



## Azerbaijan's Large-Scale Exercise Amid Coronavirus

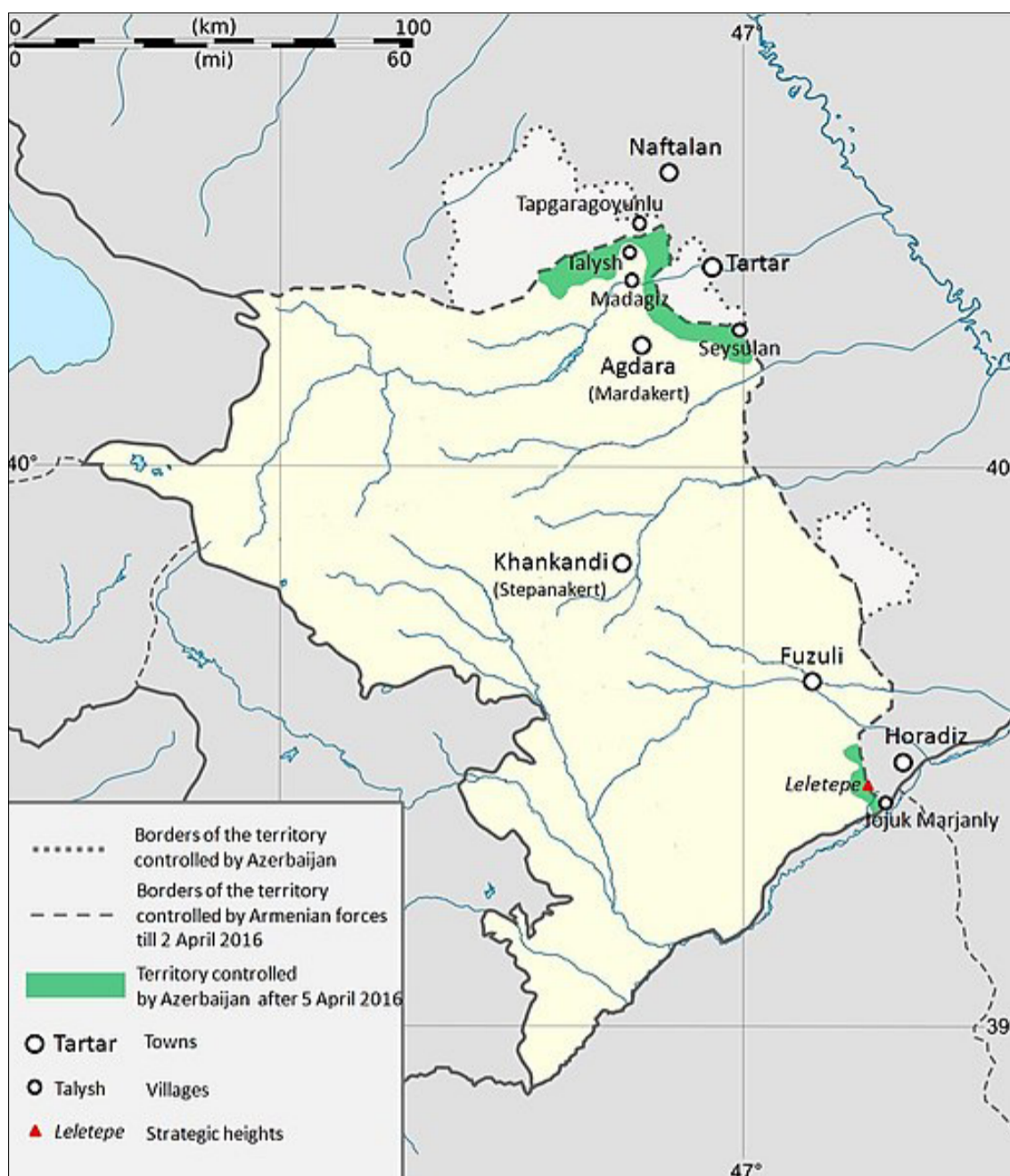
**OE Watch Commentary:** Earlier this year Azerbaijani officials reported that the country's armed forces had been following a set of measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus and maintain readiness (see: "Conscription in the Caucasus during Coronavirus," *OE Watch*, June 2020). The accompanying excerpted articles report on a large-scale exercise recently carried out by the armed forces just as the country began a phase of loosening restrictions amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The article from *Eurasia Daily*, a Russian-language news website, reports that the Azerbaijani armed forces carried out "large-scale tactical exercises 18-22 May" and that the exercises involved "close to 10 thousand soldiers, around 120 tanks and armored vehicles, close to 200 artillery systems of various calibers, multiple rocket launch systems and 30 aircraft from the army as well as unmanned aerial systems." The article does not mention if the armed forces took any precautions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus during the exercise. However, it is worth noting that the government of Azerbaijan enforced a curfew in most urban areas during the first weekend of June after the number of coronavirus cases in the country rose following the phase of loosening restrictions, which began on 18 May. The article does mention how the "scenario of the exercise looked at utilizing units in specific areas, the application of massive strikes by rocket and artillery, airstrikes and the use of precision-guided weapons throughout the depth of the conditional enemy."

The exercise scenario shares similarities with the clashes in April 2016 when Azerbaijani forces carried

out an operation with the use of rocket and artillery strikes followed by an assault with ground forces in a few areas along the line of contact in the occupied territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The article also notes that the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan conducted a videoconference in April and that they "agreed that in the current global health crisis it is important to adhere to a ceasefire and refrain from any provocations."

The article from *Trend*, an Azerbaijani news agency, reports on an exercise that took place in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic (an exclave of Azerbaijan) around the same time, which also focused on carrying out "operations in different sectors of the territory." The article notes that the exercise involved "12 motorized rifle and mechanized companies, 18 artillery and mortar batteries" and that "units conducted tactical actions and live firing." Ultimately, the articles show that the government of Azerbaijan continues to prepare for a scenario similar to April 2016; and sees this as a high priority that cannot be delayed, even despite a pandemic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



*Territorial changes after 2016 Armenian-Azerbaijani clashes.*

Source: Interfase via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial\\_changes\\_after\\_2016\\_Armenian-Azerbaijani\\_clashes.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_after_2016_Armenian-Azerbaijani_clashes.jpg), CC BY 4.0

***“The scenario of the exercise looked at utilizing units in specific areas, the application of massive strikes by rocket and artillery, airstrikes and the use of precision-guided weapons throughout the depth of the conditional enemy.”***



## Continued: Azerbaijan's Large-Scale Exercise Amid Coronavirus

**Source:** “Азербайджанская армия проведёт крупные учения на фоне глобальной пандемии (The Azerbaijani army will carry out a large-scale exercise amid the global pandemic),” *Eurasia Daily*, 14 May 2020. <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2020/05/14/azerbaydzhanskaya-armiya-provedyot-krupnye-ucheniya-na-fone-globalnoy-pandemi>

*The armed forces of Azerbaijan will carry out large-scale tactical exercises 18-22 May...The exercise will involve close to 10 thousand soldiers, around 120 tanks and armored vehicles, close to 200 artillery systems of various calibers, multiple rocket launch systems and 30 aircraft from the army as well as unmanned aerial systems...*

*The scenario of the exercise looked at utilizing units in specific areas, the application of massive strikes by rocket and artillery, airstrikes and the use of precision-guided weapons throughout the depth of the conditional enemy...*

*As reported by EA Daily, the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Elmar Mamedyarov and Armenia, Zograb Mnatsakanyan, held talks on 21 April via videoconference...The ministers of the two republics agreed that in the current global health crisis it is important to adhere to a ceasefire and refrain from any provocations...*

**Source:** “В войсках Нахчыванского гарнизона завершились командно-штабные учения (Soldiers at the Nakhchivan garrison have wrapped up a command-staff exercise),” *Trend*, 24 May 2020. <https://www.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3244551>

*Soldiers of the Nakhchivan garrison have wrapped up a command and staff exercise, reports Trend, citing the Defense Ministry of Azerbaijan. According to the plan of the exercise, operations in different sectors of the territory were carried out...*

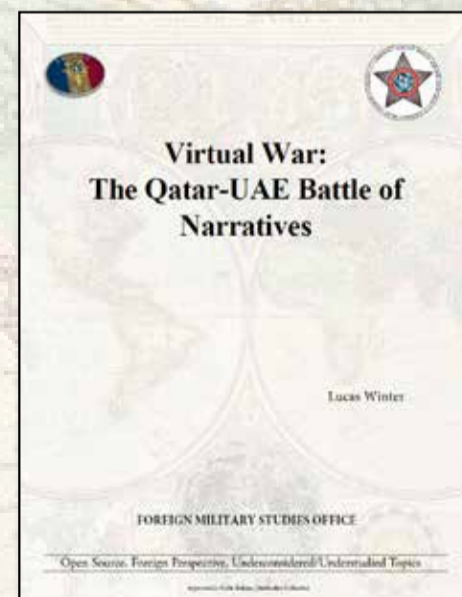
*Amid a unified tactical situation, the tactical training was carried out with 12 motorized rifle and mechanized companies, 18 artillery and mortar batteries. Units conducted tactical actions and live firing...*

## VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter

May 2020

For much of the past decade, Qatar and the UAE have been engaged in a battle of narratives. Their ongoing dispute dates to 2011 and is rooted in foreign policy and ideological disagreements. Following a hack of the Qatari News Agency in 2017, the nature of Qatari-Emirati competition shifted from being primarily the purview of government officials, spokespeople, journalists, analysts and authors, to one where coders, influencers, trolls and cybersecurity experts played a vital role. Since then, both countries have worked to increase their capabilities in the cyber and informational domains. Their relationship in these domains has evolved into one of strategic competition. This paper looks at how these dynamics may affect the regional operational environment, with a particular focus on the cyber and informational domains.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/329799>