service as a social lift...

The contract is “not just a job,” the Defense Ministry writes. It is true: for the entire term of the contract, the employee becomes virtually powerless, often unable to quit or at least transfer to another unit. Salaries can be two or three times lower than promised, a guaranteed apartment can be turned into a barracks, and hazing can be replaced by extortion and violence.

Almost 400,000 people serve in the military on contract in Russia. Every year, a thousand of them are tried for trying to leave their place of service....

...Duditsky told his superiors that he wanted to quit before the probationary period ended. The management agreed, promising to start drawing up documents for dismissal. But nothing followed - Duditsky believes that the commanders simply waited until the probationary period ended.... They say: if you sign a contract, if you don't like it, you can terminate it. Then the command stalls for time, tells the contract soldiers various stories, three months pass - and that it's very difficult to quit....

...Dismissal for non-fulfillment of the terms of the contract most often interferes with getting a job in power structures, in the Ministry of Emergency Situations, in the police...

...Experts who spoke to Important Stories say that commanders in the field often have an intention to increase the number of contract soldiers. “A directive is issued that there must be a certain number of contract soldiers in the unit, and the unit commander begins to massively process the guys [conscripts to sign a contract],” explains Shcherbak from Soldiers' Mothers of St. Petersburg. “They promise a higher salary than it actually is, they are misleading about the possibility of dismissal - that is, they are outright misinformed....”

“The law allows for the transition from military service to contract,” explains Levinson of Citizen and the Army. “And commanders often voluntarily force conscripts to write a report on the conclusion of a contract, because they have a plan to have more contract soldiers this year than last year....”

...Conscripts, who now serve only a year, are promised that they will not have to serve on a contract any longer - despite the fact that the first contract is usually signed for two or three years. The leadership, according to Levinson, assures the soldiers that they will be released in a year, “as soon as the demobilization comes up,” and then says: “no, you must serve, you signed [the contract]!”...



Russian Concerns over Chinese Espionage

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past several years there has been much discussion regarding closer relations between Russia and China, particularly within the military realm. As an example of this growing proximity, the first excerpt from the pro-business daily *Business Online* quotes President Putin, who remarked during the recent Valdai Conference, that while there are no discussions at present regarding a military alliance with China, “theoretically it is quite possible to imagine such a thing,” and “in principle, we are not going to rule it out.”

Some of President Putin’s hesitancy may stem from concerns over certain trends within China. The second excerpt from the centrist *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye [Independent Military Review]*, describes how recent Chinese legislation has “ordered all Chinese citizens and companies to work for the intelligence services.” According to this legislation, “all [Chinese] citizens of the PRC and all Chinese companies are obliged to unconditionally cooperate with the special services.” The author stresses that “tens of millions of Chinese scattered around the world are obliged to voluntarily become spies or counterintelligence agents.” He concludes by arguing that even before this legislation took effect, the “ordinary Chinese were not only ready, but also willing to provide assistance to the special services. For a Chinese patriot, this behavior is a matter of honor, valor and heroism.... This approach is fueled by centuries of cultivated respect for people in uniform and patriotism.”



President Vladimir Putin with President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping during a tour of the Moscow Kremlin. June 2019.

Source: Vitaly Kuzman, <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60669/photos> CCA 4.0

The third excerpt from the official Russian news agency, *TASS*, suggests that despite the warmer relations with China, Russian officials are still willing to use forceful measures to protect their interests. The article describes the recent arrest of a Russian scientist for allegedly “transferring to China secret Russian developments ‘associated with alternative power sources.’” This is not the first such arrest; this past summer, another Russian scientist was detained for supposedly passing classified information about Russian submarines to the Chinese. While relations between Russia and China have grown closer over the past decade, mutual mistrust may prevent the development of a full-fledged military alliance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“In practice, this means that nearly one and a half billion Chinese citizens and tens of millions of Chinese scattered around the world are obliged to voluntarily become spies or counterintelligence agents.”

Source: “Путин не исключил, что Россия и Китай могут заключить военный союз (Putin does not rule out that Russia and China could conclude a military alliance),” *БИЗНЕС Online*, 22 October 2020. <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/news/485588>

Russian President Vladimir Putin did not rule out the possibility of a military alliance between Moscow and Beijing, although this is not necessary for both states at the moment. “You can imagine everything. We have always assumed that our relations have reached such a degree of interaction and trust that we generally do not need this, but theoretically it is quite possible to imagine such a thing,” Putin said during the Valdai discussion club.

...Putin stressed that such cooperation enhances the defenses of both armies. “And Russia is interested in this, and China. How it will develop further, life will show, but now we are not setting such a task (about a military alliance), but, in principle, we are not going to rule it out. Let’s see,” added the head of state.

Source: “Тотальная разведка по-пекински (Peking Total Intelligence),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 5 November 2020. https://nvo.ng.ru/gpolit/2020-11-05/10_1116_gpolit1.html

The secret services of the PRC are constantly and very active in all parts of the world and cause endless headaches for almost all government leaders and heads of private structures in developed countries.... The spies of the Celestial Empire are engaged in all types of theft of secrets: from economic, industrial and commercial to purely everyday, but for various reasons kept secret....

...The Law on National Intelligence was adopted in the PRC in 2017. It ordered all Chinese citizens and companies to work for the intelligence services. Article 7 of this act states that “any organization or citizen must support, assist and cooperate with the state intelligence in accordance with the law.” And Article 14 empowers intelligence agencies to demand such support. It reads: “State intelligence agencies in the legitimate conduct of intelligence work may require the relevant authorities, organizations or citizens to provide the necessary support, assistance and cooperation.”

Thus, all citizens of the PRC and all Chinese companies are obliged to unconditionally cooperate with the special services. And we are not talking about their right or desire, but about their duty. In practice, this means that nearly one and a half billion Chinese citizens and tens of millions of Chinese scattered around the world are obliged to voluntarily become spies or counterintelligence agents.

...Ordinary Chinese were not only ready, but also willing to provide assistance to the special services. For a Chinese patriot, this behavior is a matter of honor, valor and heroism. The law is law, but ordinary Chinese even before it cooperated with their special services, and without any coercion and with great willingness. This approach is fueled by centuries of cultivated respect for people in uniform and patriotism.

Source: “Источник: суд Томска арестовал ученого Луканина по делу о госизмене в пользу Китая (Source: Tomsk court arrested scientist Lukanin in the case of high treason in favor of China),” *TASS*, 2 October 2020. <https://tass.ru/proisshestiya/9618095>

The court in Tomsk sent to the pre-trial detention center scientist Alexander Lukanin, who had been detained earlier in the framework of a criminal case on treason in favor of China....

In turn, a law enforcement source clarified to TASS that Lukanin was detained on suspicion of transferring to China secret Russian developments ‘associated with alternative power sources.’



Early Lessons-Learned from Nagorno Karabakh

OE Watch Commentary: Russian defense officials have closely observed the fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the separatist region of Nagorno Karabakh. While it is too early yet to derive a full set of lessons-learned, some Russian observers are already drawing preliminary conclusions from this conflict. In the accompanying excerpt from the popular daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, military journalist Victor Baranets points out a few lessons that he believes today's Russian military ought to take from this fight.

First and foremost, Baranets argues that Russia is “not yet very ready to fight against attacks by drone swarms,” bemoaning the fact that while “there are hundreds of light and medium-sized drones in the Russian military,” the military still does not possess “attack drones in the required quantity.” He sarcastically remarks that Russia's enemies will not delay their attack simply because “our combat drones are not ready yet.” The author stresses that “military strategists are increasingly talking about drone swarms on the battlefield.” Baranets recalls an image of “the Russian army as a huge bear with nuclear fangs,” which was being “overcome by a swarm of biting bees with rocket stings.” Even though Baranets may not agree with this “caricature,” he argues that “the subtext is serious.”

Baranets only briefly describes the other systems that have played a prominent role in this conflict, pointing out “the active use of electronic warfare (EW), ...super-modern means of artillery reconnaissance, a spotter plane...to direct the flock of drones at the target, and the active use of propaganda” were among the other measures that proved decisive on the battlefield. As it has in Ukraine and Syria, the Russian military will closely study the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh for important lessons-learned and incorporate them into its future operations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“In the event of a war, you can't say: ‘Wait, enemy, our combat drones are not ready yet.’”

Source: “Готова ли Россия к войне дронов, как в Карабахе (Is Russia ready for drone war, like in Karabakh),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 19 October 2020. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/217196/4306709/>

Do we have our own drones and other “weapons of the future” that we saw in the conflict in the South Caucasus? And most importantly, is there any protection against them? Here are the thoughts of our military observer, Victor Baranets.

I confess that until my eyes hurt, I watched the videos where Azerbaijanis playfully hammered Armenian tanks and cannons with drones. And now they also boast that in this way they destroyed the enemy's military equipment worth as much as \$1 billion. And this is almost 2 annual military budgets of Yerevan!

...Familiar military experts explained to me that in recent years, Baku has spared no money on the purchase of attack drones from Turkey (Bayraktar TB2) and Israel (Hermes 900). They allegedly tear Armenian armor with their rockets.

...Reflecting on all this, one wonders: is our native Russian army ready for such a war today?

...But military strategists are increasingly talking about drone swarms on the battlefield. And this is a fundamentally new element of modern warfare.... How to deal with such a threat? Is our army ready for it? And do we have our own modern drones?

There are hundreds of light and medium-sized drones in the Russian military (though it looks like thousands are needed). But they all carry out reconnaissance and guidance tasks. And what about the heavy attack UAVs?

The heavy attack drone Hunter is now being tested... But it remains to be seen when the Russian army will be armed with such attack drones in the required quantity.... In the event of a war, you can't say: “Wait, enemy, our combat drones are not ready yet ...”

...Here's the conclusion: we are not yet very ready to fight attacks from drone swarms.

...In general, the battle in Karabakh (seemingly in a very local conflict), in addition to the traditional methods of warfare, showed at once several new “elements” inherent in wars in the near future. Here are just 5 main ones:

...The massive use of drones not only for reconnaissance and targeting artillery at enemy positions, but also for high-precision strikes against its targets.

...However, as unprecedented, the active use of electronic warfare (EW), which often and tightly cut down the enemy's command and control systems. ...And on the battlefield, such super-modern means of artillery reconnaissance appeared, which made it possible to incredibly quickly detect a position (say, a cannon, tank or missile launcher of the enemy) and hit it so that the crew or crew did not have time to escape from the place of deployment.

...Specialists drew attention to one more important point: when unmanned aerial vehicles were striking, a spotter plane was in the air near the battlefield. He directed the flock of drones at the target.

...Well, and the active use of propaganda videos (some of which could have been cooked up even in advance).

In the West, artists like to depict the Russian army as a huge bear with nuclear fangs. Recently I saw in such a malicious picture the mighty bear, who is overcome by a swarm of biting bees with rocket stings. This may be a caricature, but the subtext is serious ...



Sweden Increases Sub-Arctic Defense

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying article from the *The Barents Sea Observer*, Sweden is upgrading its defense capabilities in places like Arvidsjaur in light of concerns about Russian military action in the region. The increased defense spending is part of the recently submitted 5-year defense budget. Arvidsjaur is located 110 kilometers south of the Arctic Circle and sees its share of snow and cold in the winter. Sweden, like Finland and Norway, is keeping track of the Russian buildup in the Arctic and is taking precautionary and financial steps should the political situation deteriorate rapidly. As the article points out, this will lead to a 50% increase in the size of the armed forces, which will increase from about 60,000 today to approximately 90,000 in 2025. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Sweden will be affected if crisis or an armed conflict arises in our neighborhood. An armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out,” said Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist as he presented the defense bill for the next five-year period.”

Source: “Sweden to re-establish northern regiment, fears armed attack”, *The Barents Sea Observer*, 17 October 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/10/sweden-re-establish-northern-regiment-fears-armed-attack>

Sweden to re-establish northern regiment, fears armed attack

“Sweden will be affected if crisis or an armed conflict arises in our neighborhood. An armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out,” said Defense Minister Peter Hultqvist as he presented the defense bill for the next five-year period. “This represents the largest increase in the level of ambition in defense capabilities in 70 years. The bill is based on the defense commission’s proposal for both civilian and military defense. It is a signal to the Swedish people and our neighborhood that we are taking the security situation extremely seriously,” Defense Minister Hultqvist said. He said all branches of the war organization will be expanded, including a substantial boost for investment in military equipment.

Sweden’s military partly disarmed after the Cold War but has seen a steady increase after Moscow annexed Crimea and sent military personnel and weapons to the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, including from units on the Kola Peninsula. Including the increased defense spending from 2014 to 2020, the Swedish military will have increased its funding by 85% in fixed prices between 2014 and 2025, the proposal says.

Five regiments will be re-established, including the Norrland Dragoon Regiment (K4) in Arvidsjaur. The cavalry regiment in Arvidsjaur was decommissioned in 2005 and the military presence in town has since been the Army’s Ranger Battalion, an elite light infantry unit trained to carry out reconnaissance missions and direct actions behind enemy lines. Defense Minister Hultqvist said one reason for re-establishing the K4 Dragoon Regiment is to stay stronger in military cooperation with Norway and Finland in a crisis situation....

In addition to re-establishing the regiment in Arvidsjaur, other organizational units are coming back: the Älvsborg Amphibious Regiment (Amf 4) in Gothenburg; Uppland Wing (F 16) in Uppsala; the Bergslagen Artillery Regiment (A 9) in Kristinehamn; the Dalarna Regiment (I 13) in Falun; and the Västernorrland Regiment (I 21) in Sollefteå, with a training detachment in Östersund.

As tension with Russia grows, the Armed Forces is tasked to study additional measures to strengthen its presence in northernmost Sweden. One suggestion is the establishment of border troopers designed to cooperate with Finland and Norway in a sub-Arctic winter environment, according to Minister Hultqvist in an interview...

The number of positions in the armed forces will increase from about 60,000 today to approximately 90,000 in 2025. This means that the number of young Swedes undergoing basic training in the national total defense service will gradually increase to about 8,000 per year until 2025. “The proposals in the bill should be seen against the background of the deteriorating security situation in Sweden’s neighborhood and in Europe over time according to Minister Hultqvist. “The proposals in the bill are key to being able to implement the increase of capabilities in military and civilian defense that the Government considers to be necessary. It is a matter of continuing to be able to assert our sovereignty in an increasingly complex security reality.”

Sweden, like Finland, is not a member of NATO but a close partner and regularly trains with NATO countries in joint exercises.



Kurile Islands Getting Up-armored

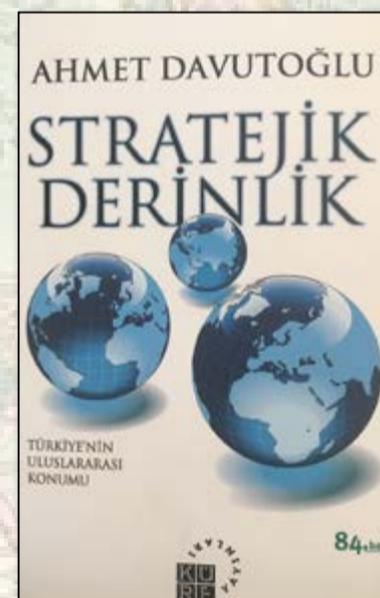
OE Watch Commentary: According to attached *Izvestia* article, Russia's Kurile Islands are being upgraded with the T-72B3 main battle tank. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Eastern Military District has usually lagged the other districts in equipment upgrades. Over the past four years, there has been a noticeable effort to modernize the district. The effort in the Kurile Islands and Sakhalin Island defenses has paralleled Japanese efforts to hold talks on adjudicating ownership of four of the south Kurile Islands since their incorporation by the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. Japan has not raised the issue of Sakhalin Island, but Russia is modernizing the entire military district. The Soviet Union and Russia have never signed a peace treaty ending World War II due to their dispute over the Kurile Islands (the Northern Territories, according to Japan). Rather, there is an agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Russia has no apparent desire to negotiate at this point. The 18th Machinegun-artillery Division mentioned in the article is stationed on three of the four disputed islands. It is primarily a static defense unit in permanent field fortifications. It has had a tank battalion and separate tank companies as mobile components, but these tanks are probably some of the longest serving tanks in the active inventory. Of interest, the 68th Army Corps is the only Ground Forces corps not subordinated to a Naval Fleet. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The new vehicle should prove effective in support of army units in counter-amphibious assault operations. 68th Army Corps, the headquarters of which is deployed at Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, is responsible for the defense of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands. Units of 18th Machinegun-Artillery Division - the only one of its type in the Armed Forces - are deployed directly in the Kuriles. A separate tank battalion is part of its composition and, furthermore, there are tank subunits in the composition of the machinegun-artillery regiments.”

Book Review: A Look Back and Forward at Turkey's "Strategic Depth" Foreign Policy Doctrine

Karen Kaya
February 2020

“Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)” is a Turkish book published in 2001. This was a time when international relations theorists were describing new frameworks of world order and security modalities following the end of the Cold War and bi-polar world. Works such as Francis Fukuyama's “End of History” and Samuel Huntington's “Clash of Civilizations” were icons of this intellectual period. It was in this context of a changing international system that Turkish International Relations Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu (who later served as Foreign Minister between 2009-2014 and Prime Minister between 2014-2016) attempted to define Turkey's position in his book “Strategic Depth.” From around 2002 to 2012, the foreign policy that Davutoğlu outlined in his book was considered the doctrine and roadmap for Turkish foreign policy.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/309386>



Continued: Kurile Islands Getting Up-armored

Source: “To the Kuriles in a Tank: Reinforcing the Islands with the Latest Armored Vehicles,” *Izvestia*, 28 October 2020, <https://iz.ru/1079266/roman-kretcul-aleksei-ramm/do-kuril-na-tanke-ostrova-usiliat-noveishimi-boevymi-mashinami>

To the Kuriles in a Tank: Reinforcing the Islands with the Latest Armored Vehicles

The MOD will reinforce the Kurile Islands with T-72B3 “missile” tanks. This is one of the best state-of-the-art vehicles in the Armed Forces’ arsenal. Its primary advantage is the unique combination of optical-electronic sights and guided missiles, which they launch from the gun tube. The T-72B3 tanks will defend Kuriles’ coast: they will be able to not only destroy enemy amphibious assault vehicles but to also sink their small ships.

The complete rearmament and mastery of the vehicles by crewmen will take one-two years... The first vehicles have already been delivered to the islands. The crews mastered the new equipment on simulators during the summer and accomplished a series of hands-on drills during the fall.

Military Expert Aleksey Khlopotov stated that “The T-72B3 - is a state-of-the-art vehicle. As compared to the base model, this version is equipped with a higher-powered engine, thermal-imaging sight, improved fire control and communications system, and additional protection. We are essentially talking about the fire reinforcement of the troops on the islands. The new vehicle should prove effective in support of army units in counter-amphibious assault operations.

68th Army Corps, the headquarters of which is deployed at Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, is responsible for the defense of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands. Units of 18th Machinegun-Artillery Division - the only one of its type in the Armed Forces - are deployed directly in the Kuriles. A separate tank battalion is part of its composition and, furthermore, there are tank subunits in the composition of the machinegun-artillery regiments.

Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy states that “A mobile armored element is absolutely necessary for the defense of the Kurile Islands. Tanks are a versatile battlefield weapon. They can destroy any hardened target within line of sight. It is no problem for them to fire at ships from the coast. A ship or even a boat present a large target for a tank as compared to ordinary targets. The vehicle’s ammunition load is versatile: sabot rounds, high explosive-fragmentation, and shaped-charge projectiles. Fixed weapon installations cover only certain axes. They cannot provide the defense of the entire coast. While having an armored mobile fist, which can operate both as a fire and also as a strike weapon on any sector of the coast, the counter-amphibious assault defense will be much stronger. Tanks are entirely capable of driving the assault force into the sea in coordination with the motorized riflemen and under the cover of air defenses. This is a versatile tool that has proven itself. The T-72B3 is a state-of-the-art tank with improved combat and operating characteristics. It has significantly higher firepower, level of protection, and command controllability than the Soviet modification the T-72B”.

Izvestiya previously reported that the units, which are deployed on Sakhalin, obtained the T-80BVM “jet-propelled” tanks last year. The T-80 was accepted into the inventory in the mid-1970s, but it has been upgraded into an armored vehicle which meets the most contemporary requirements. The T-80BVM obtained the state-of-the-art “Sosna-U” fire-control system with a thermal imaging device, a laser rangefinder, and an automatic target tracker. This has seriously increased the tanks’ firing capabilities. Furthermore, the vehicle can now conduct fire using missiles. The “Refleks” weapon control complex permits the destruction of naval targets at long distances. The system uses a laser beam to guide the supersonic missiles, which have been launched from the gun’s tube, to the target. Their flight range totals approximately five kilometers, which is two kilometers more than conventional tank projectiles.

The Ministry of Defense has been seriously reinforcing the defense of the Kurile Islands in recent years. The units and formations, which are deployed on the islands, have been reinforced by separate UAV detachments. They received the “Orlan-10” medium-range unmanned aerial vehicle, which has reliably proven itself in a combat situation in Syria. The drones were massively employed in the Kuriles for the first time in 2015. At that time, exercises were conducted on the islands, where they rehearsed repelling the landing of an amphibious assault force from the sea. “Granat-1”, “Granat-4”, and “Zastava” UAVs, which carried out reconnaissance, monitoring the landing of an amphibious assault force, and adjusted fire, were actively used during the course of the maneuvers. The UAVs’ missions in the Kuriles have increased since that time. For example, the unmanned aerial vehicles can accomplish the functions of reconnaissance personnel and artillery spotters for the “Bal” and “Bastion” coastal missile complexes.

Tank subunits and units in the Far East are being reequipped with T-80BVM tanks with some exceptions. That same equipment is being sent to units of the Polar Region. This has been caused by the fact that there are gas-turbine power plants in these vehicles. They are easily started even in heavy frost. In so doing, the vehicles’ operational readiness is reached in a matter of minutes. In comparison, a diesel requires up to 40 minutes to heat up.

Izvestia addendum: The T-72B3 - is a Russian main battle tank. This modification of the T-72 family was developed as a lower-cost alternative to the T-90A tank until the Army would obtain the new-generation T-14 Armata vehicles. The T-72B3 version is equipped with “Relikt” reactive armor, a 2A46M-5-01 gun, a B-92S2F engine, an automatic transmission, a digital display, and a rear-view camera. There is also a movement control system with voice reporting on the critical operational modes of the tank’s components. Most of the tank’s parameters have been brought to the T-90A level. The weapon can also be used to launch guided missiles.



A Turkish Perspective: Key Military Takeaways from the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

OE Watch Commentary: On 27 September, hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan erupted into a full-fledged war once again over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey put its full support behind Azerbaijan, competing with Russia for influence in this region. The accompanying article from Turkey's state-owned news source *Anadolu Agency*, provides a Turkish perspective and highlights key military takeaways from this conflict.

After analyzing the conflict, the article underlines five lessons on the future of warfare. First, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) pose a greater threat to conventional forms of warfare and military units “without adequate sensors, electronic warfare cover, and counter-drone weaponry.” Second, integrating land-based fire-support and UAVs provides superiority and achieves successful results. The Azerbaijani military has used UAVs in close coordination with artillery and rocket systems to achieve results.

The third lesson pertains to Armenia's usage of “intra-war deterrence,” which the author describes as “controlling the escalation patterns within an ongoing conflict.” Armenia targeted Azerbaijan's major population centers and critical national infrastructure with “ballistic missile and heavy multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) salvos” after facing “Azerbaijan's technological superiority in the battlefield.” The author notes that the ongoing war indicates that intra-war deterrence will remain important and continue to dominate battlefields in the future.

Fourth, UAVs are very effective in neutralizing the enemy's low-to-mid-range air defenses. The Azerbaijani military has effectively used drones, especially Turkish-made TB-2 drones using Turkey's MAM-L smart munitions to destroy Armenia's air defenses. The author states that Azerbaijan's military destroyed about 60 pieces of Armenia's air defenses. Finally, even though UAVs have proven to provide an effective warfighting capability, “military-geostrategic calculus still matters” and “[c]onventional warfighting capabilities to clean, hold, and deny territory remains crucial.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Bayraktar TB2 on Runway.

Source: Bayhaluk via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_Runway.jpg Attribution: CC-BY-SA-4.0 | Self-published work

“Despite the drone age, military-geostrategic calculus still matters”

Source: “Five key military takeaways from Azerbaijani-Armenian war,” *Anadolu Ajansi*, 30 October 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-five-key-military-takeaways-from-azerbaijani-armenian-war/2024430>

...Below, I listed five main observations to grasp the future of warfare...

Lesson 1: Without adequate sensors, electronic warfare cover, and counter-drone weaponry, traditional ground units are in Trouble.

The first lesson that the Azerbaijani–Armenian clashes showed is the vulnerability of traditional land units --armored, mechanized, and motorized formations-- in the face of advanced drone warfare weaponry and concepts.

Lesson 2: Integration of land-based fire-support and drones looms large in modern warfare.

Syria has functioned as a warfare laboratory of the 21st century... Turkey and Russia are the two nations that developed ‘drone – artillery complexes’ during their Syria expeditions.

...

The Azerbaijani Armed Forces showed yet another example of the drone & land-based fire-support complexes. In many clashes, including night fighting, the Azerbaijani artillery and rocket systems fought in close coordination with drone warfare assets.

Lesson 3: Intra-war deterrence gain importance.

...the military-strategic dimension of the Armenian forces' ballistic missile and heavy rocket use during the war deserves attention, highlighting the vital concept of “intra-war deterrence”.

Intra-war deterrence is, briefly, about controlling the escalation patterns within an ongoing conflict.

Overwhelmed by Azerbaijan's technological superiority in the battlefield, Armenia has resorted to ballistic missile and heavy multiple-launch rocket systems (MLRS) salvos, targeting Azerbaijan's major population centers. More importantly, the Russian-manufactured SS-26 Iskander ballistic missiles in the Armenian arsenal makes the situation even more dangerous.

Overall, the... war showed that intra-war deterrence, and strategic weapons pertaining to this crucial concept, will continue to dominate battlefields in the coming years.

Lesson 4: Drones make good SEAD assets against low-to-mid-range air defenses.

In the Syrian and Libyan battlegrounds, Turkey's Bayraktar TB-2 drone has made a name for itself-- the “Pantsir-hunter”-- due to the successful kill scorecard of the Russian-manufactured Pantsir short-to-medium range mobile air defense systems. Following the Turkish drone warfare school's footsteps, the Azerbaijani military has effectively used UAS, especially Bayraktar TB-2, to hunt down the Armenian air defenses. Of course, Roketsan-made smart munitions, predominantly MAM-L, played a chief role in the suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) campaign. Within the first two weeks of the ongoing clashes, the Azerbaijani Armed Forces destroyed some 60 pieces of air defenses, mostly 9K33 OSA and 9K35 Strela systems.

...

Lesson 5: Despite the drone age, military-geostrategic calculus still matters.

While Azerbaijan's technological edge and drone warfare have, so far, demonstrated a robust warfighting capability, the offensive campaign has had to utilize traditional concepts and weaponry to clear and hold the occupied territories. As the Azerbaijani push developed, Baku's military planning transformed from a drone-driven, overwhelming war of attrition into a more combined arms warfare effort, pursuing a more balanced approach.

...

All in all, the... war shows that the traditional military-geostrategic calculus is still relevant. Conventional warfighting capabilities to clean, hold, and deny territory remains crucial.



Foreign Perspectives of the Geopolitics of Data Governance

OE Watch Commentary: Data governance is quickly becoming an area of great power competition. Data flows, such as information shared on social media, do not conform to national borders, even though most countries are trying to wrap sovereign borders around data. The way governments interact with each other regarding who can collect, store or share data matters more and more for geopolitical competition. Access to data is important for national security, economic growth, innovation, and global e-commerce. Some governments want to moderate digital content (data shared via social media platforms or video-streaming providers) and control what is and what is not permissible for their citizens to access. The first two accompanying passages provide examples of attempts to control digital content, while the final passage provides a global context.

In November, *The Hindu*—an English-language daily newspaper based in Chennai, India—reported that the government of India had decided to place “video streaming service providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and others, under the ambit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.” The article notes that currently there is no law or autonomous body governing digital content. This decision will give the government control over such platforms.

Similarly, as the second passage from Turkish government-controlled newspaper *Hürriyet* reports, in early November the government of Turkey imposed a fine on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube for failing to comply with a Turkish social media law (Law 7253 entitled, “Legislation Regarding the Regulation of Content on the Internet and...Fighting Against Crimes via such Content”), which required social media companies to designate a Turkey country representative by 2 November.

These are just two of the latest examples of governments trying to control digital data. These growing and uncoordinated efforts have triggered debates about the landscape of this new competition over data, which is still being mapped out. The final passage from a study by *Oxford Insights* lays out this landscape. It examines the different data regulation regimes of the European Union, China, the United States, and India, arguing that these regimes will shape the rest of the world’s approach to data, since “developing countries tend to follow their biggest economic partners’ approach as they develop their own data strategies.” The author claims that these four actors “each represent and typify a distinctive approach to data legislation.”

According to the study, the European Union’s regime has a “firm emphasis on personal privacy and individual rights,” while China’s model “asserts the central role of the state in regulating the flow and usage of data.” The study finds that the Chinese model “effectively establishes the state as a de facto data processor, directing the country’s efforts towards its goals of establishing ‘cyberspace sovereignty’ and leading global innovation in new digital technologies, including artificial intelligence.” Meanwhile, it points out that the United States “prioritizes the commercialization of personal data, reflecting a uniquely American ‘business-first’ approach.” Finally, it claims that India is developing a hybrid approach that combines Chinese-style data sovereignty with European-style protection of individual rights. The authors note that “while this is an intriguing model, it remains to be seen whether these principles are compatible in practice.” Each of these regimes will have geopolitical consequences and will shape the 21st century global competition over data. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Social media icons.

Source: Pixabay.com, <https://pixabay.com/vectors/social-media-you-tube-facebook-1177293/> Attribution: Public Domain

Source: “Facebook, Instagram, Twitter ve YouTube’a Türkiye’den ceza (Penalty from Turkey to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube),” *Hürriyet*, 4 November 2020. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/teknoloji/facebook-instagram-twitter-ve-youtubea-turkiyeden-ceza-41654075>

Social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Periscope, TikTok have been fined. Based on what has been called the ‘Social Media Law’, Law 7253 entitled, “Legislation Regarding the Regulation of Content on the Internet and... Fighting Against Crimes via such Content,” had taken effect on 1 October. According to the law, social media companies had to designate a Turkey country representative by 2 November.



Continued: Foreign Perspectives of the Geopolitics of Data Governance

Source: “Christine Jiang and Dr. Sabrina Martin, “The Geopolitics of Data Governance, Part 1- Data Governance Regimes” *Oxford Insights*, May 2020. <https://www.oxfordinsights.com/the-geopolitics-of-data-governance>

As the internet and data use have evolved, they have become crucial drivers of a country’s economic development, important enablers of government functions, and focal points of debate in international relations. Innovation in commercial technology can confer a huge competitive advantage to a country’s economy. But the pursuit of technological advancement must be moderated by human concerns of social benefit and fairness.

The state is uniquely well-placed to carry out this balancing act. However, choosing what kind of data governance regime to adopt is a deeply political act. The most important state actors in cyberspace have introduced vastly different legal codes, and developing countries tend to follow their biggest economic partners’ approach as they develop their own data strategies.

This new global landscape of data governance is still being mapped out.

The European Union, China, the United States and India each represent and typify a distinctive approach to data legislation. The European Union’s regime is differentiated by its firm emphasis on personal privacy and individual rights. This has arguably made it harder to trade in data-related products and services, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

China’s model asserts the central role of the state in regulating the flow and usage of data. It effectively establishes the state as a de facto data processor, directing the country’s efforts towards its goals of establishing ‘cyberspace sovereignty’ and leading global innovation in new digital technologies, including artificial intelligence.

The United States prioritizes the commercialization of personal data, reflecting a uniquely American ‘business-first’ approach.

Finally, India’s developing approach contains elements of Chinese-style data sovereignty, prioritizing government control and national laws, and European-style protection of individual rights. This offers an intriguing hybrid model, but it remains to be seen whether these principles are compatible in practice.

These clear differences in legislative regimes will have geopolitical consequences.

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fms0/m/fms0-monographs/194880>





Chinese Central Military Commission Issues New Outline of Joint Operations

OE Watch Commentary: China's Central Military Commission (CMC) has issued an outline for improving the joint combat capabilities of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). The CMC is China's senior military authority. According to a press release regarding the outline (which itself is not public) published by state-run press agency *Xinhua*, the document represents the highest level of the Chinese military's system of operational regulations and is meant to clarify responsibilities and generally standardize how operations work at higher levels across the PLA.

While references to the PLA's joint operations appeared in white papers in the early 2000s, real progress toward actually reaching that goal has only appeared in the past ten years. At the end of 2015, the CMC reorganized China's military regions into a system of joint Theater Commands and abolished the General Staff Department in favor of a Joint Staff Department with clearer lines of communication and a less dominant role for PLA ground forces.

The 2019 Defense White Paper released by the Chinese State Council previously committed the PLA to “generally achieve mechanization by the year 2020 with significantly enhanced informatization and greatly improved strategic capabilities,” essentially completing modernization by 2035 and “fully transforming” into “world-class forces” by 2050.

In October 2020, a communiqué released after the fifth plenary session of the 19th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee committed China to build a “fully modern military” by 2027, the centennial of the PLA's founding.

According to the excerpted press release, the outline seems to build on the progress detailed in these previous white papers. As such, “The CMC has ordered all levels of the armed forces to study and implement the outline.” The adoption of a unified set of guidelines is another important step toward building a joint force. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The results of these reforms have great significance for the consolidation and deepening of the outcomes of reform regarding leadership and command structure, force structure, as well as for the PLA's joint operational capabilities.”



General Li Zuocheng, chief of the Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission.

Source: Chief Petty Officer Elliott Fabrizio via Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/48/China%E2%80%99s_Central_Military_Commission_Gen_Li_Zuocheng.jpg, Public Domain

Source: “经中央军委主席习近平批准 中央军委印发《中国人民解放军联合作战纲要（试行）》,” (Following Approval by CMC Chairman Xi Jinping, the CMC Issues the Outline of PLA Joint Operations [Trial Implementation]), *Xinhua*, 13 November 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-11/13/c_1126735392.htm

Following approval by Central Military Commission (CMC) Chairman Xi Jinping, the CMC has issued the Outline of People's Liberation Army Joint Operations (Trial), which went into effect beginning on 7 November 2020.

The Outline adheres to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics in the New Era, thoroughly implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Strengthening the military and the military's strategic guideline for a New Era. Focusing on achieving the Party's goal of strengthening the military in the New Era, and transforming the people's armed forces into world-class forces, [the Outline] is focused on establishing a system of regulations for joint operations, establishing basic concepts, systems, clarifying basic responsibilities, and answering major questions of “which wars to fight” and “How to fight them” from an institutional level, stressing the importance of combat preparedness.

The results of these reforms have great significance for the consolidation and deepening of the outcomes of reform regarding leadership and command structure, force structure, as well as for the PLA's joint operational capabilities.

The Outline represents the highest level of the Chinese military's system of operational regulations in the New Era and emphasizes guiding ideas and principles, focusing on providing macro-level guidance and overall standardization, clarifying basic issues of joint operations organization and implementation, unifying thought on combat, clarifying the sequence of authority and responsibility, and clarifies major principles, requirements and basic procedures for conducting joint operations as well as operational support, national defense mobilization, political work, etc.

The CMC has ordered all levels of the armed forces to study and implement the outline, and take it as the fundamental basis for organizing joint combat and training activities, so as to comprehensively improve the military's ability to fight and win wars in the new era.



China Lays Out Technology Road Map to Catch Up with the United States

OE Watch Commentary: Chinese state-run People’s Publishing House, recently released a booklet that provides guidance for the military to catch up with the United States in military capability. According to the following article, published by the *South China Morning Post*, a Hong Kong-based news source, China’s goal is to have the People’s Liberation Army transformed into a modern military force by 2027. In order to accomplish that, China needs to rely on smart technologies and it needs to “keep pace with the developments of the times. This includes keeping pace with evolving theories, formations, personnel, and strategic management.” The article concludes that China needs to strengthen its military so that the military can catch up with the country’s global economic status. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“History has repeatedly proven that a strong nation can only be built with both economic and military power ... when the ‘sword’ is not sharp enough, a nation may fall.”

Source: “China’s Military Lays Out Technology Road Map to Catch Up with the US,” *South China Morning Post*, 12 November 2020, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3109443/chinas-military-modernisation-must-be-driven-innovation>

China must apply cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence if it wants to transform its military into a modern fighting force on a par with those of other leading powers, according to ... a booklet published this month by the state-run People’s Publishing House, in which senior officials, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, outlined the latest five-year plan for the country’s development.

According to a communique released after a high-level meeting last month, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) will be transformed into a modern military force by 2027. Analysts say China’s aim is to build an army that is on a par with that of the United States.

In an article titled “Speed up the Modernisation of Defence and Military” from the booklet, Xu Qiliang, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, stressed the importance of smart technologies in modernising the PLA.

“[China has to] keep pace with the developments of the times and emphasize the use of smart technologies to achieve interdisciplinary innovation,” Xu said.

That would involve modernising military theories, formations, personnel and strategic management, he said.

“History has repeatedly proven that a strong nation can only be built with both economic and military power ... when the ‘sword’ is not sharp enough, a nation may fall,” he said.



China’s cyber policy appears to have three vectors —peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner— that dominate China’s cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>



China Questions Safety Issues in Military Intelligentization

OE Watch Commentary: The growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military sector has prompted two Chinese researchers to take a close look at the safety issues of military intelligentization. The term, intelligentization, is a uniquely Chinese concept that uses AI's rapid machine processing capability in military planning, operational command, and decision support. Chinese military strategists believe that developing intelligentization will change the structure and outcome of warfare to their advantage.

In the following article, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, the People's Liberation Army's official newspaper, the authors argue that due to the complexity, confrontational strategies, and autonomous nature of intelligentized weapons and equipment, as well as the unpredictable nature of intelligentized warfare, the military is facing three categories of safety issues.

First, there is the "issue of safe control." Basically, safety can be compromised by human error or mechanical malfunction. These factors can result in the loss of control over intelligentized weapons and equipment, causing them not to function the way they are intended. The result can be disastrous with the equipment turning "the muzzle to fire at their own creator and owner."

Second, there is the "issue of safe protection." The authors note that compared to mechanized and informatized combat systems, the command and control of intelligentized military systems is more centralized and more complex. Intelligentized military systems consist of more sensitive electronic components and longer information transmission links. These factors, coupled with military intelligentization being in the embryonic stage, make the systems more vulnerable to attack and interference. This could then lead to their paralysis and incapacitation.

Finally, there is the issue of safety ethics. This has to do with the accidental killing of innocent civilians through drone strikes. The authors explain that the nature of war has changed from close-up fighting to using technology that allows for long-range and over-the-horizon intelligentized strikes. This has a desensitizing effect, weakening human resistance to killing. It is also lowering the threshold of war. The authors write that this can create moral and ethical issues.

According to the article, the safety issues in military intelligentization are complex, but the bottom line to resolving these issues is more training and more research and development to advance the technology. They also suggest that legislation on the research and development and employment of intelligentized weapons and equipment be enacted as soon as possible. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“It is a must to solve the safety issues encountered in the development of military intelligentization through the innovative development of military intelligence technology.”

Source: “重视军事智能化发展安全问题 (Attach Importance to Safety Issues in the Development of Military Intelligentization),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 13 October 2020, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2020-10/13/content_273276.htm

The rapid development of artificial intelligence, as well as its wide applications in the military sector, does not make our world safer. On the contrary, because of the confrontational strategy of military intelligentization, the complex intelligentization technology, the “autonomous” actions of intelligentized weapons and equipment, and the unpredictable intelligentized warfare have made the safety issues faced by military intelligentization more prominent.

Issue of Safe Control...

Issue of Safe Protection...

Issue of Safety Ethics...

The causes of the safety issues in military intelligentization are complex...

The high-degree integration between human and machine has turned the hail of bullets and the fight with flesh and blood on the traditional battlefield into a “game” of bytes and codes. Long-range and over-the-horizon intelligentized strikes have gradually weakened humans’ resistance to killing each other and also lowered the threshold for war. The voids in those guidelines and laws are the source of the moral and ethical issues in military intelligentization.

To exert effort to eliminate potential safety risks in military intelligentization. The development of artificial intelligence, building of an intelligentized military, and winning over intelligentized warfare require adhering to dialectical thinking, being problem-oriented, striving to make the best of one’s strengths and avoid one’s weaknesses, and eliminate potential negative factors and unsafe issues. To speed up the development of military intelligence technology.

S&T is the core combat capability. Military intelligence technology is an important leading and disruptive force to drive future combat capability building. It is a must to solve the safety issues encountered in the development of military intelligentization through the innovative development of military intelligence technology.

To enact legislation on R&D and employment of intelligentized weapons and equipment as soon as possible. To solve the safety issues in military intelligentization at the root, it is essential to establish guidelines for the R&D and employment of military intelligence technology; incorporate military R&D and employment of artificial intelligence with the building of morals, ethics, and laws; and formulate generally recognized and binding international norms based on joint studies and efforts from different countries, so as to put a halter on the system for the development of military intelligentization.



An Indian Perspective on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)

OE Watch Commentary: On 6 October, the foreign ministers of India, Japan, Australia and the United States met in Tokyo as part of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or QUAD—an informal strategic forum. As the accompanying passage in *Swarajyamag*, an Indian monthly print magazine, reports, the QUAD was initiated in 2007, but was mostly inactive until November 2017, when it was resurrected “to counter China’s growing influence over the South China Sea, its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), debt-trap diplomacy and expansionism.” The magazine, which reports favorably on the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, featured an article that discussed the pros and cons of the QUAD from an Indian perspective.

The article starts out by providing some background of the group, noting that it has faced criticism over its lack of formal structure. It points out that there have been calls for institutionalization, to formalize the group as a formidable anti-China bloc. It notes that India has historically been hesitant to explicitly define its “anti-China associations,” but the recent border confrontations at Ladakh gives it reason to reconsider the benefits of such formalization.

The article then briefly describes how each member state “has faced the heat of China’s increased aggression” in recent years: trying to influence Australia’s domestic policies and imposing punitive tariffs on the country; engaging in the border confrontation with India; and flaring up territorial disputes with Japan regarding the Senkaku Islands. And with the United States, the article notes China “is battling a fully-fledged trade war.” Meanwhile, it also points out that China has exported a deadly virus to the world and refused to take responsibility. Therefore, the article argues that the resurrected QUAD has greater potential because the four member countries have “greater grudges against the dragon than they did during QUAD 1.0.”

The article points out how the recent meeting did not yield a common statement, but rather each country issued individual statements, with the United States being the only country “to specifically call out the Chinese Communist Party.” It points out, “The United States is keen on institutionalizing the QUAD and wants to shape it on the lines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an Asian NATO of sorts. It seeks to militarize the alliance.”

From an Indian perspective, the author claims there is much to be gained in cementing military ties with the QUAD, writing, “such an alliance would be a useful counter to China’s string of pearls and its all-weather friendship with Pakistan.” On the other hand, he writes that the present structure, “or rather the lack of one has its own benefits. It allows India significant diplomatic posturing without negating the scope of de-escalation with China.” The Indian Foreign Minister’s opening comments during the meeting signaled “India’s desire to keep out external interference in its bilateral matters.” Furthermore, the author writes that the loose, informal structure prevents the QUAD from becoming a closed, exclusive club; and enables it to have external participation, noting for example, a teleconference regarding the coronavirus pandemic between the QUAD and New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam. Overall, the author appears to favor the QUAD as “a geostrategic vision and a foreign policy instrument for India to balance China via global networking,” rather than a formalized anti-China alliance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Secretary Pompeo Participates in the US Australia Japan Strategic Dialogue, 2019.

Source: U.S. Department of State from United States, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Secretary_Pompeo_Participates_in_the_US_Australia_Japan_Strategic_Dialogue_\(48430172021\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Secretary_Pompeo_Participates_in_the_US_Australia_Japan_Strategic_Dialogue_(48430172021).jpg), Public domain

“QUAD is, through its intent, a label, a geostrategic vision and a foreign policy instrument for India to balance China via global networking.”



Continued: An Indian Perspective on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)

Source: “Here are the Profits and Pitfalls for India if we Formalize an Anti-China Bloc,” *Swarajyamag.com*, 16 October 2020. <https://swarajyamag.com/world/quad-here-are-the-profits-and-pitfalls-for-india-if-we-formalise-an-anti-china-bloc>

On 6 October, the foreign ministers of India, Japan, Australia and the United States met in Tokyo amidst the coronavirus pandemic as part of their continued efforts to revive the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or QUAD.

This grouping of four democracies was revived in 2017 to counter China’s growing influence over the South China Sea. The dragon’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), debt-trap diplomacy and expansionism are concerns that have led to fairly regular interactions between the member states both in 2018 and 2019.

However, despite renewed efforts, the QUAD has faced criticism over its lack of formal structure. There have been calls for institutionalization, a formal agreement to transform the group into a formidable anti-China bloc. While India has been historically hesitant over explicitly defining its anti-China associations, the recent border confrontations at Ladakh give us enough cause to reassess the profits and pitfalls of such formalization.

... Each member state has faced the heat of China’s increased aggression. China has grown in might and influence and is keen on picking up fights. After attempting to influence Australia’s domestic policies, it slapped punitive tariffs on the country. It is engaged in what has become a routine border confrontation with India. China has flared up territorial disputes with Japan with regards to the Senkaku Islands and is battling a fully-fledged trade war with the United States. It has exported a deadly virus to the world and has refused to take responsibility for the pandemic. The four countries today have greater grudges against the dragon than they did during QUAD 1.0. Therefore, the reincarnated QUAD has greater potential.

The recent Tokyo meet saw the iteration for a “free and open Indo-Pacific” however, what was also displayed was a lack of commitment. There was no joint statement, instead each country issued individual statements. Amidst oblique references, America was the sole country to specifically call out the Chinese Communist Party.

The QUAD is often called a coalition without commitment. It, in its present form, is nebulous without a structure or a secretariat. The United States is keen on institutionalizing the QUAD and wants to shape it on the lines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an Asian NATO of sorts. It seeks to militarize the alliance.

The Indian Perspective

So far the QUAD has operated in the realm of strategic dialogue, white paper iterations and occasional military drills. As Japan and Australia already have military alliances with the United States, the success of formalization hinges on India’s participation. Delhi has been cautious in its approach. It has much to gain in cementing its military ties. Such an alliance would be a useful counter to China’s string of pearls and its all-weather friendship with Pakistan.

Steps have already been taken to further cooperation in this regard. India has conducted joint exercises and maritime drills in the Indian Ocean with Japan and the US. India, Japan and the US are part of the annual Malabar Military Exercise, and India is planning to extend Australia an invite — a move it earlier held off out of fear of antagonizing China.

Apart from military gains, institutionalization through mutual assistance treaties can provide clear geostrategic goals.

However, the present structure or rather the lack of one has its own benefits. It allows India significant diplomatic posturing without negating the scope of de-escalation with China.

Delhi has recognized QUAD’s potential as demonstrated by Foreign Minister S Jaishankar’s opening remark at the Tokyo meet: “The fact that we are meeting here today in person despite a global pandemic is a testimony to the importance that these consultations have gained, particularly in recent times.”

However, his veiled references to China and the QUAD falling shy of collectively naming the dragon signals India’s desire to keep out external interference in its bilateral matters.

The loose structure also prevents the QUAD from becoming a closed exclusive club. It accommodates the interests of the member states while providing for incipient expansion and multilateralism.

For example, in March this year, a teleconference regarding the coronavirus pandemic with the QUAD members saw the participation of New Zealand, South Korea and Vietnam. This allows India to use the platform to enhance engagement with not just stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region but also amongst countries world over that regard China as a global threat.

Additionally, the QUAD has served the function of taking off the heat from the diplomatic networking India has performed on the sidelines. India has successfully upped its bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral engagements with members of the QUAD in terms of both defense and trade partnerships.

QUAD is, through its intent, a label, a geostrategic vision and a foreign policy instrument for India to balance China via global networking. When a tipping point is reached, it provides scope for the forging of an alliance amongst the world’s most formidable militaries. Until then, the QUAD’s future as a platform for multilateral engagement is secure.



Indian Defense Chief Sees Collusion Between China and Pakistan

OE Watch Commentary: Indian Media conglomerate *NDTV* recently posted partial transcripts and analysis of a two-day (6-7 November) virtual seminar given by India’s Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat, and organized by India’s National Defence College. Although Rawat admitted that India faced a variety of threats, much of the general’s address was focused on tensions with China. According to the excerpted article, Rawat reiterated the oft-stated Indian position on Chinese actions near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) where violent clashes took place in June 2020. Rawat reemphasized India’s heroic and dedicated moves to counter what the Indians see as China’s aggressive efforts to challenge the existing disputed border, stating that India “will not accept any shifting of the LAC.”

According to the published transcripts, the defense chief also accused China and Pakistan of conspiring against India saying, “‘increasing collusion’ poses an ‘omnipresent danger’ of regional strategic instability and threatens India’s territorial integrity.”

It is no mystery that India has been engaged in a decades long struggle against Pakistan. It is also a fact that the disputed LAC between India and China is located in territory that Pakistan claims. According to Rawat, a proxy war “unleashed by Pakistan in [India-administered] Jammu and Kashmir accompanied by a ‘vicious’ anti-India rhetoric on social media and efforts to create social disharmony within India have taken Indo-Pak relations to a new low.”

Rawat stated that Pakistan will remain the epicenter of armed insurgency and terrorism while continuing to claim that Pakistan considers Kashmir “unfinished business.” However, beyond those statements, Rawat shared no specific evidence regarding China-Pakistan collusion. He did, however, continue lump them together in a dual-threat scenario: “This gets further compounded by the phenomenal economic and military rise of China and the unique hybrid capabilities of Pakistan.”

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Both Pakistan and China have territorial claims against India. Pakistan and China also enjoy a fairly harmonious relationship since the Sino-Soviet Split in 1959, which drove India closer to Russia as a move to balance power in the region. These political dynamics of the 1950s-1960s created a Pakistan-China axis and an India-Russia axis, both of which continue to be relevant today, especially along the disputed India/Kashmir-China frontier [see: “The Limit of Russia-Pakistan Security Cooperation,” OE Watch, December 2020]. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**



Map of Disputed Kashmir Region.

Source: CIA, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/36/Kashmir_Region_%282020_skirmish_locations%29.jpg, Public Domain

“The constant friction with two of our nuclear-armed neighbours with whom India has fought wars, with both increasingly acting in collusion, poses an omnipresent danger of regional strategic instability with potential for escalation, threatening our territorial integrity and strategic cohesion.”



Continued: Indian Defense Chief Sees Collusion Between China and Pakistan

Source: Chinese Army Facing “Unanticipated Consequences” For Misadventure: Defence Chief, NDTV, 7 November 2020. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/chinese-army-facing-unanticipated-consequences-for-misadventure-defence-chief-bipin-rawat-2321909>

China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is facing “unanticipated consequences” for its misadventure in eastern Ladakh because of the “firm and strong” responses by the Indian armed forces and the possibility of transgressions and confrontations on the Line of Actual Control spiraling into a larger conflict cannot be ruled out, Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat said on Friday.

In an address at a virtual seminar, General Rawat said the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh remained tense and that India’s posturing to deal with it has been “unambiguous”, adding the country will not accept any shifting of the LAC.

Talking about myriad external security challenges facing the nation, Gen Rawat also referred to “increasing collusion” between Pakistan and China and said it poses an “omnipresent danger” of regional strategic instability and threatens India’s territorial integrity.

“The situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh remains tense. The PLA is facing unanticipated consequences of its misadventure in Ladakh because of the Indian defence force’s firm and strong response. Our posturing is unambiguous and we will not accept any shifting of the LAC,” he said “In the overall security calculus, border confrontations, transgressions and unprovoked tactical military actions spiraling into a larger conflict cannot, therefore, be discounted,” the Chief of Defence Staff(CDS) said at the seminar organised by the National Defence College.

“The constant friction with two of our nuclear-armed neighbours with whom India has fought wars, with both increasingly acting in collusion, poses an omnipresent danger of regional strategic instability with potential for escalation, threatening our territorial integrity and strategic cohesion.”

The Chief of Defence Staff said the “unabated proxy war” unleashed by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir accompanied by a “vicious” anti-India rhetoric on social media and efforts to create social disharmony within India have taken Indo-Pak relations to a new low.

“The surgical strikes post Uri terror attack and the Balakot air strikes have delivered a strong message to Pakistan that it no longer enjoys the impunity of pushing terrorists across the Line of Control under the nuclear bogey,” he said.

“The new Indian template has injected ambiguity and uncertainty in Pakistan, evident in its media reports, about Indian Armed Forces reaction, if Pakistan sponsored terrorists cross the threshold of tolerance,” Gen Rawat added.

The Defence Chief said despite internal problems, failing economy, international isolation and vitiated civil-military relations, Pakistan will continue to “profess” that Kashmir is their “unfinished agenda”.

“And its Army will continue to raise the bogey of an existential threat from India to justify its disproportionately large strength and need for funds to maintain its war fighting capabilities,” he said.

Gen Rawat said Pakistan has continued to remain the epicenter of armed insurgency and terrorism.

“For three decades now, the Pakistan Army and the ISI - known as the ‘Deep State’ have been waging a proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir and are now increasingly resorting to non kinetic means by launching vicious anti India rhetoric on social media and propagating false communal narratives to create social disharmony within India,” he said.

...

Referring to evolving geo-political situation, the Defence Chief said China, with its ambition of emerging as a global power, is already making inroads into South Asia, Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and especially East Africa through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

“Chinese aspirations are evident in the ever-expanding Chinese military maritime footprints in the Indo-Pacific, huge investments in the IOR littorals, and entering into strategic partnerships with a number of countries in the region like South Africa, Egypt, Pakistan and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN),” he said.

...

““For India the challenges have manifested with military flare-ups along the LAC. In the coming years we are likely to witness aggressive pursuit of hegemonic interests by China manifesting through economic exploitation of weaker nations.”

...

“This gets further compounded by the phenomenal economic and military rise of China and the unique hybrid capabilities of Pakistan and machinations of its Deep State.

...

He said it has raised a ‘Strategic Support Force; that is acquiring capabilities in space, cyber and electronic warfare domain to conduct an “intelligentised” form of warfare.

(Except for the headline, this story has not been edited by NDTV staff and is published from a syndicated feed.)



Continued: Indian Defense Chief Sees Collusion Between China and Pakistan

Source: “Larger Conflict Can’t Be Discounted,” General Bipin Rawat Warns On China, *NDTV*, 6 November 2020. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/general-bipin-rawat-chief-of-defence-staff-border-confrontations-unprovoked-actions-spiraling-into-larger-conflict-cant-be-discounted-news-agency-pta-2321463>

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat warned today that a “larger conflict” with China cannot be ruled out if border confrontations and unprovoked military actions spiraled. General Rawat also said China and Pakistan acting in collusion meant an omnipresent danger of regional instability with potential for escalation.

While the General indicated that a full scale conflict with China is low on probability, he cautioned: “In the overall security calculus, border confrontation, transgressions and unprovoked tactical military actions spiralling into a larger conflict cannot be discounted.” These are the most direct remarks made by anyone in the government on China and the possibility of the crisis festering in Ladakh since May spinning out of control.

Referring to China’s ambitions as an aggressive pursuit of hegemonic interests, General Rawat said the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) - the de facto border between the two countries - remained tense amid transgressions and belligerent action by the Chinese.

...

Referring to the China-Pakistan nexus, General Rawat said: “Constant friction with two of our nuclear-armed neighbours with whom India has fought wars increasingly acting in collusion, poses an omnipresent danger of regional strategic instability with potential for escalation, threatening our territorial integrity and strategic cohesion.”

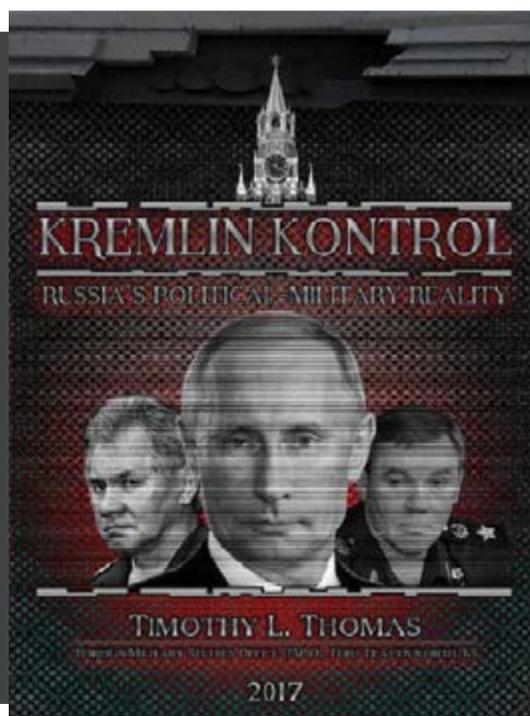
India and China have held seven rounds of military talks to resolve the standoff in Eastern Ladakh that started in May and saw unprecedented escalation in June when 20 Indian soldiers died for the country in a physical clash with Chinese troops at Galwan Valley.

General Rawat’s remarks came as India and China began their eighth round of talks to discuss de-escalation and disengagement by both sides from all points of friction. There has been very little progress so far in these talks.

In August, Chinese soldiers tried to close in on Indian troops who reclaimed key heights at the northern and southern banks of Pangong Tso overlooking Chinese posts, and there was firing in the air for the first time in decades.

“The persisting boundary dispute, China’s support to Pakistan, its increasing influence in south Asia through the Belt and Road Initiative and an unbalanced economic relationship is likely to ensure that in the near future, the Sino-Indian relationship will remain a fundamental competitive one,” General Rawat said.

On Pakistan, he said the “new Indian template to deal with terror” had injected ambiguity and uncertainty in the country, which was continuing its proxy war through cross-border terror. “Unabated proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir unleashed by Pakistan, a vicious anti-India rhetoric on social media and efforts to create disharmony within India have taken India-Pakistan ties to a new low,” he said.



In 2016, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov instituted sweeping changes that have reorganized the country’s security forces and reestablished the nation’s military prowess. This study, *Kremlin Kontrol*, aims to describe how control over the security services and the military have hastened those changes.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/197266/download>



Chinese Mobile Apps and China's Increasing Digital International Presence

OE Watch Commentary: The first two accompanying articles from Chinese sources discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the emergence of new Chinese mobile app technologies that are likely here to stay. The third article from an Italian source warns that China's rising use of mobile apps has accelerated its digital international presence, which could lead to Chinese dominance over international digital networks and tools. If control over data is the great power competition of the 21st century, China is rising quickly via its mobile apps.

The first article from *Global Times*, an English-language Chinese newspaper under the auspices of the Chinese Communist Party's *People's Daily* newspaper, provides an example how a Chinese app was used amid the pandemic's emergence. Passengers flying to Beijing had to register their information in an app called "Jingxin Xiangzhu" and provide information about their residential community or hotel after arrival.



Alibaba and WeChat pay signs at a Burger King in China.

Source: N509FZ via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alipay_and_WeChat_pay_signs_in_BurgerKing_ZBAA_\(20170309123855\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alipay_and_WeChat_pay_signs_in_BurgerKing_ZBAA_(20170309123855).jpg) Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

The second article from *China Daily*, an English-language daily newspaper owned by the Chinese Communist Party, explains how the Chinese mobile application market was thriving by April and had "witnessed new growth opportunities amid the novel coronavirus outbreak." According to the article, average mobile usage had risen by 30% to reach five hours a day in China compared to February 2019. "Business and education apps were among the most widely used as many chose to work and study from home," the article reports. It also quotes a Chinese academic who says that the pandemic has raised demand in sectors such as "telecommuting, online education, fresh food e-commerce, entertainment and health and fitness apps." The academic also forecasts that China's mobile app market will continue to grow as prevention and control of the pandemic will become part of people's daily lives. He also claims that the consumers who have experienced new digital services will "maintain the new consumption habits after the epidemic ends," which will "accelerate the digital transformation of... industries, which will help inject new impetus for the growth of the app market in China."

The third article by an expert at the *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*, a think-tank, explains how such mobile apps were critical in turning China's economy around, following the emergence of the pandemic. The author notes that China's GDP contracted by 6.8% in the first quarter of 2020; but quickly recovered in the second quarter of 2020, with China "becoming the only G-20 member to emerge from the recession with a 3.2% increase in GDP." He claims that mobile apps, in particular, were one of the key drivers of this recovery, noting that Chinese applications allowed local businesses to increase their profits by up to 120% during the months of the lockdown.

However, he warns that a swift economic recovery was not the only thing that apps enabled. They also "accelerated China's digital international presence and influence under the Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiative," which he defines as the digital route of the Belt and Road Initiative. The author writes that the DSR ultimately leads to policies related to digital governance, cybersecurity and data-sharing, endangering personal privacy. By using its infrastructure-building approach to expand its network access capabilities, China is amassing new kinds of data. The author warns that this is China's push for "international primacy over digital networks and tools" within the international digital battlefield. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“The recent increase in mobile apps and electronic devices... accelerated China's digital international presence and influence under the Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiative.”



Continued: Chinese Mobile Apps and China's Increasing Digital International Presence

Source: “Head-to-toe measures in China prevent imported infection from overseas arrivals,” *Global Times (China)*, 9 March 2020. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1182031.shtml>

At Frankfurt airport, notices written in Chinese and English were posted at gates for flights to China reminding transfer passengers to input their passport information. Passengers to Beijing had to register their information in an app called “Jingxin Xiangzhu” and provide information of their residential community or hotel after arrival.

Source: “China’s mobile application market is thriving,” *China Daily*, 14 April 2020. http://www.china.org.cn/business/2020-04/14/content_75929201.htm

Chinese mobile application market is thriving, and it has witnessed new growth opportunities amid the novel coronavirus outbreak, global business intelligence firm App Annie said in a new report.

...
Due to the novel coronavirus outbreak, average mobile usage has risen by 30 percent to five hours a day in China from a year ago during February, the App Annie report said. Business and education apps were among the most widely used as many chose to work and study from home.

...
Ouyang Rihui, assistant dean of the China Center for Internet Economy Research at Central University of Finance and Economics, said: “The epidemic has triggered demand in emerging sectors such as telecommuting, online education, fresh food e-commerce, entertainment and health and fitness apps.”

China’s mobile app market will continue to grow as the coronavirus epidemic prevention and control work gradually becomes part of people’s daily life, he said.

According to him, many people will continue to study and work from home and spend more time indoors.... “A growing number of consumers have experienced new digital services, and they will maintain the new consumption habits after the epidemic ends,” Ouyang said. “It will also accelerate the digital transformation of traditional industries, which will help inject new impetus for the growth of the app market in China.”

Source: Davide Fanciulli, “A Digital Ascent: The Revolution of Chinese Mobile Apps,” *Italian Institute for International Political Studies*, 27 October 2020. <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/digital-ascent-revolution-chinese-mobile-apps-28005>

With more than 1.4 billion people forced to lockdown and a total of 85,500 cases, China has undoubtedly represented the main protagonist during the initial phase of the Covid pandemic. In light of the containment measures adopted by Xi Jinping, the Chinese economy saw its GDP contracting by 6.8% in the first quarter of 2020, slowing down the rise of the People’s Republic in one of the heaviest crisis faced by the nation in the last decades. Despite the abrupt deceleration, the country managed to quickly recover in the second quarter of 2020, becoming the only G20 member to emerge from the recession with a 3.2% increase in GDP. Together with a general loosening of the containment measures, the immediate, advanced and strategic use of technology and, in particular, of mobile apps certainly represented one of the key drivers of the recovery. ...In China mobile apps such as Shuishenma and Jingxin Xiangzhu, owned by the tech-giants Tencent and Alibaba, allowed more than 1.1 billion people to monitor the health-status of their contacts through simple QR codes. ... In China applications like DingTalk and Taobao allowed local businesses to increase their profits by up to 120% during the months of the lockdown. ...

During the months of the lockdown, the mobile apps’ usage has in fact risen by more than 30% across the country, reaching 5 hours a day spent on average on the screen.... Nevertheless, such post-pandemic new and increasingly digitalized normal must be intended and read within a broader picture: the recent increase in mobile apps and electronic devices usage did not only represent a safe space during the coronavirus, it did not only stimulate a swift economic recovery, but it most certainly accelerated China’s digital international presence and influence under the Digital Silk Road (DSR) initiative.

The DSR represents the third main declension of the Belt and Road Initiative, not only characterized by an overland and a maritime route, but now more than ever marked by its digital one. As a matter of fact, in a time where physical transports of whatever sort have been abruptly hit, China has been able to promptly redirect its expanding strategies in the realm of technologies and digital ecosystems through the emphasis on tools such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT). ... The ultimate aim of such programs is not only a national push on innovation and technology, but also and most importantly an international primacy over digital networks and tools....



Iran: We Have Five Years to Grow the Population

OE Watch Commentary: It has become fashionable in both journalistic and diplomatic accounts to discuss the youth bulge in the Middle East. But while Arab states like Egypt and Iraq have baby booms and a population whose median age is declining, after the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, Iran saw one of the world's sharpest declines in birth rates. Indeed, the Iranian birthrate today is less than half of what it was in the period immediately following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. This is likely why Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has delivered at least two major speeches over the past few years highlighting the need to reverse declining birth rates and to combat Iran's high divorce rate, which leads many women to forego having children or prevents them from having larger families.

The excerpted article from the hardline *Fars News Agency* suggests that Khamenei's past entreaties have not worked and Iran is now facing a demographic crisis and has a limited time—perhaps just four or five years—to reverse it. Parliamentarian Hojjatoleslam Hossein Mirzaei sounded the alarm and outlined a plan to remedy it, including free land, subsidies, a national fund to support childrearing, and health support in order to encourage younger Iranians to have children and pull Iran back from a demographic precipice. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“If this golden time is lost, we will definitely see a crisis.”

Source: “Ozu-ye Komisiyon-e Farhang-e Majles: 5 Sal Bara-ye Rashad Jome'at-e Farsat Darim (Member of the Parliamentary Cultural Commission: We have five years to grow the population),” *Fars News Agency*, 5 November 2020. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/13990815000417>

We Have Five Years to Grow the Population

The Azad News Agency has conducted an interview with Hojjatoleslam Hossein Mirzaei, a member of the parliament's cultural commission, the important parts of which are as follows: If the fertility rate in the country does not reach the replacement level, the population will gradually age and thousands of problems will arise for the entire population. The goal of the population youth plan and family support is to prevent that until we reach a critical point in the population debate. There are 4 to 5 years of opportunities to help fertility and population growth in the country. If this golden time is lost, we will definitely see a crisis.



Hojjatoleslam Hossein Mirzaei.

Source: FarsNews.ir, https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1399/08/12/13990812000841_Test_PhotoN.jpg



Iran: Construction Begins on the Chahbahar-Zahedan Railway

OE Watch Commentary: Chahbahar has long been an Iranian backwater. It was a sleepy port mostly serving dhow traffic and smugglers, more than 400 miles away from Zahedan, the provincial capital and itself a dusty outpost. The climate is harsh and living standards impoverished.

Over the past decade, however, Chahbahar has grown in economic and strategic importance. China seeks to fold the town into its ‘string of pearls’ network of military-capable ports across the Indian Ocean basin. Chahbahar has also become important as a logistical hub for imports into Afghanistan, approximately 600 miles away.

Initially, India invested heavily in Chahbahar as a means to export its products into Afghanistan and Central Asia. Doing business with Iran is difficult at the best of times because of a lack of commercial law and Tehran’s refusal to uphold business norms. Iran cut India out of its proposed railway product four years ago after tensions mounted between Tehran and New Delhi regarding payments and services.



The Chahbahar-Zahedan railway under construction.
Source: Mehr News Agency, <https://media.mehrnews.com/d/2020/10/21/3/3585307.jpg>

The excerpted story from *Mehr News Agency* was reportedly widely in the Iranian press and suggests that, even absent Indian investment, the Iranian government is now moving ahead with a major port and infrastructure expansion. The reported presence of Sardar Mohammad, commander of the local *Khatam al-Anbiya* unit, highlights the pivotal role which the economic wing of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps will play in Chahbahar’s expansion.

Because roads along the Makran Coast and in the interior of Iranian Baluchistan are so poor, the railroad, once completed, will bolster Chahbahar’s utility perhaps more than the new infrastructure of the Shahid Beheshti port facilities. Constructing a new border terminal in Milak suggests that Iran seeks to increase its transit role for Afghanistan trade and increase Baluchistan’s role in Iran’s economy more broadly.

While the plans to bolster Chahbahar’s role in the Iranian economy reduce Iran’s vulnerability to any blockade of the Strait of Hormuz and therefore seaborne trade from the major ports and oil terminals that line Iran’s Persian Gulf coast, the general instability of Iran’s southeast will continue to pose problems for the region’s economic development. The Baluch are not only an ethnic minority but, as Sunni, a sectarian one as well. The region is also known for instability wrought by drug smugglers who often challenge the Iranian border police and even Revolutionary Guard. Any increase in road and railway trade will simply present more targets for insurgents and criminal elements unless the government is able to impose greater security and rule-of-law in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Work began on the Chahbahar-Zahedan railway.”

Source: “Amaliyat-e Raylgozari Rahahan Chahbahar-Zahedan Aghaz Shod (Construction Operations on the Chahbahar-Zahedan Railway Have Begun),” *Mehr News Agency*, 4 November 2020. <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5063631>

Construction Operations on the Chahbahar-Zahedan Railway Have Begun

...This afternoon, work began on the Chahbahar-Zahedan railway in the presence of Mohammad Eslami, minister of Roads and Urban Development; Ahmad Ali Mohabati, governor of Sistan and Baluchestan; Sardar Mohammad, commander of Khatam Al-Anbiya encampment; Seyyid Amir Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, first deputy speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly [parliament], and a number of parliamentary representatives from the province.... It is worth noting that they visited the site of the new city of Tis, the new market of Rimdan on the Iran-Pakistan border, the Negin Makran petrochemical project, the implementation site of the Chahbahar-Zahedan railway section 8, and the commencement of the Chahbahar to Zahedan railroad project..., and they also visited the container terminal project of Shahid Beheshti port and the location of 100,000-ton grain silo construction project at Shahid Beheshti port, and the inauguration of construction on the Iranshahr to Khash, Zahedan to Bam, and Zahedan-Zabol roads, and also the Milak border terminal....

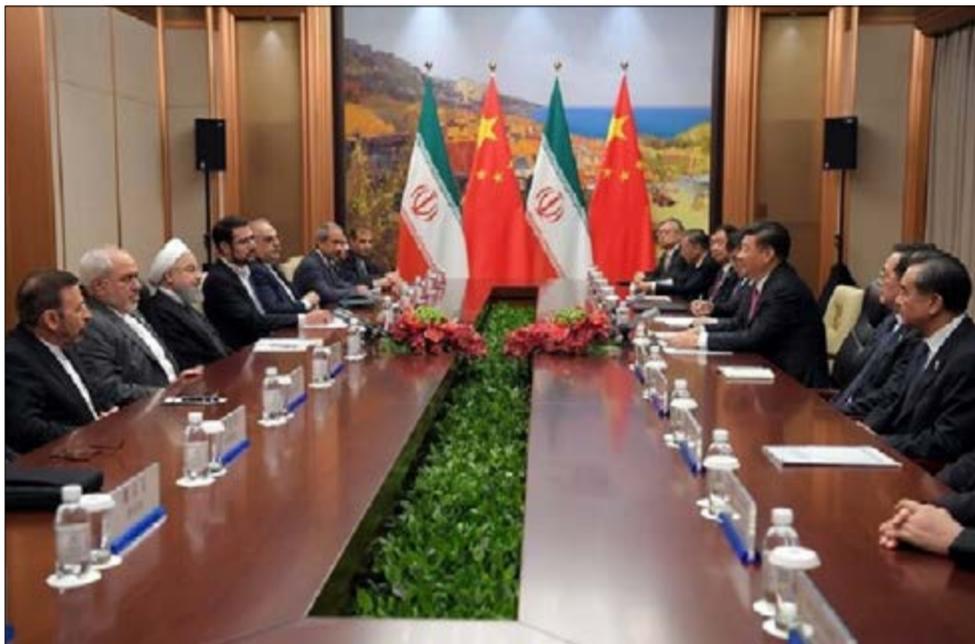


Iran: Conflicting Assessment of China Talks

OE Watch Commentary: Iran's new "strategic partnership" agreement with China made international headlines last July but, in the months since, negotiations have been mired in the details. The negotiations began during the administration of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) but, as implied in the excerpt of this article from *Donya-e Eghtesad*, perhaps Iran's top financial newspaper, may outlast his successor Hassan Rouhani, whose second term will end in 2021.

That *Donya-e Eghtesad* highlights the divergence between Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and his deputy for economic affairs reaffirms the pattern in which Iran's financial papers dryly skewer the Iranian government's official positions without comment by juxtaposing inconsistencies.

While the excerpt suggests a lack of consensus on drafts that must be worked through before anything can be finalized, the article also suggests that the threat of U.S. sanctions has also slowed China's willingness to deal with Iran. This in turn suggests that while Tehran highlights its partnership with China as a means to counter the United States, the view from Beijing is more nuanced and appears to prioritize economic opportunity above strategic factors. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Iran President Hassan Rouhani and Chinese President Xi Jinping sign cooperation agreements in Beijing, 11 June 2018.

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, <https://img9.irna.ir/d/r/2/2020/07/16/3/157216967.jpg>

“The only thing that can be done now is to wait.”

Source: “Mozakirat-e Iran-Chin Motavaqaf Nashodeh Ast (Iran-China Talks Have Not Stopped),” *Donya-e Eghtesad*, 5 November 2020. rb.gy/gx4jpg

Iran-China Talks Have Not Stopped

The 25-year comprehensive strategic cooperation plan between Iran and China is one of the most important developments in the Middle East region which, while deepening relations between the two countries, can also have a great impact on the quantity and quality of economic cooperation between the two countries and trade relations in the Middle East. The news of this strategic plan has caused growing concern among some American politicians who have long been trying to prevent the expansion of Iran's relations with China by so-called maximum pressure and harsh sanctions against the Iranian nation....

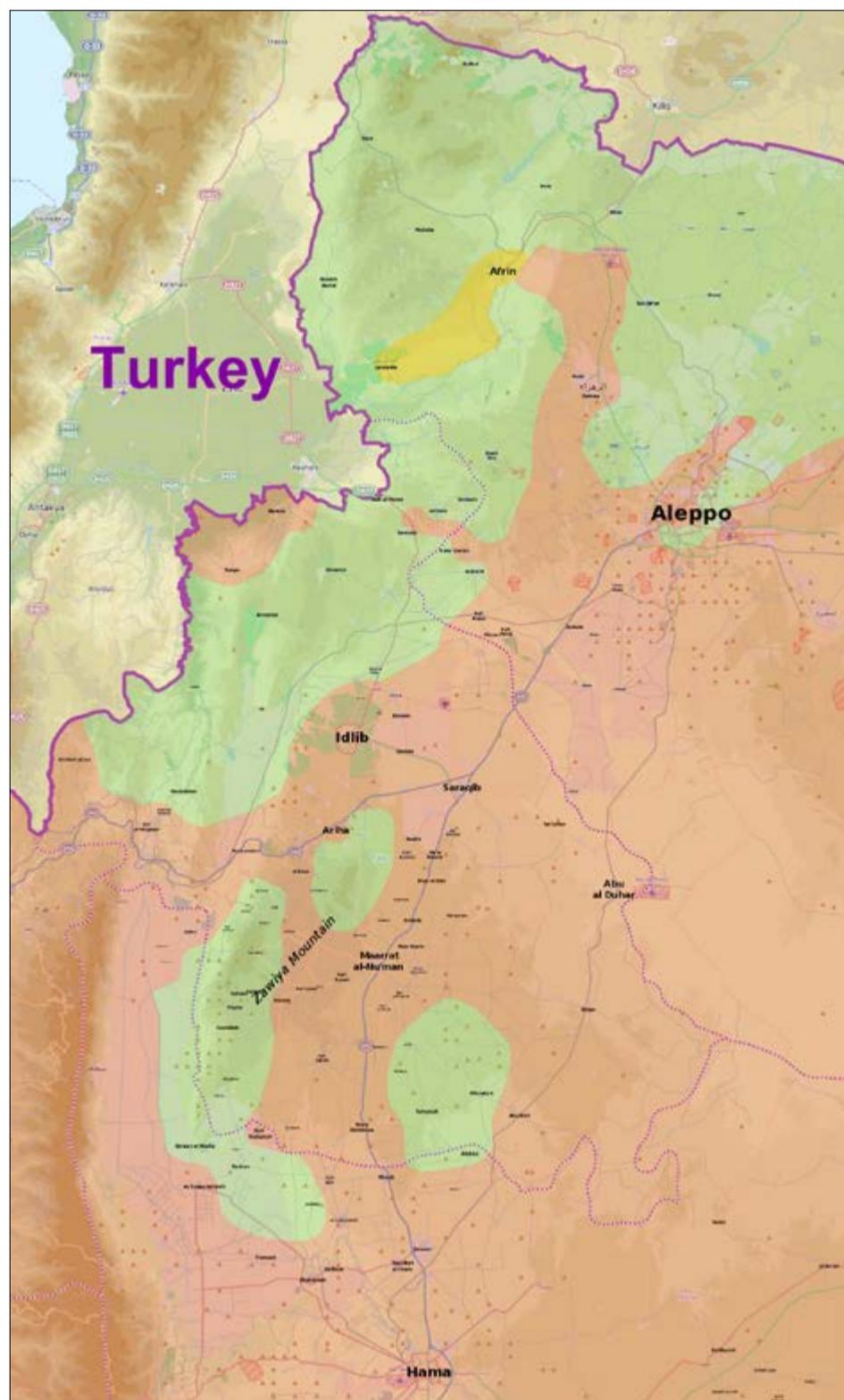
The developments come as [Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad] Zarif recently said Iran is ‘very close’ to a comprehensive agreement with China, but his deputy says it will take a long time. On the sidelines of the cabinet meeting, Zarif told Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting that the Chinese side had submitted a document based on Tehran's proposed draft and that Iran was ready to begin negotiations to finalize it. The Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Affairs, however, said that official travel between Iran and China had stopped and that we should “wait.”

The Islamic Students' News Agency reported on 24 July, citing the Islamic Republic's Deputy Foreign Minister for economic affairs that it would take “several drafts” for such a document to be finalized. Gholamreza Ansari said that the only thing that can be done now is to “wait,” and he said, “We have to wait for the negotiations to start, the content of the negotiations to be clear and the agreements to be clarified, then we can say how these documents should be published.” The Deputy Foreign Minister says that the beginning of the discussion on the long-term agreement with China dates back to the visit of the president of the country to Tehran in 2015.

Today, after five years, we are here to prepare the documents and negotiate,” he added. According to official reports, Iran's draft proposal for a document on long-term cooperation between Iran and China was approved by the cabinet in the early days of June and referred to the Foreign Ministry for follow-up and negotiation. According to some speculations, China's delay in finalizing the strategic cooperation document with Iran may not be unrelated to the severe U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic....



Is Turkey Preparing for War in Idlib?



Map showing the situation in Idlib governorate, August 15 2012.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Northwestern_Syria_%26_Aleppo_offensives_2015.svg via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Idlib_Governorate_\(August_15_2012\).svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Idlib_Governorate_(August_15_2012).svg), CC-BY-SA-4.0

also has reinforced its position with more military build-up. As the article points out, the possibility of a full-fledged war between Turkey and its proxy forces and a Syrian regime backed by Russia might be imminent.

The second article, from pro-Turkish government newspaper *Hürriyet*, summarizes the events leading up to Syrian regime forces capturing areas near Idlib and surrounding Turkish military outposts since the summer of 2019. The Syrian regime's offensive led to seven Turkish military outposts being surrounded and strategic portions of the M5 highway being captured by the Russia-supported Syrian army. The author points out that these military outposts being surrounded by the Syrian regime were a security risk for Turkish military personnel stationed there, and Turkey had to rely on Russia to reinforce and supply these outposts. Additionally, the article quotes *Hürriyet*'s Ankara correspondent saying Turkey is likely to reinforce other areas in the north closer to the Turkish border. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

OE Watch Commentary: Syria's Idlib province, the last rebel stronghold, continues to impact Turkey's relations with both Russia and the Syrian regime. Turkey had assumed responsibility (under the Astana and Sochi agreements, as well as the most recent Moscow agreement) to eliminate terrorist groups in Idlib, to prevent Russia and the Syrian regime from launching a military operation on the city. While Turkey faces challenges in keeping extremist groups under control, Russia and the Syrian regime have grown impatient to capture Idlib. The accompanying articles argue that Turkey seems to be preparing for a war in Idlib.

After the Turkish and Russian presidents brokered a deal to deescalate the fighting in Idlib on 5 March, the situation there has generally remained calm. However, the article from *Al-Monitor*, a news site with analysts from the Middle East, states that Turkey's withdrawal from Morek on 19-20 October, one of the 12 military observation posts Turkey established around Idlib, is an indication of a forthcoming war. Syrian regime forces surrounded some other Turkish observation posts "since their capture of the key M5 highway in February." Russia has been pressing Turkey to evacuate the surrounded outposts and Turkey will likely evacuate them. On 16 September, in military talks in the Turkish capital, Russian officials once again pressed Turkey "to leave the outposts, reduce its military presence elsewhere [in Syria], remove its heavy weapons from the region and push armed groups away from the M4 highway." The author suggests that this Russian pressure might be because of Turkey's involvement in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The author writes, "Turkey's withdrawal from observation posts may appear to be acquiescence to Russian pressure at first glance, but its military activities around the M4 speak of fresh war preparations."

The article explains that there is a Turkish military build-up in Idlib to thwart a possible offensive by the Syrian regime. Since the 5 March deal, "Turkey has sent two or three military convoys per week to Idlib, setting up some 140 military points equipped with armored vehicles, tanks, howitzers and air defense weapons around the M4 road." Turkey also has tried to create a unified front among armed opposition groups including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham and "the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army and National Front for Liberation under the banner of a joint military council." Meanwhile, the Syrian Army

“Turkey’s military buildup in Idlib may appear a deterrence effort, but is clearly setting a stage where a small spark might ignite a destructive war.”



Continued: Is Turkey Preparing for War in Idlib?

Source: “Turkey’s withdrawal in Idlib may be omen of war,” *al-Monitor*, 22 October 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/turkey-syria-russia-turkish-withdrawal-safe-zone-war-omen.html>

Turkey has begun withdrawing from military observation posts in regime-held enclaves in Idlib, the last rebel stronghold in Syria, but the move looks more like an omen of war for the region than a sign of reconciliation and retreat.

The outpost at Morek, one of several encircled by Syrian government forces since their capture of the key M5 highway in February, was evacuated Oct. 19-20, with others expected to follow suit.

Turkey has been under growing Russian pressure to leave the surrounded outposts. Most recently, the issue was raised at Sept. 16 military talks in Ankara, with the Russian side pressing for Turkey to leave the outposts, reduce its military presence elsewhere, remove its heavy weapons from the region and push armed groups away from the M4 highway, the other key road in Idlib...

...

Turkey’s evacuation of the Morek outpost came soon after it ventured into Russia’s backyard in the Caucasus... It is very likely that Russia has retracted its security guarantees in Idlib.

Eight Turkish observation posts — at Sheikh Aqil, Anadan, Rashidin, al-Ais, Tell Touqan, al-Surman, Arima and Morek — remained in territories recaptured by regime forces in a Russian-backed offensive that began in May 2019 and culminated in the seizure of the M5 last February...

Turkey has not officially announced the withdrawal and it remains unknown how many outposts it will evacuate... According to other sources, Turkish troops are already dismantling and packing up military equipment at multiple other locations.

...

Turkey has sent two or three military convoys per week to Idlib since March 5, setting up some 140 military points equipped with armored vehicles, tanks, howitzers and air defense weapons around the M4 road. According to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, more than 10,600 Turkish military vehicles entered Idlib from Feb. 2 to Oct. 20.

The expanse and layout of Turkey’s deployment speak of an effort to raise a barrier against a possible thrust by the Syrian army.

As the 170-vehicle convoy that left Morek retreated to the Jabal al-Zawiya region, another Turkish convoy of tanks and other military vehicles crossed from the border province of Hatay to Idlib, and Turkish troops set up a new base in the village of Kokin in Jabal al-Zawiya and deployed to the village of Karatah in southern Idlib. Military preparations were also reported at a Turkish base at Taftanaz in eastern Idlib.

Since the March 5 deal, Turkey has also sought to enhance its control over the armed groups holding sway in Idlib. There is an ongoing effort, coordinated by Turkish intelligence, to unite Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the dominant outfit in Idlib, and the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army and National Front for Liberation (NFL) under the banner of a joint military council.

Turkey’s withdrawal from observation posts may appear to be acquiescence to Russian pressure at first glance, but its military activities around the M4 speak of fresh war preparations...

...

In sum, Turkey’s military buildup in Idlib may appear a deterrence effort, but is clearly setting a stage where a small spark might ignite a destructive war.

Source: “İdlib’de o zor karar sonunda alındı (That difficult decision was finally made in Idlib),” *al-Monitor*, 23 October 2020. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/idlibde-o-zor-karar-sonunda-alindi-41643569>

... Since these observation points remained in the regime area, they both created serious security risks, and meeting their needs caused practical difficulties. The maintenance of the supply lines of the facilities required close cooperation and coordination with Russia. In any case, keeping these outposts for a long time did not seem like a sustainable situation.

It was no secret that the Kremlin had requested Ankara to evacuate these points from the beginning. The news from the field since last Monday evening showed that the observation outpost 9 in Morek was being evacuated.

In today’s column by our Ankara Representative Hande Fırat stated that the “High Level Turkish Security Resources” conveyed their statements, confirming the news and announced that “some observation outposts will be relocated to areas in the north”. These statements indicate that the withdrawal is not limited to the observation outposts in Morek, but it will also include other bases in the regime held region... In addition, relocating to a region north of the M-4 highway means Turkey further strengthening its military presence in this region...



Syrian Kurdish Commander Discusses Issues Facing Kurds

OE Watch Commentary: The commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) Mazloun Kobane (a.k.a. Mazlum Abdi) has been waging a successful campaign to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) for several years with the backing of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. Even though ISIS has been territorially defeated in Iraq and Syria, its militants and sympathizers continue to conduct terrorist acts throughout the region. The accompanying excerpt from *Al-Monitor*, a news site with analysts from the Middle East, features an interview with Mazlum Kobane, who provides a Kurdish perspective on several key issues facing Syrian Kurds.

The first issue is ongoing unity talks among Syrian Kurds. The Kurdish National Council (KNC), a Syrian Kurdish political party backed by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG), insists on adding a paragraph in the agreement that explicitly states that the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a leading political party among Syrian Kurds, will commit to severing ties with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an outlawed armed group waging war on the Turkish government since 1984. Mazlum Kobane says “we refuse to name any group” in the final agreement. He also states that Russians perceive these talks as positive and Syrian Kurds have been briefing them on the progress of the talks.

The second issue is Russian insistence that Syrian Kurds engage with the Syrian regime. While Syrian Kurds expect Russia to press the Syrian regime, Kobane states that the regime is not ready for a solution. Kobane also states that they have stopped the efforts of the Syrian regime and Iran to “provoke Arab tribes against us [SDF].”

The third issue is the ongoing tension between the PKK and KDP in the KRG. He notes that this tension could cause harm to the Kurds. Syrian Kurdish leaders are in contact with both parties to diffuse tensions while remaining neutral. Finally, the interview concludes with the issue of Turkish-backed groups cutting off the water supply to Hasakah from the Alok power station. While Russians are trying to solve this problem, they have not been successful.

Another issue is whether Syrian Kurds will engage in a dialogue with Turkey. Kobane states that Syrian Kurds would be willing to sit down with Turkey to ease Turkey's national security concerns. However, this would depend on Turkey's intention and willingness to commit to a peaceful resolution. He continues to say a dialogue between Syrian Kurds and Turkey would positively impact Turkey's relations with the PKK and its Kurdish population. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**



Mazloun Abdi (also known as Mazlum Kobani), general commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces, speaks at a press conference on 24 October 2019.
Source: Voice of America Kurdish via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mazl%C3%BBm_Koban%C3%AE_October_2019.png, CC-PD-Mark | PD VOA

“Everyone here agrees that Rojava must be administered by the Syrian Kurds and that Syria’s territorial integrity needs to be preserved... any administration in Rojava needs to be formed by Syrian Kurds alone...”



Continued: Syrian Kurdish Commander Discusses Issues Facing Kurds

Source: “Syrian Kurdish commander sees chance to ease tensions with Turkey under Biden,” *al-Monitor*, 09 November 2020. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/11/syria-mazlum-kobane-sdf-mediate-pkk-us-election-biden-trump.html>

Al-Monitor: Sources tell us the talks [unity talks between the KNC and the PYD] keep getting hung up over the issue of the PKK. More precisely, the KNC is demanding that any final agreement must contain a paragraph saying that the PYD is committed to severing its ties with the PKK or for the PKK to be expelled from Rojava, or something along those lines. And you have refused. Is that correct?

Kobane: Everyone here agrees that Rojava must be administered by the Syrian Kurds and that Syria’s territorial integrity needs to be preserved. It’s commonly agreed that any administration in Rojava needs to be formed by Syrian Kurds alone, that all decisions made by that administration need to be made by Syrian Kurds alone and that all such decisions need to be made transparently. It is agreed that the Syrian Kurdish identity needs to be nurtured and fortified. On this, we are in agreement. Therefore, if the KNC is truly sincere about this territory being self-administered without any external interference, there is no problem.

Al-Monitor: So what is the problem then?

Kobane: At the moment there are some problems between the Kurds. There are tensions between the PKK and the KDP (the Kurdistan Democratic Party). We do not want to be a party to those tensions. We as the Syrian Kurds, as the Syrian Democratic Forces, as the Autonomous Administration in Rojava — we refuse to take sides...

Al-Monitor: But the KNC has been insisting on referencing the PKK in a final agreement. And you are refusing. Right?

Kobane: Yes, that’s right. And it’s not just the PKK. We refuse to name any group in this context. We as the Syrian Democratic Forces sought the help of everyone in our fight against terror, against DAESH...

Al-Monitor: What about the Russians? What is their position on the talks?

Kobane: This process developed independently of the Russians. However, nothing negative about the talks was communicated to us by the Russians through their official channels. Though they are not part of the process, they want to be kept informed about it. They are constantly briefed about them by us... The number of Russian forces has expanded in our area in the wake of Turkey’s Operation Peace Spring, and when problems arise on the ground, we always manage to solve them.

Al-Monitor: But the Russians want you to strike a deal with the regime?

Kobane: It’s true that they are pushing us to make peace with the regime. But we expect them to put more pressure on the regime. In any case, overall the regime is not ready for a solution... It’s not ready for a democratic solution. It’s been unable in particular to shake the Baath mentality when it comes to the Kurds. However, we remain in constant contact with the regime because we live side by side and we face common security problems.

Al-Monitor: The regime and Iran are seeking to sow discord between you and the Arab tribes.

Kobane: The regime and Iran work in concert in the territory under our control. They are trying to provoke the Arab tribes against us. We made our displeasure known to them. We can say we have stopped their mischief for now. We have good relations with the tribes everywhere, and we wish to make them even better...

Al-Monitor: One of the main purposes of the unity talks is to improve relations between the Rojava administration and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). If tensions between the PKK and the KDP continue, isn’t this likely to cause harm to the talks?

Kobane: Of course... It will cause a lot of harm. At the end of the day, you have Kurds on both sides... A conflict like this will cause harm to Rojava as a whole as it will to the ongoing dialogue between the Syrian Kurds. That is why we are doing our very best to help reduce these tensions. We are in contact with all the different parties. We are talking to officials from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. We are also in touch with Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani. This fight is of a kind that will cause harm not only to Rojava but to all Kurds.

Al-Monitor: What caused this quarrel?

Kobane: There is only one cause: Turkey. Turkish pressure. There is nothing to be gained by either the KDP or the PKK in this fight. Both sides continually say they are against Kurdish infighting... This situation is the result of the intervention of outside forces. It’s the result of Turkey’s military operations against the PKK in Iraqi Kurdistan.

...

Al-Monitor: ... Are you ready to sit down with Turkey without any preconditions?

Kobane: It depends on their intentions. Our intentions are open and clear. We want peace. We want stability. If Turkey doesn’t espouse a cynical approach, if it is ready to take steps with a real solution in mind, and if that solution is to the benefit of the people of Rojava, and if all outstanding issues are put on the table, why not?...

On the question of Turkey’s national security concerns and interests, we are very clear. We are ready to accommodate them...

However, before talking about mediating between the PKK and Turkey, we first need to solve the problems between ourselves and Turkey...

Al-Monitor: There’s the chronic problem of Turkey cutting off the water supply to Hasakah from the Alok power station in Serekaniye. What’s the latest?

Kobane: However much this problem occurs within Turkey’s full knowledge, it’s first and foremost a problem caused by the Turkish-backed Sunni opposition armed group there. They keep cutting off the water. They place Turkey in an awkward position. The Russians are mediating to solve the problem but they have failed so far. So we are working on a lasting solution that involves carrying water from the Euphrates River to Hasakah.



France Reaffirms Counter-Terrorism Commitments with Mali

OE Watch Commentary: In July members of the Malian Armed Forces conducted a coup that deposed the country's leader, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. Mali has not changed its foreign relations posture since the coup. However, the excerpted 21 October French-language article on *africaradio.com*, which is based in Paris and covers African pan-continental current affairs, examined French efforts to seek reassurances from Mali's post-coup leaders.

The article noted that French foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, was planning a visit to Mali to meet the coup leaders and ensure they fulfill their obligations under Mali's pre-coup peace agreement involving the government and non-jihadist militant factions. According to the article, the visit had additional significance because it would be the first time Le Drian visited Mali since the coup. Moreover, besides Mali, Le Drian scheduled visits to neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso, which, like Mali, have been suffering from insurgencies.



Covid-19 - international solidarity with DRC (category Jean-Yves Le Drian in 2020).
Source: MONUSCO Photos / Myriam Asmani, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Covid-19_-_international_solidarity_with_DRC.jpg, CC x 2.0

Drian's visit also followed a major hostage exchange involving al-Qaeda's Malian affiliate, which led to the release of Malian politician Soumaïla Cissé alongside French aid worker Sophie Pétronin, who were in the al-Qaeda affiliate's custody. The Malian government meanwhile released around 200 jihadists from prison, who were subsequently greeted in a video featuring al-Qaeda's Malian leader, Iyad ag Ghaly. Nevertheless, the article notes Drian's main objective was to confirm that the Malian coup leaders would observe their commitments to stay in their positions of power for only 18 months, as they originally promised. After that, the transitional period will end and the coup leaders will be bound to allow a civilian ruler to come to power through a popular vote.

In summary, the article demonstrated that France seeks to preserve the pre-coup foreign policy status quo in Mali. Notwithstanding concerns about the rupture in democratic processes caused by the coup and the uncertainty that followed it, Mali has since stabilized. Therefore, the article indicated Drian's visit would reaffirm that Mali retains the same counter-terrorism commitments with France that existed before the coup. A subsequent article from *Agence France-Presse* on 26 October confirmed Drian's mission achieved its objectives, but that Drian additionally called for no more negotiations with al-Qaeda's Malian affiliate. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“This will be the first visit by a French official to Mali since the coup and is also the first visit by a French minister since the release of the hostage Sophie Pétronin in early October in exchange for jihadist prisoners.”

Source: “Le chef de la diplomatie française va rencontrer les nouvelles autorités maliennes (The head of French diplomacy will meet the new Malian authorities),” *africaradio.com*, 21 October 2020. <https://www.africaradio.com/news/le-chef-de-la-diplomatie-francaise-va-rencontrer-les-nouvelles-autorites-maliennes-174107#:~:text=Le%20chef%20de%20la%20diplomatie%20fran%C3%A7aise%20va%20rencontrer%20les%20nouvelles%20autorit%C3%A9s%20maliennes,-21%20octobre%202020&text=Le%20chef%20de%20la%20diplomatie%20fran%C3%A7aise%20Jean%2DYves%20Le%20Drian,accords%20de%20paix%20d'Alger>

Source: “France, Mali at odds over dialogue with jihadists,” *news.yahoo.com/french*, 26 October 2020. <https://news.yahoo.com/french-fm-says-dialogue-mali-121117586.html>

The head of French diplomacy, Jean-Yves Le Drian, will go Thursday and Friday to Bamako to meet the transitional authorities after the coup of August 18 and work on the revival of the Algiers peace accords of Algiers. He said on this trip he would also make a trip to Niger and Burkina Faso. This will be the first visit by a French official to Mali since the coup and is also the first visit by a French minister since the release of the hostage Sophie Pétronin in early October in exchange for jihadist prisoners. Under pressure from the international community, the implementers of the coup pledged to return power to elected civilian leaders at the end of a transitional period of up to 18 months.

Jean-Yves Le Drian noted the commitments made by the [Malian] authorities in the fight against terrorism and implementation of the Algiers peace accords.



Climate Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa

OE Watch Commentary: Traditionally, two big questions underlie migration: What causes people to leave and where do they go? Important for today, those questions have to be asked in the context of global climate change and other influencing environmental factors. The excerpted accompanying article from the South African news site *The Conversation* used meta-analysis with data from 30 country-level studies to not only determine what are the main environmental migration drivers in sub-Saharan Africa, but also to identify the areas of markedly increased migration due to those environmental factors.

In reviewing this information it is important to note that the decision to migrate is often a complex one. At times such a decision might seem counterintuitive to an outside observer until all factors are taken into consideration. For example, it is not always the poorest people who migrate. The article notes how they are often constrained in their mobility and at risk of being trapped in even harsher environmental conditions. Middle-income people, on the other hand, often have the resources to move away from environmental degradation.

The article attributes another misimpression, that migration from sub-Saharan Africa is primarily to Europe and the United States, to commentators and politicians. Actually, most sub-Saharan migration is internal to the region and generally rural to urban, making sub-Saharan cities some of the fastest growing in the world. This rapid urbanization comes with numerous problems, including inadequate infrastructure and strains on public services. For many migrants who were counting on the move to cities to substantially improve their lives, it has been disappointing as they often find themselves in marginalized neighborhoods with poor sanitation and little government help.

Some of the climatic and environmental conditions driving this migration occur relatively slowly, such as rising temperatures, desertification, and loss of biodiversity. Other times rapid environmental changes drive migration, including floods and droughts, which have been increasing in both frequency and intensity. Paradoxically, in escaping dangerous rural environmental hazards, the migrants pouring into city slums now face dangerous urban environmental hazards, such as unstable dwellings constructed in areas prone to flooding.

The article notes that with climate migration already a reality, more must be done in sub-Saharan Africa to mitigate the adverse effects of a rapid population increase in cities. Emphasizing urban infrastructure and providing social and economic benefits for the migrants are some of the programs and policies the author puts forth, though without mentioning the tremendous difficulties in implementing these on a large-scale. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Environmental changes are helping to drive migration in Africa.
Source: UNICEF/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unicefethiopia/8286868373/>, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

“Climate migration is already a reality for many people and will continue to be. The World Bank Groundswell report projects that up to 86 million people could be forced to migrate within their own countries by 2050 to escape the slow-onset impacts of climate change in sub-Saharan Africa.”

Source: “Climate change, migration and urbanisation: patterns in sub-Saharan Africa,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 2 November 2020. <https://theconversation.com/climate-change-migration-and-urbanisation-patterns-in-sub-saharan-africa-149036>

For households exposed to environmental stress, migration can serve as an important livelihood and adaptation strategy, particularly in rural areas. Often it’s individual household members who migrate in an attempt to open new and diversify existing income sources.

In the past decades, several cities in sub-Saharan Africa have seen rapid population growth and are today among the fastest growing in the world. Cities that already host several million people, such as Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Kampala in Uganda, Abuja in Nigeria, Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso and Bamako in Mali, are expected to double in size by 2035. The rapid urbanisation has significant implications. It brings new opportunities as well as risks.

Urban floods, in particular, are a major challenge. For example, in 2018, six of the ten largest flooding events that triggered displacement were in sub-Saharan Africa, and urban areas bore the greatest impacts. Also this year, severe floods across the region affected several hundred thousand people and led to severe damage and displacement.

Climate migration is already a reality for many people and will continue to be. The World Bank Groundswell report projects that up to 86 million people could be forced to migrate within their own countries by 2050 to escape the slow-onset impacts of climate change in sub-Saharan Africa.



“Good Coups” Present Dilemma for African Union

OE Watch Commentary: Beginning with Egypt in 2013, there has been a trend emerging in African coups. As the excerpted accompanying article from a pan-African platform for news, African Arguments, explains, that Egyptian coup, along with those in Burkina Faso in 2015, Zimbabwe in 2017, Sudan in 2019, and the most recent one in Mali in 2020 occurred amid large public protest whereupon a junta then overthrows an unpopular leader. As a result, the coup leaders can present themselves as being on the side of the people.

These coups create a dilemma for the African Union (AU). On the one hand, armed overthrows contravene numerous documents, including the constitutions of individual countries; the 2000 Lomé Declaration, which includes respect for democratic principles as one of its objectives; and the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Additionally, as the article notes, coups are considered one of the drivers of insecurity and instability on the continent. However, these coups are often the culmination of widespread anger against corrupt and/or ineffectual leaders, making it difficult for the AU to strongly condemn them, though it often does so, albeit with certain compromises.

An example of those compromises can be seen in Sudan in 2019, when then-President Omar al-Bashir, following protests demanding his removal, was toppled by the military. The AU suspended Sudan’s membership but continued to work with Sudan even though, as the article’s author notes, this action could potentially embolden disgruntled soldiers elsewhere.

The AU also faces challenges with presidents who either will not step down after their term ends, as happened with Gambia’s Yahya Jammeh, who was finally forced out by ECOWAS troops, or they amend the constitution to allow them to stay in power, as with Uganda’s Yoweri Museveni, who is still in power. The AU’s inaction in such cases, where a president lacks legitimacy, helps fuel the concept of a “good coup,” as the article describes it, by the people living under such rule.

The concept of good coups versus bad coups leads to several questions, including who decides which type it is and what is the threshold for the military to intervene. If the coup overthrows a democratically elected leader but in doing so prevents more chaos and deaths, is that a good or bad coup?

The article suggests several actions the AU could take to help prevent coups. One would be to amend its own charter to make it more difficult for coup leaders to assume any sort of power after the overthrow. Another would be to make it harder for leaders to amend their constitutions in undemocratic ways. However, even with these and other actions, it may be impossible to prevent some coups. Still, the AU does have some influence on its member states, and as the article explains, by helping to shape the political landscape it could possibly not only help deter potential coups from occurring, but could also prevent countries from reaching the point where a coup is even considered necessary. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“Until the African Union ensures coup leaders don’t benefit personally and ends its incumbent bias, it may struggle to deter “good coups.”*”**



Protests at around the time of the Sudanese coup.

Source: AFP/Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Sudanese_coup#/media/File:Sudan_coup_military_afp.jpg, Public Domain

Source: “Why can’t the AU seem to deter coups?,” *African Arguments*, 20 October 2020. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/10/20/why-cant-the-au-seem-to-deter-coups/>

Until the African Union ensures coup leaders don’t benefit personally and ends its incumbent bias, it may struggle to deter “good coups”.

As such, international organisations are typically decisive, if uneven, in their responses. It has been estimated that between 2003 and 2017, the AU suspended over 90% of countries that experienced coups and imposed targeted sanctions on over 70%.

The first derives from the fact that the AU has multiple goals that may sometimes contradict. The union is a site of political contestation in which members have their own individual interests and differences of interpretation when it comes to the body’s charter. Moreover, the AU’s intention is not to be punitive for the sake of it when its rules are broken, but to build and nurture a community-derived authority that is both legitimate and Pan-African.

A second difficulty arises from the fact that the AU is inconsistent when it comes to unconstitutional violations. The body actually recognises various types of unconstitutional change of government. One is the overthrow of an elected government by the military, mercenaries or rebels. When faced with these kinds of instances, the AU acts decisively. Another category is when incumbents refuse to hand over power following free and fair elections.

However, there is one type that is most problematic for the AU – namely when those in power effectively refuse to relinquish power by amending the constitution and prohibiting democratic change. There is a growing list of leaders who have done this with few repercussions.

There are now seen to be “good coups” and “bad coups”. The appeal of this thinking is clear. In many instances, it may be true that the actions of putschists avoided more chaos and bloodshed. The danger with this dichotomy, however, is the question of how to decide which is which.



In Africa, China Learns Development May Not Improve Security

OE Watch Commentary: China has learned some hard lessons regarding development work and security in Africa, and how the two are linked. At least those are some of the findings described in the excerpted accompanying article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies*, a South African nonprofit that works to improve African security, which took a close look at China's sometimes frustrated attempts at development on the continent.

China's negative experiences in Africa are due in part to its overemphasizing the impact of development on security, insisting on dealing only with fellow sovereigns even when those individuals are responsible for poor governance, and adhering to a strict principle of noninterference. The article's author provides examples of these missteps, beginning with the country's belief that development would lead to security. In Mali, China invested heavily in schools, clinics, and transportation infrastructure, but insurgents regularly destroyed these, ostensibly so that they could provide the villagers with such services, in the process garnering goodwill and increasing their legitimacy in the eyes of the locals.

This brings up another of China's problems, its insistence on dealing only with sovereigns and not other actors. By only working through Malian government officials, its standing in the community is not as prominent had it also worked with villagers or their local representatives.

With regards to China's policy of noninterference, this results in Chinese peacekeepers being portrayed as risk averse. Interestingly, the article says this goes back to China's strong belief that development is necessary for security, with the result that security efforts are not emphasized as much as development.

In fairness, China's significant engagement with security affairs in Africa is still relatively recent, only coming about with the 2011 Libyan conflict. Previously, it had some involvement providing noncombatants for African peace operations, but when 35,000 of its citizens in Libya were caught in the crossfire of a bombing campaign and civil war, it realized it could not stay out of the conflict. Since then, China's involvement with security has been, as the article explains, often related to its increasing business ventures on the continent.

It is in Mali that China's approach to security issues on the continent changed again. From originally condemning French armed involvement, it eventually deployed combat troops to the troubled nation. Thus, with increasing Chinese military forces in Africa involved in increasing numbers of operations, as the author states, Chinese security beliefs, such as development leads to security, are undergoing a reality check. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The belief that development is not only a necessary but also almost a sufficient condition for security is quite widespread. In many conflicts the dearth of development is indeed the critical factor. But just as often, if not more so, it is also the lack of governance and the state's inability to exercise a monopoly of violence over its entire territory.”

Source: “Mali gives China a reality check,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 16 October 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/mali-gives-china-a-reality-check>

Since then, China's increasing engagement on security has largely followed its growing commercial involvement in Africa, turning on its head the old colonial-era maxim of trade following the flag. Its key objective initially in beefing up security has been to protect its business people and projects in Africa. That was the focus for its first peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, where it had oil interests to safeguard.

Another reality check on China's notions about the development-security nexus was the discovery that good governance is essential to the success of development projects. The scholars cited several examples of Chinese development projects such as schools and universities, which simply didn't operate because of lack of political will and competence by Malian officials.

These lessons apply beyond Mali and perhaps even beyond China. The belief that development is not only a necessary but also almost a sufficient condition for security is quite widespread. In many conflicts the dearth of development is indeed the critical factor. But just as often, if not more so, it is also the lack of governance and the state's inability to exercise a monopoly of violence over its entire territory.

As Benabdallah and Large discovered in Mali, the three forces of development, security and government relate to each other in a dynamic and alternating flow of cause and effect.

The growing number of Chinese boots on African ground provides a reality check on Beijing's core beliefs.



Chinese Peacekeeping Battalion in South Sudan being awarded UN Medal for Service.

Source: UNMISS/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unmissmultimedia/36743053214/in/album-72157687458137433/>
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East African Terrorists Take Advantage of Coastal Security Gaps

OE Watch Commentary: Three violent east African extremist groups are taking advantage of gaps in coastal security to help fund their landbased operations. According to the excerpted accompanying article from the Institute for Security Studies, a South African nonprofit that works to improve African security, Ansar al-Sunna, al-Shabaab, and the Islamic State in East Africa Somalia (IS-Somalia) use marine corridors to traffic drugs, arms, and humans. Some extremist groups exploit sugar, cereal, and textiles as well. Charcoal smuggling is also a big money earner, especially for al-Shabaab, whose illegal transportation of the black carbon residue, combined with other maritime crimes, nets it an estimated US\$7 million a year.

It is not just the open seas that serve as moneymakers for these terrorist groups. Ports can also be harnessed to supply revenue. While al-Shabaab has been reported as having been driven from Mogadishu, it still exerts some influence on the city's port, where it raises funds through extortion and illicit taxation. According to the article, it charges US\$100 for a 20-foot container and US\$160 for 40-foot containers, with a threat of violence to those considering not paying.

IS-Somalia, which within a year of its founding controlled the Somali port town of Qandala, has added another dimension to the problem of maritime security. Although it was forced from Qandala, the article notes the group is accessing a plethora of resources, including weapons and fighters, from its affiliate, IS-Yemen. These arrive at small ports and landing sites dotting the Somali coast after traveling only a few hours by boat from Yemen. With expertise gained from the Yemen conflict, those foreign fighters have been instrumental in developing their Somali counterparts.

The third main group taking advantage of the maritime situation is Ansar al-Sunna. Its fighters have launched attacks from the sea on Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province, including one in March in conjunction with a land assault that enabled it to occupy a port. The group continues to use maritime approaches against military bases and refugee camps.

The article provides several reasons why, despite millions of dollars being spent on counterterrorism operations, these maritime activities by terrorist groups continue relatively unabated. To begin with, most counterterrorism operations focus on land. Additionally, the agencies that do deal with illicit activities related to the sea tend to concentrate their resources on antipiracy operations as opposed to counterterrorism ones. Indeed, as the article notes, trafficking of humans and arms at ports is frequently overlooked by maritime police. Finally, some terrorist activities cross borders, creating jurisdictional issues that, because a coordinated regional approach to the problem is lacking, means pursuit and prosecution of the offenders becomes less likely. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Counter-terrorism strategies must consider how the coastline provides a financial and operational life-line to violent extremists.”

Source: “East African Terror Groups Are Exploiting the Seas,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 13 October 2020. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/east-african-terror-groups-are-exploiting-the-seas>

Counter-terrorism strategies must consider how the coastline provides a financial and operational life-line to violent extremists.

Millions of dollars have been spent by governments and international organisations like the United Nations (UN) on curbing terrorism, especially in Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Mozambique. The African Union Mission in Somalia, despite possessing a maritime component, hasn't developed any real expertise or consistency in this area.

Mandates and deployments of coast guards and other maritime enforcement agencies differ, so creating a regional approach aimed at terrorists might be difficult. Not only do extremist groups operate across maritime borders, but many of their activities intersect land and sea, making establishing jurisdiction tricky.

Timothy Walker, Maritime Project Leader at the ISS, says some maritime counter-piracy operations could also focus on preventing terrorism within the national waters of participating states. For example Operation Prosperity in the Gulf of Guinea, and Operation Copper, in which South African naval forces are deployed in Mozambique's territorial waters.

Counter-terrorism efforts against the three violent extremist groups operating on Africa's East Coast have continued for years with varying degrees of success. None have considered the importance of the oceans for the long-term survival of these groups. Strategies to prevent terrorism must include maritime elements that close off the financial and operational activities on which these groups rely.



A man controls a cargo handling equipment as they offload at the Sea port of Mogadishu, Somalia.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mogadishu_sea_port.jpg, CC-BY-SA-4.0



Kenyan Perspectives on Tanzania's General Election

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 October, John Pombe Magufuli was elected to a second five-year term as Tanzania's president amid allegations of fraud and voter intimidation. The accompanying articles from *The Daily Nation* and *The Star*, which are both popular Kenyan daily newspapers, provide an overview of Kenya's response to Magufuli's election as well as its implications domestically, for Kenya-Tanzania relations, and for the East African Community (EAC) more broadly.

As *The Daily Nation* explains, the landslide victory of Magufuli's party, Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM), in both the presidency and Tanzania's unicameral national assembly, cemented its "dominance of domestic politics" in the East African country. During his second term, analysts cited by *The Daily Nation* assert, Magufuli may try to "further strengthen his control" domestically.

During Magufuli's presidency, Kenya-Tanzania relations weathered numerous disputes over trade, the handling of COVID-19, and cross-border movements of people according to *The Daily Nation*. Magufuli's "tit-for-tat" attitude to bilateral and multilateral relations led some Kenyan government officials to publicly express their frustration at what they see as "retrogressive" actions. A Kenyan expert quoted in *The Daily Nation* article projected that this attitude was unlikely to change during Magufuli's second term and may actually worsen.

Within the East African Community (the intergovernmental organization of which both Kenya and Tanzania are members), academics and experts cited by *The Daily Nation* worry that the "provincial mentality" of Magufuli's administration will be counterproductive. However, they did not foresee the EAC member countries collectively putting substantial pressure on Tanzania to change course, as "each state has its own interests to look after."

Despite these disputes, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, as reported by *The Star*, congratulated Magufuli, saying his re-election demonstrated the "deep love, confidence, and trust" Tanzanians have in his leadership. Kenyatta indicated Magufuli's victory provided an "endorsement of his plans" for Tanzania moving forward. Striking a cooperative tone, Kenyatta emphasized his willingness to work with Magufuli "for the prosperity of East Africa" and the benefit of the African continent. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartung)**

"Magufuli 2 will be tougher than Magufuli 1. I don't expect him to lessen restrictions against other East African Community (EAC) states especially Kenya."

Source: "Magufuli's victory and regional power play," *The Daily Nation* (Kenya), 01 November 2020. <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/africa/magufuli-s-victory-and-regional-power-play-2727606?view=htmlamp>

"The figures announced by the NEC showed Dr Magufuli and his CCM had completed a total dominance in domestic politics."

"Domestically, some analysts think he could further strengthen his control..."

"Other EAC partners may not go the way of tightening screws because each State has its own interests to look after. EAC will continue to be as fragile and especially the relations between Kenya and Tanzania may get worse," argued Mucee."

"In the region, Tanzania under Dr Magufuli has seen him focus more on domestic issues but engage in tit-for-tat moves with Kenya in particular."

"In Nairobi, some government officials publicly expressed frustrations with Dar's 'win-lose' policies on trade and movement of people, seeing them as retrogressive for the East African Community."

"A prosperous East African Community will require less of provincial mentality to attain any goals of transformation,

"Magufuli II will be tougher than Magufuli I. I don't expect him to lessen restrictions against other East African Community (EAC) states especially Kenya."

Source: Uhuru congratulates Magufuli on his re-election," *The Star* (Kenya), 31 October 2020. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2020-10-31-uhuru-congratulates-magufuli-on-his-re-election/>

"The President said Magufuli's re-election demonstrates the deep love, confidence and trust the people of Tanzania have in his leadership."

"Uhuru added that Magufuli's extension to power is an endorsement of his plans for the future prosperity of the country."

"We in Kenya look forward to continuing working with your Administration for the benefit of the people of our two nations, for the prosperity of East Africa and for the peace, stability and growth of the African continent," Uhuru said."



Swearing in of President John Magufuli, November 2015.
Source: Paul Kagame Flickr, <https://flic.kr/p/zMSyWm>, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



As Ethiopia Conducts Military Ops in Tigray, the African Union Pushes for Peace

OE Watch Commentary: The African Union (AU) and the Ethiopian government appear to be at odds over Ethiopia's military response to its troubled, semi-autonomous Tigray region. According to *The East African*, a regional news site out of Kenya, the AU's chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, wants Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to forego the military crackdown in order to avoid harming civilians. However, Abiy (in Ethiopia the first name is generally used even when addressing someone formally) stated the military operation would continue to go forward, ceasing when its objectives—disarmament of what it refers to as the criminal junta, restoration of the legitimate administration, and apprehension of those involved—are met.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development has called for dialogue, the AU has offered an inter-Ethiopian peace effort, and various diplomats have pressured Ethiopia to pursue peace. However, Abiy, the article notes, has run out of patience with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), claiming that it attacked an Ethiopian military camp in an attempt to steal artillery, a charge the TPLF denies. The Ethiopian government then declared a state of emergency and began bombarding the region.

A brief review of the TPLF's history can help in understanding the present conflict. Founded by former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the TPLF ruled Ethiopia as part of a coalition for over 20 years. That came to an end in 2018 when Abiy became Prime Minister. This year, Abiy cancelled elections because of COVID-19, but the TPLF held them anyway, with the federal government declaring it would not recognize the results. It should be noted that other issues have also fueled the animosity between the two sides, including Abiy claiming the TPLF stole funds during its time in power and has hired child soldiers.

The AU and others have been pressuring Abiy to pursue peace because there is concern the fighting might lead to the conflict not only intensifying but also spreading to nearby regions, including Eritrea, which according to the article shares some ethnic similarities to Ethiopia. Abiy, though, rejects the idea that Ethiopia is descending into chaos, and calls such concerns unfounded.

An expert cited in the article explained that for long-term peace to occur, Ethiopia needs to implement security and justice reforms. Meanwhile, Abiy, who won the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for his work in ending the postwar stalemate between Ethiopia and Eritrea, now finds himself in the position of pursuing military operations against the TPLF while the AU and others press him to stop. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.
Source: The Kremlin, Russia/Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abiy_Ahmed#/media/File:Abiy_Ahmed_2019.jpg, CC BY 4.0

“The African Union on Tuesday implored the Ethiopian government to go slow on bombarding the troubled Tigray region, even as Addis Ababa insisted the situation was an internal matter.”

Source: Aggrey Mutambo, “Africa: Abiy Stays Put As AU Asks Ethiopia to Go Slow in Tigray,” *The East African/AllAfrica.com*, 10 November 2020. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011100921.html>

The African Union on Tuesday implored the Ethiopian government to go slow on bombarding the troubled Tigray region, even as Addis Ababa insisted the situation was an internal matter.

In a measured statement, however, the AU reaffirms a “firm attachment to the constitutional order, territorial integrity, unity and national sovereignty of the Federal Democratic Republic of

Ethiopia to ensure stability in the country and in the Region”.

Following Ethiopia's launch of airstrikes on the military installations of the TPLF, the group claims all 10 of them so far “have missed targets”.

In a statement posted on their Facebook page, the TPLF accused Addis Ababa of “ethnic cleansing on the people of Tigray”.

“We will Last December, TPLF refused to dissolve and join the new Prosperity Party (PP) formed by Abiy for a centralised policy of the ruling government. soon remove the fascist Abiy regime for once and for all,” TPLF stated.

Abiy also accuses the group of operating with impunity, stealing public funds during its reign in power, committing atrocities, rejecting court orders issued by the federal judiciary, hiring child soldiers and frustrating the operations of the Ethiopian National Defense Force.



South Sudan-Uganda Troops Clash Along Disputed Border

OE Watch Commentary: Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) and the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) clashed along their shared border on 27 October. Two SSPDF troops and possibly two UPDF troops were killed. South Sudanese and Ugandan military spokesmen provided conflicting accounts of the incident, which was the most recent in a series of border clashes that occurred despite a 2017 agreement to more clearly demarcate the border. The excerpted articles from the *East African*, a Kenyan newspaper covering regional political issues, the *Daily Monitor* (Uganda), and *Nyamilepedia News* (South Sudan) discuss the incident and its implications.

According to a Ugandan military spokesman quoted by the *East African*, the UPDF engaged South Sudanese troops who entered Lokung Sub-County, Uganda, and established a roadblock. When UPDF troops approached the roadblock, the SSPDF opened fire. The UPDF did not confirm any casualties.



UPDF Troops Listen to Speech, January 2013.

Source: AMISOM Public Information, <https://flic.kr/p/dKx2gX>, CC 1.0/Public Domain

Contradicting the UPDF account, South Sudanese authorities cited by *Nyamilepedia News* alleged the UPDF made a “major incursion” into South Sudanese Magwi County (adjacent to Lokung) equipped with artillery and trucks mounted with machine guns. According to the *Daily Monitor*, the SSPDF spokesman said the UPDF overran a South Sudanese border post, killing two soldiers and injuring one. The SSPDF spokesman also said two UPDF troops were killed, but the UPDF has yet to confirm this.

A local South Sudanese youth group leader and a civil society activist based in the area, cited by *Nyamilepedia News* and the *East African*, respectively, both pointed to “huge competition over local resources” (most notably timber) as a possible cause for the flare-up.

The October firefight is, according to the *East African*, one of the multiple border clashes between the UPDF and SSPDF over the past several years. Most recently, four SSPDF troops and one police officer were killed by the UPDF in an adjacent county during a firefight in June. Although the two sides agreed to a border demarcation plan in 2017 in an effort to avert future confrontations, “little has materialized” per the *East African*.

The border clash did not lead to a wider conflict. The *Daily Monitor* and the *East African* both emphasized that South Sudanese and Ugandan officials are working to resolve the dispute “diplomatically by higher political institutions” and in the “spirit of peaceful coexistence.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartung)**

“A military confrontation over a disputed border area between South Sudan and Uganda has claimed the lives of two South Sudanese soldiers.”

Source: “Two dead after Uganda, South Sudan armies clash over border area,” *The East African* (Kenya), 30 October 2020. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/two-dead-uganda-south-sudan-armies-clash-2726574>

“A military confrontation over a disputed border area between South Sudan and Uganda has claimed the lives of two South Sudanese soldiers.”

“But the Ugandan army insists that it opened fire on South Sudanese military officers who tried to encroach into its territory by placing a border post at an area located two kilometres from Ngomoromo border in Lokung Sub-County.”

“Initially, the soldiers were erecting a roadblock which was assumed to be two kilometres inside Uganda. The reaction of forces who went to verify occurrence resulted in the clashes.”

“The area seems to be rich with natural resources such as timber and minerals, among others, which might have triggered the conflict.”

“In June this year, a similar incident occurred around Fitina-Mbaya, also called Buya, a contested part of Kajo-keji County in Central Equatoria state. Four South Sudanese soldiers and a police officer were shot and killed by the UPDF.”

“In response, UPDF army deputy spokesman Lt-Col Deo Akiiki Asimwe confirmed the clashes and said the issue is being handled diplomatically by higher political institutions.”



Continued: South Sudan-Uganda Troops Clash Along Disputed Border

Source: “Ugandan military kills two South Sudan Soldiers in a controversial border dispute,” *Nyamilepedia News (South Sudan)*, 29 October 2020. <https://www.nyamile.com/2020/10/29/ugandan-military-kill-2-south-sudan-soldiers-in-a-controversial-border-dispute/>

“On October 27th, 2020, at about 1 PM, a mechanized Unit of Ugandan People’s Defense Forces made a major incursion into our country. UPDF armed with heavy artillery pieces and light military trucks mounted with 12.7 mm machine guns launched across border attack on own Defensive Border Outpost at Pogee in Magwi County, Eastern Equatoria State.”

“They (UPDF) want to push our soldier out so that they carry on with cutting timbers, it has always been happening,”

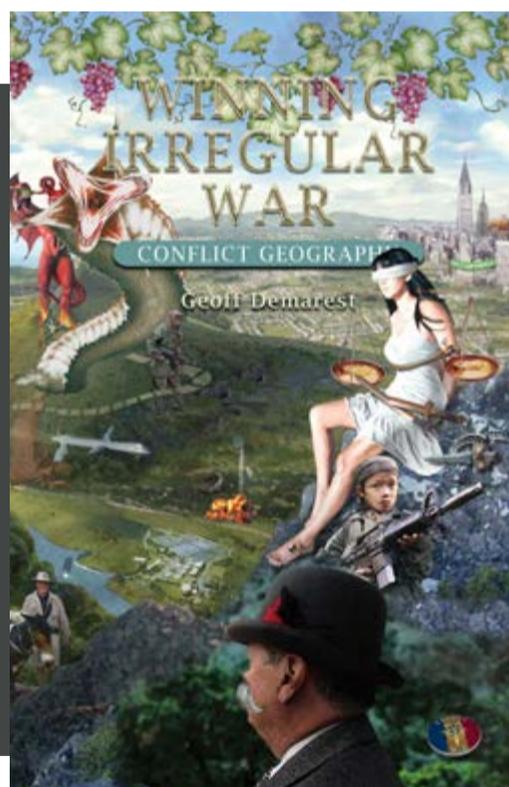
“There are some unknown people who erected a roadblock inside Uganda on our border with South Sudan. We sent there our patriots to crosscheck who those people could be, only to be returned with fire”

Source: “UPDF, South Sudan army clash at disputed border,” 30 October 2020, *The Daily Monitor (Uganda)*. <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/updf-south-sudan-army-clash-at-disputed-border--2726376>

“The spokesperson of the UPDF, Brig Flavia Byekwaso, said diplomatic and military engagements are yielding positive results to restore normalcy at the border.”

“[The SSPDF spokespeson] claimed to have gained the post later from the UPDF, but two of their soldiers were killed and another injured. He also claimed that two UPDF soldiers were killed, an allegation Uganda has neither confirmed nor denied.”

“The UPDF will continue to pursue safety alongside our border to enable trade and peaceful co-existence in the spirit of Pan Africanism,” Brig Byekwaso said yesterday.



Geoff Demarest’s *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just ‘insurgency.’ In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest uses a distinct, reconciled, more effective strategic grammar that draws on the disciplines of law and geography over political science. As Geoff Demarest puts it: “I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious.”

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



South Africa's Defense Industry in Decline, Looks to Boost Exports

OE Watch Commentary: South Africa's defense industry is facing difficult times. As the excerpted accompanying article from one of its trade websites, *DefenceWeb*, points out, not only has the industry been in decline over the last five years, no turnaround is projected unless the South African government greatly increases defense spending and/or arms exports radically increase. However, both of those propositions face strong headwinds. An increase in exports, though still far from certain, is perhaps the more likely of the two.

The Executive Director of AMD (South African Aerospace Maritime and Defence Industries Association), Sandile Ndlovu, explained that from 2016/17 to 2019/20 exports dropped by almost half, research and development by about two-thirds, and the entire industry's revenue by approximately one-third. Thirty years ago South Africa's defense industry comprised about 3,000 companies. Today that number has dwindled to only 120.

Hope for an influx of funds from the government budget is rather muted.

Recommendations from the Defense Review for significant additional funding, as the article notes, are unlikely to be implemented. The shrinking budget has left the military services struggling to acquire new equipment or even repair the old. To support the defense industry, the government, unable to provide the necessary funds on its own, is encouraging international joint ventures with local industries to manufacture arms for export.

Indeed, the defense industry is looking to increase exports, which presently account for 50% of its revenue. There are, however, certain constraints that must first be overcome, including: unpredictable cabinet committee meetings; underfunding of the Directorate for Conventional Arms Control, which is in charge of the permit application system; the export process essentially halting during elections; and the requirements for strict end-user certificates and client site inspections.

The AMD, as the article discusses, has made several suggestions to improve the export situation. These include state support for defense sales, similar to what some other countries do; digitizing and fast-tracking the approval process; and implementing measures that would allow exports to continue during election cycles.

While the article points out that with proper policies and interventions it might be possible to significantly increase exports, it paints a grim picture if such potential remedies are not implemented. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Industry association AMD has painted a bleak portrait of the South African defence industry, as exports, research and development and employee numbers decline, but the association believes problems can be fixed through interventions such as streamlining export processes.”



South Africa is trying to increase its export of arms, such as the missiles pictured here.
Source: Flash 285/Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umkhonto_\(missile\)#/media/File:Umkhonto_2.JPG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umkhonto_(missile)#/media/File:Umkhonto_2.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0

Source: “AMD paints grim picture of SA defence industry,” *DefenceWeb*, 11 November 2020. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/industry/industry-industry/amd-paints-grim-picture-of-sa-defence-industry/>

Industry association AMD has painted a bleak portrait of the South African defence industry, as exports, research and development and employee numbers decline, but the association believes problems can be fixed through interventions such as streamlining export processes.

A capable defence industry can also be a useful tool of foreign policy, and the industry can support other government departments and agencies with equipment and services, for instance intelligence services, the Police, the Correctional Services, the Border Management Authority, Home Affairs and Sea Fisheries. “By way of example, the industry has as already cited above contributed immensely to border control, anti-poaching and nature conservation, mine and rail safety as well as water purification all of which are key to the government’s ability to deliver on its mandate which can be enhanced if the sector’s role is supported and enhanced,” SAAMDEC stated.

It believes the industry can thrive if it received direct, deliberate, focused and high-level political support; stable and predictable local defence spending including R&D; a stable and sustainable Denel; an effective arms control regime to facilitate arms export and suitable financing and related instruments.



Arms Used by al-Shabab Extremists in Somalia Attack Linked to North Korea



Map of Somalia.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BoosaasoSomalia%26land_map.png Attribution: CCA SA 1.0

OE Watch Commentary: An attack on a United Nations (UN) compound in Somalia this past February by al-Shabaab extremists has been linked to North Korea. An investigation into the remains of mortar rounds fired by al-Shabaab reveal them to have been manufactured in North Korea. The accompanying excerpted article reports on how this determination was made by a UN panel and released on its website.

According to the article by South Korean *Yonhap News Agency*, the al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab, has conducted multiple attacks in the Somali capital of Mogadishu over a span of four months starting in February. Al-Shabaab is trying to fight the weak Somali administration that has long been supported by the UN. As explained in the article, the UN compound within Aden Adde International Airport was attacked with 60-mm mortar rounds, which have characteristics consistent with the “60-mm HE type 63 mortar round, manufactured in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.”

Months after the attack, a UN panel determined the mortars appear to be North Korean made, which hints at a possible arrangement of arms deals between North Korea and the Islamic group. The article also highlights the contradictory claim made by a North Korean ambassador in October who stated that North Korea has renewed its opposition to terrorism “in all its forms and manifestations and any support to it.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Jaradat)**

“...The al-Shabab Islamic extremist group used what appears to be a North Korean mortar in an apparent attack against the United Nations compound in Somalia earlier this year....”

Source: “UN panel says N. Korean mortar apparently used in terrorist attack in Somalia,” *Yonhap News Agency*, 31 October 2020. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20201031001300320?section=search>

A South Korean media outlet reports on potential involvement of its northern neighbors with extremist group al-Shabab.

The al-Qaeda-linked group carried out six separate mortar attacks on the international airport in the Somalian capital, Mogadishu, between February and May...

“Two unexploded 60-mm mortar rounds (were) found in the aftermath of the attack on 17 February 2020. One has characteristics consistent with a 60-mm HE type 63 mortar round, manufactured in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea...”

The report came weeks after North Korea renewed its opposition to terrorism...

“It is the consistent stance of the government of the DPRK to oppose terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and any support to it,” an unidentified North Korean diplomat said in a UN session earlier in October...

In 2017, the US redesignated North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism...

Washington removed Pyongyang from its list in 2008...



ELN Suffers Major Blow

OE Watch Commentary: The Colombian government recently killed the ELN's senior leader, Vanegas Londoño, a.k.a. Uriel, in Colombia's western Choco Department. Choco is home to the western Pacific coast reaches of a major smuggling corridor that spans the north of the country. The ELN has been trying to expand its territorial control of routes along that corridor. Londoño was highly visible on social media. The accompanying references (well-established, generally non-socialist-leaning outlets) tell the story of his neutralization and its significance, which was enough to merit a personal announcement of the news by President Iván Duque. Londoño had been identified as responsible for the 2019 attack against the police academy that had left 23 dead. He also bragged that the ELN was centrally involved in the urban rioting that Colombia has been suffering, providing strong evidence in support of the government claims that the rioting was orchestrated and that the ELN had developed and was exercising an urban warfare capability. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



ELN Flag.

Source: Fibonacci via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_ELN.svg, public domain

“...Iván Duque confirmed the killing of Vanegas Londoño, alias ‘Uriel’...”

Source: “Confirman baja de ‘Uriel’, sanguinario y mediático líder del Eln en Chocó (Killing of ‘Uriel’, bloody and high-profile leader of the ELN in Choco is confirmed),” *El Colombiano*, 25 October 2020. <https://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/confirman-baja-de-uriel-sanguinario-y-mediatico-lider-del-eln-en-choco-HD13899493>

“This Sunday night the President of the Republic Iván Duque confirmed the killing of Vanegas Londoño, alias “Uriel”, who was the chief of the ELN’s Ómar Gómez Western War Front, which operated in Chocó Department... Of alias ‘Uriel’ it I known that he had 25 years as an active member of the ELN and that in public appearances of the guerrilla he has justified the participation of children. This last July, when the ELN commemorated its 55 years, an audio recording of the guerrilla came out in which he is saying that it is not a question of recruitment but of ‘voluntary entrance’. He had a direct line of communication with Pablo Beltran, member of the ELN Central Committee, and he used social media as a platform to make ELN propaganda.”

“...this guerrilla chief was responsible for the attack against the General Santander School of Cadets...”

Source: “Duro golpe al ELN: cae abatido alias ‘Uriel’, cabecilla de la narco-guerrilla (Costly blow to the ELN: alias ‘Uriel’, top leader of the narco guerrilla, felled),” *PanamPost*, 25 October 2020. <https://panampost.com/jose-gregorio-martinez/2020/10/25/duro-golpe-eln-cae-abatido-alias-uriel-cabecilla-narcoguerrilla/>

“The President of Colombia Iván Duque reminded that this guerrilla chief was responsible for the attack against the General Santander School of Cadets [Police Academy] that left 23 dead...”

Luis Fernando Navarro, Commanding General of the Military Forces, indicated that Operation Odin, in which alias ‘Uriel’ was taken out, is a clear demonstration of the government’s strategy to combat these organizations that threaten against the security of Colombians.”

“...‘Uriel’ admits the participation of ELN urban networks in the acts of urban violence...”

Source: “Donde hay movilización ha estado el Eln”: alias ‘Uriel’ (Alias ‘Uriel’: Where there are mobilizations, there has been ELN),” *El Colombiano* and *Colprensa*, 24 September 2020. <https://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/paz-y-derechos-humanos/protestas-fueron-infiltradas-por-eln-para-atacar-cai-de-policia-LN13698627>

“In a video, one of the commanders of the ELN ‘s Ómar Gómez Western War Front, alias ‘Uriel’, confirmed that members of the structure has participated in the marches that have been carried out recently in the country...”

The boss of the illegal structure assured that ‘among the students are compañeros and compañeras of the Army of National Liberation, among the workers, the laborers, inside the judiciary, among the sindicalists, the health sector, transporters...everywhere there has been a social mobilization there have been compañeros of the Army of Liberation’...

For Trujillo [Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Minister of Defense], it is brazen how alias ‘Uriel’ admits the participation of ELN urban networks in the acts of urban violence and vandalism in Bogotá...”



Peruvian Presidency in Flux

OE Watch Commentary: On 9 November, the Peruvian congress voted 105-19 to remove President Martín Vizcarra, effective immediately. The two accompanying references, on which this comment relies entirely, are from well-established news outlets with strong investigative capacities. Peru does not have a vice president, so as head of congress, Manuel Merino ascended to the presidency in accordance with the constitution. Pro Vizcarra riots broke out and on Saturday (14 November) became violent. For a variety of reasons, President Merino did not consider his position tenable and resigned the following Monday, having served less than a week. The next regular elections are scheduled for 11 April 2021, with the term to begin on 28 July. So, whomever is chosen by the congress as an interim will also likely serve for only a short time. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Martín Vizcarra was removed by 105 votes in favor, 19 against and 4 abstentions...”

Source: “Martín Vizcarra: Así votaron los congresistas la moción de vacancia presidencial (Martín Vizcarra: How congressmen voted on the motion to vacate the presidency),” *El Comercio*, 16 November 2020. <https://elcomercio.pe/politica/congreso/martin-vizcarra-asi-votaron-los-congresistas-la-mocion-de-vacancia-presidencial-noticia/?ref=nota&ft=autoload>

“...Martín Vizcarra was removed by 105 votes in favor, 19 against and 4 abstentions...Two persons died this Saturday during the protests against the removal of Martín Vizcarra Cornejo in a course of events in which the national police repressed the demonstrators. Politicians, pre-candidates and various authorities asked for the immediate renunciation of Manuel Merino, including the acting president of the Congress, Luis Valdéz...The petition for removal came out after testimonies of several financial collaborators became known, according to which the political leader had received bribes in return for favoring bids from construction companies when he was governor of the Moquegua region...Four benches [of legislators by party] voted as blocks...”

Bench	In favor of removal	Against removal	Abstained
Acción Popular (Popular Action)	18	4	2
Alianza Para El Progreso (Alliance for Progress)	20	0	1
Fuerza Popular (Popular Force)	15	0	0
Frepap	14	0	0
Unión por el Perú (Union for Peru)	12	0	0
Podemos Perú	10	1	0
Somos Perú (We Are Peru)	7	2	0
Partido Morado (Purple Party)	0	9	0
Frente Amplio (Broad Front)	6	2	0
No agrupados (Not Alligned)	3	1	1

“...The interim executive stepped down after huge protests left two deaths and more than 100 wounded...”

Source: “Renunció el presidente de Perú Manuel Merino: “Convoco a la unidad y a la paz” (President of Peru Manuel Merino resigns),” *Infobae*, 15 November 2020. <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2020/11/15/manuel-merino-renuncio-a-la-presidencia-de-peru-convoco-a-la-unidad-y-a-la-paz/>

The interim executive stepped down after huge protests left two deaths and more than 100 wounded. The Congress must now designate a new president who will pacify the country...Whom they elect will be the third executive in less than a week, in a nation hit by the coronavirus pandemic and economic recession, that added to the political crisis when popular ruler Martín Vizcarra was removed in a lightning judgement Monday...Before his [Manuel Merino’s] action [resignation], the president of the Congress, Luis Valdez, had given an ultimatum to Merino that he abandon the position during the day on Sunday under the threat of the approval of another censure motion...



Diplomacy in Bolivia



Ex-President of Bolivia Evo Morales at a conference in Mexico late 2019.
 Source: [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Conferencia_de_Prensa_de_Evo_Morales_en_el_Museo_de_la_Ciudad_de_M%C3%A9xico_6_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Conferencia_de_Prensa_de_Evo_Morales_en_el_Museo_de_la_Ciudad_de_M%C3%A9xico_6_(cropped).jpg), Attribution: EneasMx, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license."

OE Watch Commentary: While Spain had announced that it was not sending an ambassador to Caracas, which regime leader Nicolás Maduro took as a slight, the government of Bolivia indicated that it would invite opposition leader Juan Guaidó to the 8 November inauguration of its newly elected President, Luis Arce. Arce is a senior member of the Movement to Socialism (MAS) party. That party is a strong Bolivarian ally of Venezuela's ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), so the invitation to Guaidó might seem to have been an insult. The Bolivian Foreign Relations Ministry came out with an ameliorating explanation—that the Ministry does not make the invitation choices, that it is by law the purview of an independent commission, and that no slight should be taken.

As the accompanying reference notes, no representative from the Maduro regime was invited by the commission. The invitations commission was evidently not happy with Maduro's insults regarding Bolivia's political processes, or at least not the processes that saw former President Evo Morales exiled. In any case, Guaidó evidently did not attend. As the second and third accompanying references attest, Morales was back in the country before two

days had passed and the embassy of Venezuela in La Paz returned to the Bolivarians. The article indicates an expectation that Bolivia's foreign policy will return to the Bolivarian fold. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...he [Morales] knew he would return to his country, but not that it would be so soon...”

Source: Una comisión mixta invita a Guaidó a toma de posesión de nuevo presidente de Bolivia (A mixed commission invites Guaido to the innauguration of the new Bolivian president),” *Tal Cual*, 30 October 2020. <https://talcualdigital.com/bolivia-invita-a-juan-guaido-a-la-toma-de-posesion-de-luis-arce/>

This Friday 29 October, the Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs [Karen Longaric Rodríguez] sent a new communique to clarify that that office is not the one that defines the list of invitees for the inauguration of the president elect, Luis Arce, this coming 8th of November, but rather that it simply sends out what is determined by the commission on Presidential Leadership Transition...

Chancellor Longaric explained by way of a communique that the vetoing of Morales owed to that ‘he has been hostile to the Bolivian democratic process and his presence in the country would generate social and political tension’...

Source: Editors, “Luis Arce es investido como nuevo presidente de Bolivia (Luis Arce is sworn in as the new President pf Bolivia),” *El Universal, Mexico*, 8 November 2020. <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/mundo/luis-arce-es-investido-como-nuevo-presidente-de-bolivia>

...Arce took possession as Chief of State and of Government in La Paz in front of leaders including King Phillip IV of Spain and several presidents of American countries. Previously, the Aymara David Choquehuanca swore in as Vice-President...The investiture of Arce supposes the return to power of that party [MAS] almost exactly one year from when the political crisis broke a hegemony of almost 14 consecutive years of Morales as president...

Source: Editors, “Evo Morales regresa a Bolivia tras un año de exilio en Argentina (Evo Morales returns to Bolivia after a year in exile in Argentina),” *ABC*, 9 November 2020, https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-morales-regresa-bolivia-tras-exilio-argentina-202011091647_noticia.html

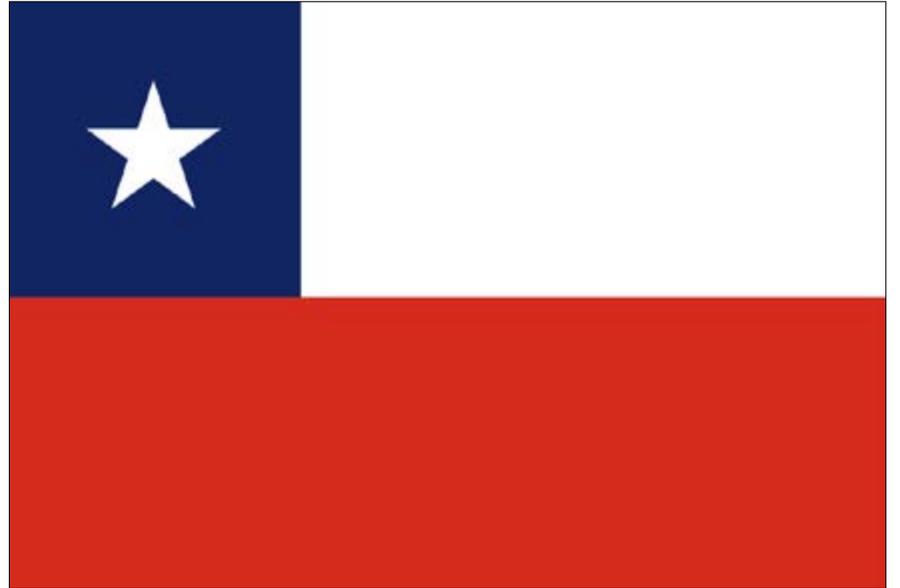
...Already back on Bolivian soil, the ex-ruler indicated that he knew he would return to his country, but not that it would be so soon. Accompanying him were ex-Vice-president Álvaro García Linera and ex-ambassador to the Organization of American States, Sacha Llorent... After the Evo Morales political front won the national elections, an order for his arrest was eliminated...Evo Morales indicated in recent weeks that he would not be part of the new government in Bolivia, although he would advise the new president. Luis Arce, on administration. As on previous opportunities, he assured that this time he would return to the Chimoré region, in the department of Cochabamba, in order to continue as a coca boss...



Chileans Will Write a New Constitution

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 October, Chileans voted to rewrite their country's constitution. They also voted to have it written by a group of 155 persons to be elected for the purpose. That means that another election on the subject is coming in April. As the first accompanying reference from *El Comercio* (long-established legacy paper) reports, the option to re-write the constitution gained a convincing majority of votes, meaning that a wide gamut of the country's political parties and ideological outlooks support the process.

The second reference is from *El Nacional*, an established news outlet based from Caracas. Perhaps its geographic distance from Santiago helped the writer provide us with a usefully balanced comment, but still from within the region. The commenter notes that all of Chile is involved, the pathway is complicated, and the results will be consequential. The next steps—setting up the vote to decide who will actually draft the new document, the efforts of the convention itself, and the follow-on process of public acceptance of whatever the convention comes up with—together make for a long steep slope, and one that should fascinate the entire region, if not the world. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Flag of Chile.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Chile.png, Attribution: Metronick CC0 1.0

“...Chile decided to write a new Constitution...”

Source: “Chile sepulta Constitución de Pinochet en un plebiscito nacido en la calle (Chile buries the Pinochet Constitution in a plebiscite born in the street),” *El Comercio* and *EFE*, 26 October 2020, <https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/chile-constitucion-pinochet-plebiscito-protestas.html>

“This Sunday, 25 October 2020, in a plebiscite resulting from last year’s street protests, Chile decided to write a new Constitution and bury its current fundamental law...”

Chileans voted overwhelmingly for ‘Approve’, (more than 78% of the votes), the option that opens a constituent process, and they elected that this be absolutely citizen-based, putting a constitutional convention in charge of writing the new Magna Carta, (79%), which will be composed of 155 persons elected by popular vote specifically for that purpose...

In spite of that [the pandemic], the participation rate was higher than 50%, the highest percentage since voting ceased to be obligatory in 2012...

The leftist opposition parties showed themselves to be entirely in favor of the change [in constitutions] while the four rightist parties that make up the governing coalition showed they were divided, among them those who defended against constitutional change to the end, and those who favored making a new fundamental text...”

“...a decisive crossroad for all of the actors in this Chilean process...”

Source: “La empinada cuesta de la Constitución chilena (The Chilean Constitution’s steep slope),” *El Nacional* and *Editores Unidas*, 3 November 2020. <https://venezuelaunida.com/la-empinada-cuesta-de-la-constitucion-chilena/>

...what happened with the referendum that took place a few days ago has been a decisive step toward the burying of the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship and a very important one in favor of cementing institutionality, legitimacy and the will of the citizenry as the national sovereignty...

The process that begins in April 2021 with the election of members of the National Convention, which will have a limit of one year to birth a text, is really uncertain. This process will depend so much on political wisdom regarding what might be left of Chilean finances after having confronted the pandemic. Without economic strengthening, it will be impossible to talk about inclusive social measures, and that all has to come together so that the exercise of redacting a new Constitution is not a sterile one...

This is, then, a decisive crossroad for all of the actors in this Chilean process...the whole country and all its living forces will be put to the test.



Spain Not Sending Ambassador to Venezuela

OE Watch Commentary: Spain's foreign ministry recently announced that it was not going to send an ambassador to Venezuela but would send a chargé d'affaires instead. This, according to the accompanying article from *Voz Populi* (generally conservative Madrid-based news website), is continuing fallout from the 2019 elections in Venezuela, which many countries of the world held to be fraudulent. Spain's President of Government (Administration) is Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Sánchez is a socialist who is governing with the support of the far-left, pro-Bolivarian Podemos party. However, as the accompanying article notes, the European Union, while not treating Venezuelan opposition personality Juan Guaidó as formal leader of Venezuela, is also not giving full recognition to the Bolivarian leader Nicolás Maduro either. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Spain does not recognize the last electoral processes that the regime of Nicolás Maduro organized...”



Flag of Spain.

Source: Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Spain#/media/File:Flag_of_Spain.svg, public domain



Flag of Spain and Flag of Venezuela.

Source: Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flag_of_Venezuela.svg, public domain

Source: “España no enviará nuevo embajador a Venezuela al no reconocer las últimas elecciones de Maduro (Spain will not send a new ambassador to Venezuela as it does not recognize the last Maduro elections),” *Voz Populi*, 29 October 2020. https://www.vozpopuli.com/espana/espana-venezuela-elecciones-maduro_0_1405360707.html

“Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Cristina Gallach, has announced today in a parliamentary session that at this time Spain was not going to send an ambassador to Venezuela, but that diplomat Juan Fernández Trigo would be accredited to Venezuelan authorities as ‘chargé d’affaires with cabinet portfolio’...”

The ‘number two’ of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has justified this political decision because Spain does not recognize the last electoral processes that the regime of Nicolás Maduro organized. Additionally, she has pointed out that it follows the examples of Italy and the Netherlands, two European countries that limited to sending chargés d’affaires in place of ambassadors in recent months...

Gallach has indicated, likewise, that Spain was going to name new ambassadors to Colombia, Cuba, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago in the coming weeks. Last Tuesday the naming of a new chief of mission to El Salvador was authorized by the Council of Ministers...”