

OEWATCH

FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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OE Watch Commentary: *The crisis in Ukraine and Crimea has serious repercussions for Turkey, which sits only 173 miles south of Crimea, across the Black Sea. This turmoil to Turkey's north comes on top of the situation Turkey is facing on its southern border with the Syrian crisis, and Iraqi turmoil in its southeast.*

As the accompanying passages point out, analysts in the Turkish media are discussing whether Turkey, in the case of a NATO action, would be able to balance its obligations under NATO membership with its obligations under the 1936 Montreaux Convention, which gives Turkey control of the only passageway to the Black Sea and limits the navigational rights and access of nonlittoral powers (countries that do not border the Black Sea) into the Black Sea through the Turkish Straits. Thus, Turkey's application of the Montreaux Treaty has an impact on the operational flexibility of any U.S. or NATO attempt to patrol the Black Sea.

Since the beginning of the crisis Turkey has advocated Ukraine's political unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and has been opposed to the secession of Crimea. However, Turkey is not in a position to take a firmer stance and directly confront Russia on this issue, due to its dependency on Russia for over half of its natural gas. Russia and Turkey also have energy agreements and strategic cooperation ties that go back 30 years. Annual trade between Russia and Turkey is around \$40 billion and Turkey recently chose a Russian company to build its first nuclear power plant. These ties enable the Turkish government to keep the standard of living at a certain level, a critical factor at a time when two important elections (presidential and parliamentary) are coming up in the next year. One example of how Turkey has been more restrained towards Russia is the fact that Turkey has not followed the U.S. and the European Union in imposing sanctions on some Russian officials.

Another factor for Turkey is the Muslim Crimean Tatars, with whom Turkey has close linguistic, cultural and religious links. However, its dependence on Russia for natural gas puts it in a difficult situation when it comes to protecting them.

Despite all the challenges, however, the situation also presents an opportunity for



Source: <http://consortiumnews.com/2014/03/09/crimeas-case-for-leaving-ukraine/>

Source: "Gülen örgütü Türkiye aleyhine lobi yapıyor (The Gülen organization is lobbying against Turkey)," Sabah.com.tr, 18 April 2014, <http://www.sabah.com.tr/Gundem/2014/04/18/gulen-orgutu-turkiye-aleyhine-lobi-yapiyor?paging=1>

"On the one hand, NATO wants to soften the implementation of the Montreaux Convention; on the other hand Russia is blaming Turkey of not applying Montreaux. Meanwhile, Turkey needs NATO's Patriot missiles to protect itself against Syria. So, the Ukraine crisis has made it difficult for Turkey to continue its Black Sea politics and has forced it to conduct a very delicate [foreign] policy."

"The events in Ukraine has put Turkish foreign policy in a difficult situation. However, the crisis can also present an opportunity for Turkey. The events in the Ukraine have underlined something that has been proven time and time again since the 1973 oil crisis: those who control the energy resources can use these as a political weapon. So energy security is hugely important. Europe depends on Russia for energy. With the Ukraine crisis, both the U.S. and the European Union countries have started to discuss the importance of looking for alternative energy routes. In this framework, the South Stream Gas Pipeline Transit Project has become important. For example, the British Foreign Minister said in a statement, "As European countries, we need to diversify our energy resources and increase our energy security. In this framework, Turkey and Azerbaijan and the South Stream Gas Pipeline Transit Project becomes very important." If this project is implemented, this would make Turkey a transit country. This would have not only economic but also strategic benefits for Turkey. It would make Turkey a more important country for Europe."

(continued)

Continued: Turkey and the Ukraine Crisis

Turkey. As one of the accompanying passages points out, the crisis highlights Turkey as a potential alternative energy route (through the South Stream Gas Pipeline Transit Project), as Europe looks to reduce its dependency on current energy routes through Russia and Ukraine. End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)

Source: “Ukrayna Rusya savaşı çıkarsa Türkiye ne yapacak? (What will Turkey do if a Ukraine-Russia war breaks out?),” Netgazete.com, 4 March 2014, <http://www.netgazete.com/dunya/620672.html>

“The Montreaux Convention is gaining importance here. According to the Montreaux Convention, in the case of a potential conflict, any decision that NATO takes will be hugely important for Turkey, which controls the passage of military ships of countries which do not border the Black Sea. What does the Montreaux Convention say about this? What has happened in other similar cases? Can Russia send its navy fleet to invade Crimea? Can NATO member countries (other than Turkey) send military ships to the Black Sea to prevent a Russia-Ukraine war?

According to one of the clauses in the Convention, any warships owned by countries which don't border the Black Sea have to exit the Black Sea within 21 days. According to this, if a U.S. or NATO-member country's warships enter the Black Sea, they can only stay for 21 days.”

“On the one hand, NATO wants [Turkey] to soften the implementation of the Montreaux Convention; on the other hand Russia is blaming Turkey for not implementing Montreaux. Meanwhile, Turkey needs NATO's Patriot missiles to protect itself against Syria. So, the Ukraine crisis has made it difficult for Turkey to continue its Black Sea politics and has forced it to conduct a very delicate [foreign] policy.”

“From now on, we will be the one giving permission [to purchase special production equipment that is used in the explosive production plants], not the one asking for it.”

OE Watch Commentary: On 16 April 2014 Turkey’s Science, Industry and Technology Minister Fikri Işık announced that this year Turkey would be opening a national modern facility that would produce indigenous warheads, airplane bombs and plastic explosives. As the accompanying passages point out, the warheads and bombs that will be produced in this facility are meant to free Turkey from its dependency on foreign powers for its defense needs and improve its global standing.

According to the Turkish media, the Turkish Technological and Scientific Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and the Turkish Machinery and Chemical Industry Institution (MKEK) have signed an agreement to create the Warhead Production Facility, which will be established in the Kırıkkale Province of Turkey. All of the special production equipment that will be built in the facility (which will produce the explosives for all modern equipment) will be produced by domestic firms within Turkey.

This is the latest in a series of initiatives that Turkey has taken to reduce dependence on foreign weapons and become more self-sufficient and competitive in the defense industry. Turkey has made great strides in this field in the last five years. In May 2013 the Turkish Armed Forces unveiled their first tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), marking the first locally produced UAVs, including their software. Turkey also has plans to build upon the success of this project to produce indigenous armed drones. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Turkey’s Science, Industry and Technology Minister Fikri Işık.

Source: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/turkce/haber/turkiye-savas-basliklari-ve-ucak-bombalari-uretecek/57849>.

Source: “Türkiye modern harp başlığı üretecek (Turkey will produce modern warheads),” Anatolian Agency News, 16 April 2014, <http://www.aa.com.tr/tr/haberler/314438--turkiye-modern-harp-basligi-uretecek>

“We will be the one giving permission, instead of asking for it”

The Science, Industry and Technology Minister Fikri Işık, said that only a very small number of countries in the world have the capability to design and build such high-tech production facilities. He said that as in every field, Turkey is continuing to become a more important actor in the defense industry field:

“To be an important actor, we need to reduce our dependence on foreign powers. The special production equipment that is used in the explosive production plants is subject to the Missile Technologies Control Regime and requires permission from the provider country’s government to purchase. So if you need this equipment, but cannot get the permission from the country’s government, you aren’t able to get it. With the new production facility we are planning, we are going to turn this situation around. From now on, we will be the one giving permission, not the one asking for it.”

Işık said, “This modern facility, which only a few countries in the world have, will be opened in Turkey this year. The warheads and airplane bombs that Turkey will produce in this facility, will free it from its dependency on foreign powers in the important field of defense.”

Source: “Türkiye savaş başlıkları üretecek (Turkey to produce warheads),” Turkish Prime Ministry’s Press and Information Office, 16 April 2014, <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/turkce/haber/turkiye-savas-basliklari-ve-ucak-bombalari-uretecek/57849>

“The Science, Industry and Technology Minister Fikri Işık said yesterday that Turkey will this year launch a “national” factory to produce its own warheads, airplane bombs and plastic explosives. The Minister said, “The new factory will end our dependence on foreign providers for warheads and airplane bombs. Işık also said that the factory would produce 600 tons of plastic explosives each year.”

“It appears that militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), one of the groups at the forefront of al-Qaida linked groups in Syria, has chosen NATO member Turkey as its first target...”

OE Watch Commentary: A series of recent developments have highlighted the jihadi threat that Turkey faces due to the Syrian crisis and brought Turkey to the brink of a military incursion into Syria against fighters from the jihadi group, the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS).

As one of the accompanying passages discusses, on 20 March three militants, reportedly from the ISIS, attacked Turkish security forces in Turkey’s Nigde Province, killing three people. The following day, in a YouTube message, the ISIS threatened to destroy the Tomb of Suleiman Shah, which sits on a piece of land in northern Syria, 15 miles outside of Turkey, but is officially considered Turkish territory. This is the only Turkish territory outside of Turkey, and the tomb has symbolic significance because Suleiman Shah was the grandfather of Osman I, the founder of the Ottoman Empire. The tomb, which is protected by 15 Turkish soldiers, sits near Raqqa, a northern Syrian provincial center under ISIS rule. Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoglu warned that Turkey would retaliate should there be an attack on the tomb.

The following week, on 27 March, an audio tape recording of a high-level meeting on Turkey’s Syria strategy was leaked on YouTube. The meeting, which was held between the foreign minister, his undersecretary, deputy chief of the Armed Forces General Staff and the head of the Turkish National Intelligence Agency (MIT), includes a discussion of Turkey conducting operations against the ISIS inside Syria. YouTube was banned in Turkey after the leak, with the government citing national security concerns.

As the accompanying passages point out, Turkey’s bordering towns are increasingly becoming hubs for Syrian



The Tomb of Suleiman Shah. Source: <http://t24.com.tr/haber/yeni-ses-kaydi-secim-icin-savas-plani-iddiasi/254503>

Source: “IŞID Süleyman Şah’ın boşaltılması için Türkiye’ye 3 gün süre verdi (The ISIS has given Turkey 3 days to withdraw from Suleiman Shah),” Aksam.com.tr, 22 March 2014, <http://www.aksam.com.tr/dunya/isid-suleyman-sahin-bosaltilmasi-icin-turkiyeye-3-gun-sure-verdi/haber-294079>

“The ISIS has given Turkey 3 days to withdraw from Suleiman Shah, which is Turkey’s only territory outside Turkey’s homeland.... In a statement released last night... the organization’s spokesperson said in a YouTube video, “We are giving Turkish soldiers at the tomb of Suleiman Shah 3 days to leave. If they do not leave within 3 days, we will destroy the tomb.”

Source: Semih Idiz, “Türkiye’ye yönelen IŞID tehdidi (The ISIS threat directed at Turkey),” Al Monitor.com, 25 March 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2014/03/isis-threat-turkey-syria-jihadists.html#ixzz2zb3hkHxe>

“It appears that militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), one of the groups at the forefront of al-Qaida linked groups in Syria, has chosen NATO member Turkey as its first target, instead of Western Europe. Turkish security officials are concerned that the attack on 20 March in Nigde is only the first of a series of attacks planned against Turkey. According to information given by government officials, the attack was carried out by three ISIS members, and killed one police officer, one gendarmerie officer, a truck driver and injured five soldiers....

The public is uneasy with allegations that Ankara continues to provide logistical and weapons assistance to jihadi groups like the al-Nusrah Front. According to allegations, Turkey still supports these groups due to their activities against the regime. Even though Ankara denies these allegations, they continue to emerge. Most Turks believe that you cannot be friends with jihadi groups. Such groups will eventually threaten Turkey’s secularism. Thus many people want the government to distance itself from the radical groups in Syria. The rising tension due to these ISIS-related developments shows how appropriate this expectation is.”

(continued)

Continued: The ISIS Threat to Turkey

*extremists and militants. Turkey is becoming a transit country for international jihadists going to Syria, including those coming from Europe. Turkey is finding itself with al-Qaida-affiliated militant groups on its longest border, and faces the grave risk of such groups' acquisition and use of chemical weapons, which would have consequences far beyond Turkey and the Middle East. As one of the passages points out, the Turkish public is very uneasy with allegations that Ankara is supporting jihadi groups, such as the al-Nusra Front in Syria, which are fighting against the regime, claiming that they will eventually turn against Turkey. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)***

Source: Merve Tahiroglu, "Turkey's ISIS Problem," Long War Journal, 31 March 2014, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/03/turkeys_isil_problem.php#ixzz2zapebGqN

"As the conflict in Syria grinds on, Turkey's bordering towns are increasingly becoming hubs for Syrian extremists and militants. Turkey is being used as a transit country for international jihadists going to Syria, including those coming from Europe. Turkey has sent back 815 Europeans who have tried to cross from Turkey into Syria to join radical groups to their respective European countries, and 655 people were put on a search list."

Iranian Flotilla Docks in Djibouti

7 April 2014

“The main objective of the 29th Battle Group is to show our sacred flag across the sea.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Islamic Republic continues to expand the operational reach of its navy. Whereas once Iranian ships limited themselves to the Persian Gulf or nearby littoral waters in the Indian Ocean, in recent years the Iranian Navy has expanded its reach, sending ships through the Suez Canal, into the Pacific Ocean, and around southern Africa and into the Atlantic Ocean. The Iranian presence in the Red Sea and off the Horn of Africa has become even more frequent.*

That several Iranian ships have docked in the small east African nation of Djibouti might not merit the same headlines as an Iranian transit of the Suez Canal or polemical—and apparently so-far baseless—claims of deploying ships off the East Coast of the United States. Nevertheless, Iranian authorities likely interpret their Djibouti port call as a challenge to the United States, for which Djibouti has long been an important military partner. The port call also symbolizes the erosion of Iran’s isolation: it is one thing for the Iranian Navy to have a port call in Sudan, itself a relatively isolated state; it is quite another to establish such a relationship with a close partner of the United States.

Nor was Djibouti the only port call the Iranian naval battle group made in its two-and-a-half month deployment: the excerpted article also mentions a call at Salaleh, Oman’s second largest city. This might also raise alarm bells, as Oman, like Djibouti, has long been a Western security partner. However, in recent months it has moved to create military partnerships with Iran, for example, also negotiating a lease for an Iranian base on the strategic Musandam Peninsula, the Arab side of the Strait of Hormuz.

*Lastly, the excerpted report’s claim that the mission of the docked ships was to protect the sea lanes utilized by the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and escort its ships should also raise a red flag, given the repeated sanctioning of the IRISL by both the United States and European Union for its actions both supporting proliferation and shipping weaponry to various insurgencies in the Middle East and Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)***



Kharg helicopter carrier (shown in the picture) is part of the 29th Fleet of the Iranian Navy. Source: www.presstv.ir

Source: “Navgarueh Bist va Nahom Niru-ye Darya-ye Artesh dar Bandar Djibouti Pehlu Gereft,” (“The 29th Battle Group Docked in the Port of Djibouti”) DefaPress.com, 7 April 2014. <http://www.defapress.com/Fa/News/15283>

The 29th Battle Group of the Iranian Navy Docked in Djibouti

The 29th Battle Group of the Iranian navy yesterday afternoon docked in the port of the country of Djibouti. The 29th Battle Group docked after 73 days of sailing. This battle group, along with students of the Imam Khomeini Maritime University, will be in Djibouti for a three-day port call after patrolling the Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, and also berthing at the port of Salaleh in Oman. The main objectives of the 29th Battle Group are to secure the sea lanes and routes for the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines and showing our sacred flag across the sea.

“The claim that Iron Dome is impenetrable is empty and fictitious.”

OE Watch Commentary: Iron Dome has become Israel's first line of defense against missile attacks from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, Hezbollah-run areas of southern Lebanon, and any other potential combatants. On 1 April 2014, however, the Iron Dome system near Israel's southernmost city of Eilat launched due to a false alarm. The system failure led to a number of Iranian officials ridiculing Israel and publicly questioning whether the Iron Dome system is more propaganda than real. Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) General Ramezan Sharif, for example, told **Fars News** that not only is Iron Dome unable to provide security for the Israeli “occupiers,” but the system itself also poses a serious threat to the Zionists. Hossein Naghavi Hosseini, the spokesman for the Iranian parliament's National Security Committee, sounded the same theme in his statements, also to the hardline, semi-official **Fars News Agency**. Such hyperbole is nothing new for Hosseini: he also claimed that the United States “kidnapped” missing Malaysian Airlines Flight 370.

Such attention to Iron Dome, even if in response to a misfire, suggests that the Iranians, despite their denials, do understand the challenge the Israeli system poses to Iran's ability to strike at a state it has declared its chief enemy. At the same time, however, should the Iranian military convince itself that the Iron Dome system is not as technically capable as claimed, it could lead to Iranian overconfidence and perhaps a temptation to launch a first strike in pursuit of Iranian hardliners' ideological imperatives. Regardless, such rhetoric does not indicate that the IRGC or significant factions within parliament have undertaken the same commitment to reconcile with the outside world as some Iranian diplomats involved in nuclear negotiations claim Iran has made. At the very least, whatever might happen in U.S.-Iran negotiations, there does not appear to be any change on the horizon to the Islamic Republic's deep-seated hostility to Israel. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

Source: “Tablighat-e Rezhim-e Sionisti az Samaneh Gunbad-e Ahnin Yek Beluf Nazami Ast,” (“The Zionist Regime's Claims Regarding the Iron Dome System is a Military Bluff”) Fars News Agency, 1 April 2014. <http://farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13930112000300>

The Zionist Regime is Bluffing About Its Iron Dome System

Sayyid Hossein Naghavi Hosseini, spokesman for the National Security Committee of the Iranian parliament, told the Fars News Agency, in reference to a recent unsuccessful test of Israel's Iron Dome showed that hollowness of the claims of the puppet regime occupying Jerusalem about its military might has been established for the region. Naghavi Hosseini reiterated that we empirically see from past wars how the Zionist regime was defeated by Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the claim that Iron Dome is impenetrable is empty and fictitious. He said the propaganda of the Zionist regime about this system is just a military bluff, and the Zionist regime makes such comments in order to weaken its opponents and enemies, but Hezbollah forces have no fear of such bluster.

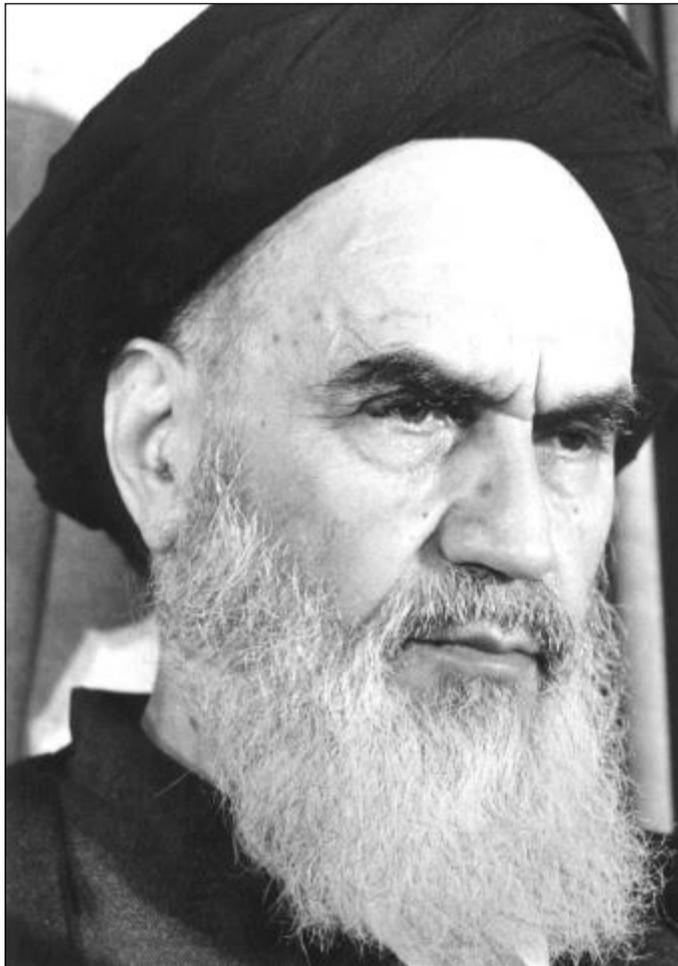


Source: Wikimedia Commons

“A revolutionary person is someone who ... will not refrain from any effort on the path of the establishment of an Islamic system.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The Islamic Republic of Iran remains an ideological state, committed not only to the concept of clerical rule, but also to the export of Islamic revolutions beyond its borders. Mohammad Eskandari, a hardline columnist for **Javan**, a daily close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), pens a long essay describing how the Islamic Republic should encourage the shaping of a jihadi generation that will harken back to the heady—and in Eskandari’s mind, revolutionary—pure days of the Iran-Iraq War generation. During the course of his essay he defines his understanding of “a revolutionary person.” While many Muslims might understand jihad to focus on the internal struggle to make themselves better individuals, the vision put forward in **Javan** suggests that the ideal revolutionary embraces fully the idea of clerical rule put forward by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and seeks to export it to other countries beyond Iran’s borders.*

*Iranian papers are not equivalent to their American counterparts: op-ed writers represent not simply their own ideas, but rather the visions of the entire paper and, more broadly given limitation of press freedom, the regime itself, because non-conforming opinions simply are not welcome. That **Javan** continues to argue for a more activist revolutionary ideal suggests that Iran remains not a status quo power, but rather a state that seeks to increase its influence and ideology beyond its borders not only by diplomatic means, but also by promotion of individual revolutionaries and the militias and insurgencies which they might support.*
End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)



Ruhollah Khomeini. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Source: “Enghalabigeri dar ‘Arseh Moderiyat-e Kalan-e Kashvar,” (“Revolutionary Thought in the Country’s Broader Management”) *Javan Online*, 6 April 2014.
<http://goo.gl/EkUZsl>

Jihadi Management

A revolutionary person is someone who believes in and is committed to Islam and the pure Islamic law of Muhammad and who regards the system of the Islamic Republic as a new framework for the theory of Islamic government based on the concept of the guardianship of jurist. Revolutionary conduct is also a form of behavior that is based on religious values whose supreme examples could be achieved in following the Supreme Leader. In fact, a revolutionary person is someone who believes in the guardianship of the jurist, and someone who will not refrain from any effort on the path of the establishment of an Islamic system, government, society and civilization.

“Not using a high-inclination sun-synchronous orbit prevents the satellite from achieving a global coverage which is not a requirement for its mission.”

OE Watch Commentary: Egypt's first remote sensing satellite, EgyptSat-1, was successfully deployed in 2007, but communications with it were lost in 2010. The launch of a second satellite was delayed from its originally projected date of October 2013. On 16 April 2014 the Russian Space Agency successfully launched EgyptSat-2 (article one). Once it is on-station and fully operational, the satellite will be handed over to Egypt (article two). Although imagery satellites are usually placed in polar orbits to maximize global coverage, EgyptSat-2 is positioned in an orbit to increase the frequency of its passage over Egypt (article three). This supports Egypt's claim that the primary mission of the satellite is to provide imagery of Egypt for mapping and environmental monitoring.



EgyptSat-2

Source: <http://www.spaceflight101.com/soyuz-u---egyptsat-2-launch-updates.html>

Source: Staff Author(s), “Egyptian satellite placed in orbit,” Interfax, 17 April 2014 <http://www.interfax.com/>

Article 1:

An Egyptian land remote sensing satellite, EgyptSat, launched from Baikonur cosmodrome on Wednesday has successfully separated from Soyuz-U launch vehicle and entered terrestrial orbit, Interfax-AVN was told at the press service of the Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos). ... EgyptSat was designed and manufactured by Energia rocket and space corporation at orders from the Egyptian State Committee for Land Remote Sensing and Space Studies. ... The equipment installed on it will permit taking pictures of the Earth with a resolution of 1 meter in panchromatic mode and 4 meters in multispectral mode.

Source: Staff Author(s), “Egyptian satellite to be handed over to customer in three months - Energia,” Interfax, 17 April 2014 <http://www.interfax.com/>

Article 2:

The Egyptian remote sensing satellite ... will be handed over to the customer in three months, a spokesperson for the Russian Rocket and Space Corporation “Energia” told Interfax-AVN on Thursday. ... The satellite will be used as part of an RKK-built space system deployed on the customer's territory. The space system includes a control center, a ground control center, stationary and mobile image reception and processing systems supplied to the customer under the turnkey project.

(continued)

Continued: Egypt Re-Enters Space as Imagery Satellite Placed in Orbit

Source: Patrick Blau, "Soyuz U Rocket successfully launches EgyptSat-2 Earth Observation Satellite," Spaceflight 101, 16 April 2014 <http://www.spaceflight101.com/soyuz-u---egyptsat-2-launch-updates.html>.

Article 3:

... the 1,050-Kilogram EgyptSat-2 spacecraft is now set for an 11-year mission providing high-resolution imagery of Egypt and surrounding regions at a resolution of one meter. ... Operation of the mission is completed by the Egyptian National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences that also operates two ground stations that will be used to downlink data from the spacecraft. ... EgyptSat-2, also called MisrSat-2, is Egypt's second Earth observation satellite. It was built by RSC Energia for operation by the National Authority for Remote Sensing and Space Sciences in Egypt. The spacecraft will be used to gather imagery of the Egyptian territory and surrounding regions for digital mapping, assessments of mineral, water and other resources, environmental monitoring, vegetation monitoring, studies of the headwaters of the Nile, and disaster management. ... EgyptSat-2 uses an X-Band communications terminal to downlink acquired data at rates of 300 to 600 Mbit/s to ground stations near Cairo and Aswan in southern Egypt. Telemetry data downlink and command uplink is accomplished via S-Band. Egypt-Sat-2 is equipped with an optical imaging payload that utilizes a folded-optics design to achieve the required focal length. The imager covers the visible spectral band as well as infrared radiation using CCD detectors, focal plane electronics and analog/digital converters to generate its images. The payload supports multispectral and panchromatic imaging covering a ground swath of up to 1,400 Kilometers depending on the imaging mode and the required resolution. In multispectral mode, EgyptSat acquires full color images at a resolution of up to 4 meters. Panchromatic images achieve a resolution of 1 meter. The optical imagery supports various modes of operation including single-scene imaging, route imaging, mapping and stereo imagery acquisition. The EgyptSat-2 spacecraft is set to operate from a circular orbit at 700 Kilometers with an inclination of 51.6 degrees, however, the satellite has an operational altitude range of 500 to 800 Kilometers. Not using a high-inclination sun-synchronous orbit prevents the satellite from achieving a global coverage which is not a requirement for its mission. Instead, the lower inclination allows the satellite to pass over Egypt more often than a satellite in a polar orbit. ... Night passes are not useful for environmental monitoring, but allow the assessment of artificial lighting in cities and villages across the country which can be used for different applications.



EgyptSat-2

Source: <http://www.spaceflight101.com/soyuz-u---egyptsat-2-launch-updates.html>

On Proxy War and Civil War in Lattakia

4 April 2014

“... Liberating the coast would be a grave mistake that could plunge Syria into the abyss, leaving nothing intact ...”

OE Watch Commentary: The term “civil war” has been used to describe the bloody and destructive Syrian conflict since at least the spring of 2012, when the Syrian regime applied its full military might to dislodge armed rebels from parts of the central city of Homs. Over the next year thousands of Syrians joined rebel “battalions” in a bid to overthrow the ruling regime. In the spring and summer of 2013, though, the role of foreign fighters began increasing, as jihadis swelled the rebel ranks while Hizbullah and Iraqi militias fought alongside regime forces. Material assistance from external powers increased, with Iran and Russia propping up the regime and Gulf States (particularly Qatar and Saudi Arabia), Turkey and the West supporting the rebellion. As 2013 drew to a close, foreign governments and fighters seemed as invested in a military victory over their opponent as Syrians themselves.

The recent rebel offensive in the northern edge of Lattakia Province along the border with Turkey, dubbed the “al-Anfal Battle” in reference to a battle from early Islamic history, illustrates how elements of proxy and civil war are intertwined in Syria. The rebel offensive is allegedly led by a Chechen commander and involves large numbers of foreign fighters (including a significant Moroccan contingent). The rebels appear to have a safe haven across the border in Turkey, and some believe that this is only the tip of the Turkish involvement iceberg. The offensive does not appear to be part of a broader strategy, which is troubling, given the highly combustible sectarian sensitivities in Lattakia, particularly between the Sunni and Alawite communities.

This is not the first rebel offensive in the Alawite heartland. In August 2013 rebels took over several towns in the mountainous province; amid a regime counterattack, the offensive was suddenly halted. The author of the first accompanying article, who supports the



Muslim al-Shishani – one of the leaders of the Lattakia offensive, screenshot from YouTube
<http://goo.gl/pqncw4>

Source:

معركة الساحل: نيران صديقة تصيب عقول المعارضين!
Mohammed Mansour. “The battle for the coast: friendly fire injures the minds of the opposition!” 3 April 2014, Zaman al-Wasl. <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/readNews.php?id=48263>

Article 1:

Many reasons were given for why this battle stopped... from an end to weapons supplies for rebels on the coast to an international decision to stop the fighting to talk of having sold out... to the point that it appeared that a line had been drawn in the sand, with no one knowing who had drawn it and why it should not be crossed...

Source:

معركة الساحل إن
Michel Kilo. “The battle for the coast!” 2 April 2014, al-Sharq al-Awsat. <http://beta.aawsat.com/home/article/68791> (Translation available at: <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/04/article55330713>)

Article 2:

In other parts of Syria, the battle is not directed against a certain demographic. However, on the coast any miscalculation or confrontation between people from different sects may lead to a national catastrophe that could eventually take the form of a long-term civil war. All of the atrocities and war crimes so far committed by the regime, its allies and the militants following its course, will be nothing compared to what might happen here... Fighting for the coast will be a long, expensive, drawn-out battle, and it will make it easier for the regime to manipulate people’s emotions and stoke hatred, embroiling them without much effort in its criminal war

(continued)

Continued: On Proxy War and Civil War in Lattakia

current offensive, claims that the reasons for this were never entirely clear. As he explains, it appeared as if “a line had been drawn in the sand, with no one knowing who had drawn it and why it should not be crossed.”

This mysterious line, it seems, is once again being drawn. The second accompanying article is an op-ed written by Michel Kilo and published in one of Saudi Arabia’s most prominent dailies. Kilo is a Christian and a longtime Syrian opposition figure who remains relevant. In the article he explains how the Lattakia offensive risks igniting a sectarian civil war that would far exceed the current bloody conflict. Already, a number of pro-regime Alawite paramilitaries have rushed in to contain the Sunni fundamentalist-led assault. The rebels have also come under criticism after taking over the Armenian-majority town of Kassab, which, as a result, has largely been emptied of its residents.

The rebel side faces a quagmire when it comes to attacking Lattakia. Non-jihadi fighters whose continued relevance depends on maintaining a reputation as “moderate rebels” are reluctant to intervene, given the high levels of sectarian polarization that heavy fighting there would bring. The Syrian National Coalition (SNC), the purported rebel government, has made symbolic gestures of support for the offensive, including a media visit by SNC leader Ahmed Jarba. Following Jarba’s visit Colonel Mustafa Hashim, the head of the rebel army in Lattakia and Hama, issued a statement accusing the Turkey-based rebel leadership of withholding supplies. He also implied that Jarba’s visit was actually meant to weaken rather than

strengthen the rebel offensive, a sentiment shared by the jihadis, as noted in the third accompanying article. These disagreements bear a striking resemblance to those that emerged during the August 2013 offensive in Lattakia. The question is whether this offensive will end as the last one did. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

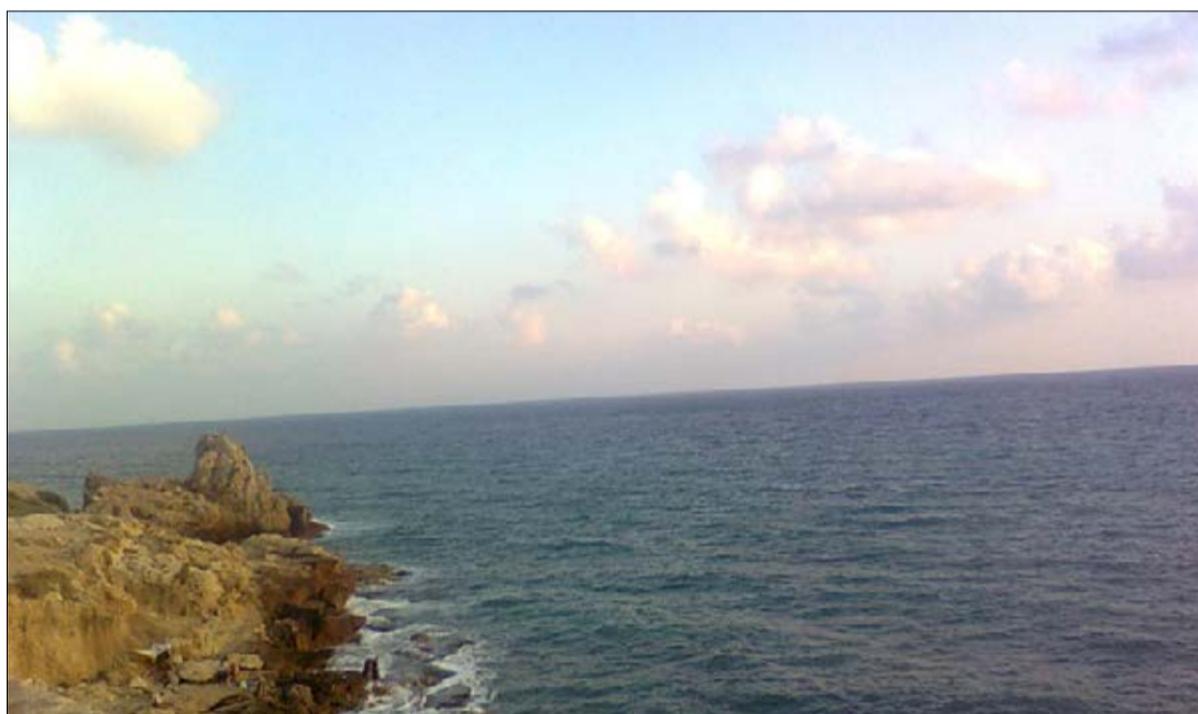
against their fellow Syrians... the people of the coastal regions should have a role in the struggle against the regime, and when signs of its collapse appear, they will be enough to convince its supporters to abandon it. Those signs will be so clear that the regime’s supporters will see their participation in the patriotic political process as being necessary to enable them to express themselves and voice their demands in the manner they choose. Until this happens, rebels should refrain from attacking the coastal region... Liberating the coast would be a grave mistake that could plunge Syria into the abyss, leaving nothing intact. Such a civil war would very much reduce the chances of weakening, and eventually toppling, the regime. Instead, it will destroy what is left of our afflicted country.

Source:

كسب: خلافات بين الفصائل على ثمار المعركة
 “Kassab: Factions disagree about the fruits of the battle,” 4 April 2014, al-Safir. <http://www.assafir.com/Article/5/345004>

Article 3:

These differences between the factions are expected to increase if the battle for the city of Kassab and its environs is extended, especially as the different factions attempt to monopolize whatever fruits this battle may bear. The visit to some towns near Kassab by the president of the opposition Syrian National Coalition (SNC) Ahmed Jarba and its defense minister Asaad Mustafa further enflamed these differences. Islamist factions claimed that the SNC was attempting to steal the “al-Anfal Battle” from them, even if only from a media perspective.



Lattakia's coast. Source: <http://goo.gl/UG2PQQ>

“ ... as if with this Turkey meant to send a strong message to the Russians, saying “We can mobilize the Chechens anytime we want” ... ”

OE Watch Commentary: In August 2013, following a protracted siege, Syrian rebels finally overran the Minnagh Military Airbase in Aleppo Province. The final storming of the airbase received a major boost from a group of Chechen jihadis, which was led by “Abu Umar al-Shishani” and fought under the banner of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Although this powerful Chechen contingent would suffer internal splits over the following months, particularly after Abu Umar’s deputy “Saifullah al-Shishani” broke ranks with his leader and ISIS, these splits appear to have strengthened rather than diminished the influence of Chechen fighters in Syria.

In March 2014 Syrian rebels launched a series of offensives throughout Syria. Two of them are especially important: the attempt to take over a key position (“Observation Point 45”) in northern Lattakia Province and the attack on the Air Force Intelligence Headquarters in Aleppo. Chechen groups were heavily involved in both of these offensives.

How to explain the prominence of Chechen jihadis in Syria? The first accompanying article comes from the newspaper of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), an independent political movement that supports the regime in the current crisis. The article identifies two main factors to explain the growing importance of Chechens in the Syrian rebellion. The first is linked to rebel manpower: Syrians who took up arms early in the conflict, often in self-defense, are increasingly either returning to civilian life or switching sides; at the same time, the net influx of jihadi fighters from Arab countries is declining due in part to fears of their return by host governments. The second factor concerns Turkey, more specifically the ruling AKP party. The article argues that the Erdogan-led government fears that a Syrian military victory would endanger not only its current hold on power, but



INSERT IMAGE CAPTION Source: <http://>

Source:

تزايد دور المقاتلين الشيشان في الحرب على سورية... الأسباب والدوافع
 “Increase in the role of Chechen fighters in the war on Syria... reasons and motives,” 15 April 2014, al-Binaa. <http://al-binaa.com/albinaa/?article=2142>

Article 1:

This is the evidence of the growing role of Chechens in the Syrian crisis and the ongoing war against the Syrian state and military. These developments are meant to put a quick end to the war of attrition. The participation of the Chechens in such force will, however, lead the Syrian people to rally around the state even more and induce even more Syrian youths to take up arms...

Source:

«الشيشانيون» والاستخبارات التركية: العلاقة المتداخلة
 Abdullah Suleiman Ali. “Chechens and Turkish intelligence: an interlocking relationship,” 24 March 2014, al-Safir. <http://www.assafir.com/Article/1/343375>

Article 2:

Here the case of Abu Musaab al-Jaza’iri bears mentioning, He was a deputy of sorts to Umar al-Shishani, the commander of the “Jaysh al-Muhajireen wal Ansar” (before it split). Al-Shishani ordered that al-Jaza’iri be detained after he met with Turkish intelligence officials. He also ordered that he face a Shari’a Court, which decided to expel him from ISIS, according to the account given by the Head Judge of the Jaysh al-Muhajireen wal Ansar, Saudi national Rakan al-Rumaihi. Despite the trivial punishment, it was tantamount to a message to Turkish intelligence saying that they no longer controlled the Jaysh al-Muhajireen wal Ansar.

It is no secret that since then, the Jaysh al-Muhajireen wal Ansar has been subject to many convulsions which presumably are the Turkish intelligence’s response to Umar al-Shishani’s message, especially given that Umar al-Shishani sent his message a short time after he pledged

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Continued: Turkey, Syria and Chechen Jihadis

even the future of Erdogan and the party itself. The declining influence of Turkish-sponsored Syrian fighting groups, the article claims, has forced Turkey to turn to Chechen jihadis.

*The second accompanying article, recently published in the Lebanese daily **al-Safir**, provides a good overview of the various Chechen leaders operating in Syria. The article argues that Turkish intelligence is behind the rise of Chechen jihadis in Syria. Indeed, as the accompanying excerpt notes, the article claims that the split in the Syrian jihad (between allies and enemies of ISIS) can, in part, be understood in terms of relationships with Turkish intelligence.*

*The third accompanying article, from a news website close to Lebanon's Hezbollah, parts from the assumption that Chechen jihadi mobilization in Syria is directed by Turkish intelligence, arguing that the recent rebel offensive in Lattakia represents Turkey's response to Russia's annexation of Crimea. According to the article, the offensive is meant as a message from Turkey to Russia, basically saying: "We can mobilize the Chechens anytime we want." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

allegiance to ISIS. ISIS's relationship with the Turkish side may be characterized as one of misunderstandings and lack of common ground. In many cases it has reached the point where Turkish forces have fired on ISIS positions and convoys, as occurred in Azaz and in al-Ra'i in rural Aleppo... the gap between Turkish intelligence and ISIS continues to grow. This will have significant influence on events on the ground. It is becoming clear that Turkish authorities wish to distance ISIS from their borders... while these same authorities have no problem with Jabhat al-Nusra coming close to their borders.

Source:

الشيشانيون القوقاز.. سلعة الأتراك لمقاتلة الروس في «كسب سوريا»

Abullah Qamah. "Caucasian Chechens... a Turkish commodity for fighting the Russians in Syria's Kassab," 28 March 2014, al-Hadath News. <http://www.alhadathnews.net/archives/117809>

Article 3:

Turkey openly assisted the Caucasian Chechen incursion into the Syrian coast... as if with this Turkey meant to send a strong message to the Russians, saying "We can mobilize the Chechens anytime we want"... The Kassab Battle has today become not only a Syrian battle but a Russian and a Turkish one...

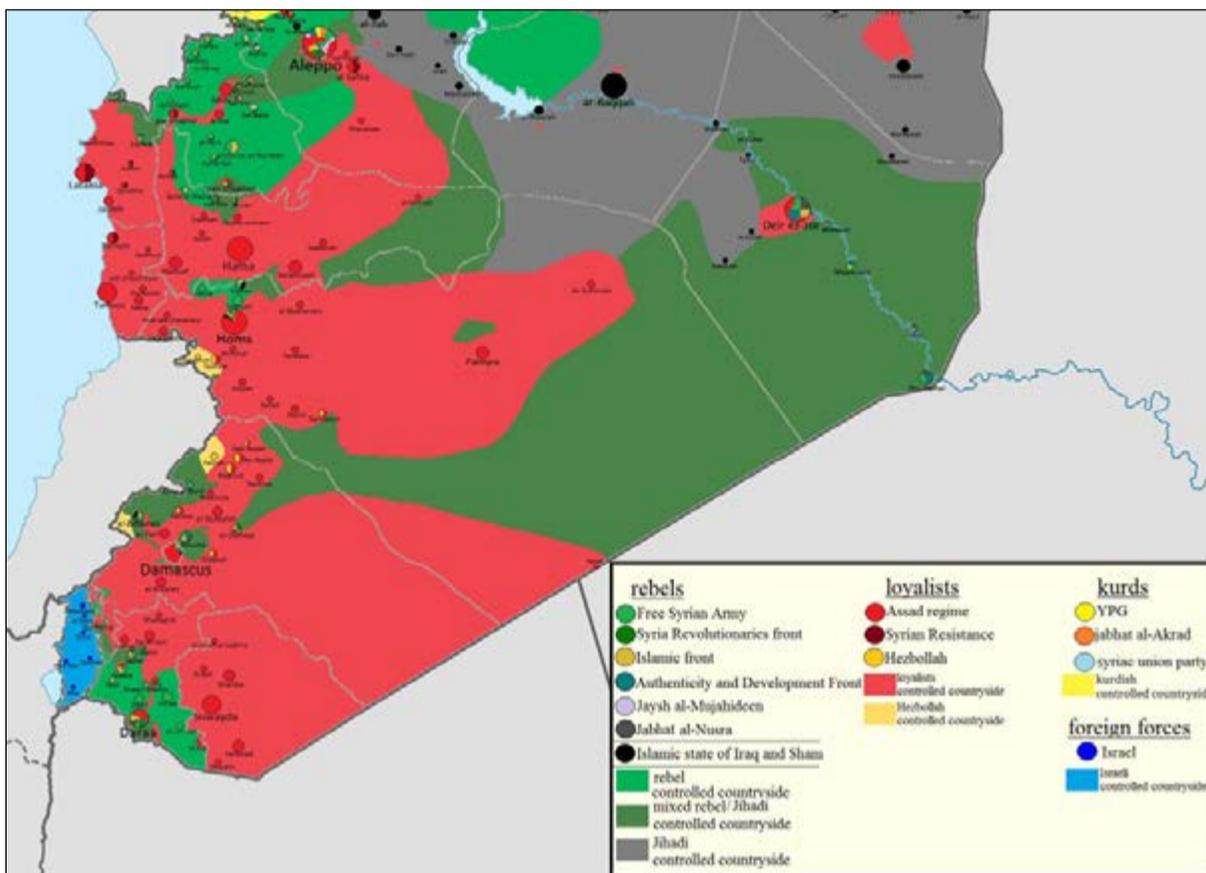
“ ... the fierceness exhibited by ISIS in its return to Deir Ezzour is explained by its desire to gain a share of the oil revenues ... ”

OE Watch Commentary: The January 2014 rebel offensive against The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) succeeded in expelling ISIS fighters from much of Aleppo, Idlib and Deir Ezzour Provinces. Although most ISIS fighters retreated to their stronghold in Raqqa Province, many in Deir Ezzour continued fighting against Jabhat al-Nusra (JN), particularly along the Khabur River Basin, which links Syria's two easternmost provinces (al-Hasakah and Deir Ezzour).

The Khabur Basin has emerged as a center for the trade in black-market Syrian oil, most of which is bound for Turkey. Control over this area is particularly attractive to ISIS, given the group's ideological rejection of outside support. The key nodes in the market are currently controlled by JN and its allies. In early April, after over a month of heavy fighting, ISIS seized control of the town of Markada, halfway up the Khabur Basin. It has since begun moving south toward key JN strongholds at the junction of the Khabur and the Euphrates, as noted in the first accompanying article.

Deir Ezzour is unlikely to be ruled from Damascus in the foreseeable future. The cultural and geographical distance between the areas is simply too vast for an emasculated central government to overcome. Although the Syrian regime retains a military presence in parts of the provincial capital, its ability to influence outcomes in the area is minimal. JN and its allies are the key powerbrokers, controlling much of the oil trade, as well as the Al Bukamal border crossing linking Syria with Iraq's al-Anbar Province (al-Qaim on the Iraqi side).

On 10 April reports emerged of an ISIS offensive to wrest control of Al Bukamal from JN. As detailed in the second accompanying article, the purported attack was more likely a limited ISIS operation that spiraled out of control. Nonetheless, many believe that ISIS could soon be



Recent map of Syria showing territorial control:
Source: <https://pietervanostaeyen.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/2000px-syria2.jpg>

Source:

دير الزور: «داعش» يقترب من حقول النفط
“Deir Ezzour: ISIS Approaches the Oilfields,” 16 April 2014, al-Safir. <http://www.assafir.com/Article/63/346734>

Article 1:

He believes that the fierceness exhibited by ISIS in its return to Deir Ezzour is explained by its desire to gain a share of the oil revenues, of which they have been deprived since being expelled from the city two and a half months ago. Yesterday, ISIS made tangible gains on the ground which may soon grant it a foothold in the oil trade, especially after its control over al-Suwar in northern rural Deir Ezzour, around 35 kilometers from the provincial capital.

Source:

ماذا جرى بين «الدولة الإسلامية» و«جبهة النصرة» في مدينة البوكمال؟
“What is taking place between ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra in Al Bukamal?” 11 April 2014, France24. <http://goo.gl/RfvUnE>

Article 2:

After research and investigation, it is certain that the battle in Al Bukamal developed in an unforeseen way for both parties. The operation to assassinate Abu Layth or the operation to free ISIS prisoners held by the Shari'a Council turned into one for control over the town after Saddam al-Jamal and his men joined the clashes. This group held key points in the city for several hours, suggesting that the town was under ISIS control. However, events quickly

(continued)

Continued: ISIS in Deir Ezzour

forced into attempting a full-fledged assault on this important area. The third accompanying article, taken from the website for Hizbullah's al-Manar television station, argues that to survive ISIS needs to link its Syrian and Iraqi branches, and to do so it must control the border crossing.

*Although JN appears to be ensconced in Al Bukamal and other parts of Deir Ezzour, ISIS could contest these areas if it can dissuade local tribal fighters from standing in its way. Recent news accounts claim that Deir Ezzour's tribes are banding together to repel a potential ISIS incursion. Be that as it may, ISIS has proven adept at negotiating tribal cultural geographies in neighboring Raqqa Province and may have a wider network of sympathizers than indicated in media reports, which tend to underestimate the group's resilience. A final factor working in ISIS's favor is the fact that it shares a common enemy with the Syrian regime. Indeed, recent ISIS incursions in Deir Ezzour have been preceded by heavy regime bombardment of JN positions. This is in stark contrast to Iraq, where the Iraqi military is engaged in fierce clashes with ISIS. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)***

changed as the balance of power on the ground shifted.

ISIS did not send any reinforcements to Al Bukamal yesterday. Al-Nusra, in an official statement regarding these events, claimed that ISIS relied on fighters and groups within the town. It is clear to anyone following events in the east that the battle for control over Al Bukamal would not be balanced for several reasons, most importantly the presence of important and vital centers for Jabhat al-Nusra in the town, making its takeover a difficult and expensive undertaking.

Source:

في الطريق إلى الأنبار .. داعش تريد البوكمال والجولاني الغاء البغدادي

Ahmed Farhat. "On the road to al-Anbar... ISIS wants Al Bukamal and al-Jawlani wants to eliminate al-Baghdadi," 12 April 2014, al-Manar. <http://www.almanar.com.lb/adetails.php?fromval=1&cid=21&frid=21&seccatid=23&eid=811600>

Article 3:

Jihadi forums mentioned that the "Ansar al-Islam" group in Iraq had pledged allegiance to Ayman al-Zawahiri. If true, this makes it the group al-Qaeda's official branch in Iraq, in the fashion of Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) in Syria. This would in turn withdraw legitimacy from al-Baghdadi's state and isolate him within its breeding grounds, specifically al-Anbar's desert and cities... For ISIS, Syria's open battlefield has turned into an existential threat, after having wanted to make it its garrison. Deir Ezzour, along the border with al-Anbar, has become the launching point for the military operations against [ISIS], after having been an area for ISIS fighters to prepare their operations against the Iraqi Army and the Awakenings... Control over the al-Qaim crossing makes it easy to smuggle fighters and weapons from al-Anbar. It also would allow ISIS to bring in reinforcements from Raqqa and other parts of Syria if those allied with JN and the Islamic Front (IF) decide to open a battlefield in al-Anbar... Information indicates that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi intends to break his isolation and follow an expansionist strategy. He is not happy with being blockaded in al-Anbar and the suppression of his campaign to unify Iraq and Syria, even if the price is angering Ayman al-Zawahiri and his fighters...

Source:

معارك دير الزور تستعر: «داعش» يبدأ تصفية «جبهة النصرة»

"Deir Ezzour battles ignite: ISIS begins to eliminate Jabhat al-Nusra," 16 April 2014, al-Akhbar. <http://www.al-akhbar.com/node/204758>

Article 4:

...The tribes have become the white knight in the battle between jihadi groups, with ISIS betting on strengthening its military position in the area by attracting more tribes into its ranks...

About that National Unity...Somali Military and Police Fight Each Other

April 2014

“Composed of inept soldiers who fought alongside criminal gangs and warlord militias over the last two decades of chaos, [the] Somali National Army (SNA) faces formidable challenges.”

OE Watch Commentary: Progress against the terrorist group al-Shabaab, a new telecommunications cable promising vastly increased internet access, and expanding businesses are all some of the recent reports of good news emanating from Somalia. The accompanying article is not one of them. Recent fighting between the Somali army and a local police force remind the world that in many ways Somalia is still a fractured country, searching for unity but not finding it.

The accompanying article was published in **Garowe**, a Somali news outlet, but does not seem to have been picked up by many, if any, major news sources. It is hard to say why such actions have been under-reported in the larger media outlets, but **Garowe's** reporting of these events in Somalia is quite notable. With the Committee to Protect Journalists reporting 52 journalists killed in Somalia since 1992, not to mention the numbers kidnapped or threatened, it takes courage to be willing to risk antagonizing anyone, including the government, military and police forces. In its brief article, **Garowe** has managed to antagonize all three.

While a great deal of Somali and international effort has gone into training the Somali National Army (SNA), it must be remembered that, despite screening efforts, many of its soldiers are probably former members of criminal gangs or militias. With much of the country in chaos the past two decades, such gangs and militias were often one of the few sources of work. Certainly not all members of the SNA deserve to be impugned; indeed, many have fought well against al-Shabaab and some have even paid the ultimate price. Still, the SNA appears to be a force with weak oversight, poor discipline, a less than stellar human rights record, and significant corruption. Last year the UN partially lifted its arms embargo on Somalia so that the government could purchase weapons for the SNA. So many weapons found their way to militant groups, including al Shabaab and those responsible for human rights abuses, that Amnesty International asked the UN to reimpose the embargo to prevent the SNA from reselling its arms.



The Somali National Army has made progress against al-Shabaab militants, but questions remain regarding control and discipline of the troops.

Source: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/africa/article3555180.ece>

Source: “Somalia - Military in Deadly Battle With Police in Middle Shabelle,” Garowe, 18 Apr 2014, http://www.garoweonline.com/artman2/publish/Somalia_27/Somalia-Military-in-deadly-battle-with-police-in-Middle-Shabelle.shtml

Fierce fighting has raged between the Somali National Army soldiers and police officers in Middle Shabelle regional district of Balad of southern Somalia on Friday, Garowe Online reports.

The deadly battle initially broke out at Balad Bridge after military forces loyal to Balad Mayor Osman Hadole fired live ammunitions at police officers in armored vehicles enroute to Jowhar according to witnesses.

Despite conflicting reports on the casualty figures, the police commander for Middle Shabelle division is among those who were wounded in the clash. The vicinity where the fighting took place is now remaining under the control of military forces.

Speaking on Mogadishu-based radio station, Irro said: “The clash [between military and police] resulted in deaths and other fatalities; we have so far confirmed that six soldiers sustained injuries during the fighting but the expected death toll could rise since many police officers are on the run in the jungle”.

(continued)

Continued: About that National Unity...Somali Military and Police Fight Each Other

The article does not say why the SNA and police were fighting. It could be over money. It could also be over clan differences, for while all are Somali, different clans have different allegiances, and settling disputes among them is sometimes a violent affair. Whatever the reason, the fierce fighting that raged between the Somali National Army soldiers and police officers in the Middle Shabelle regional district of Balad of southern Somalia is a blow to the unifying efforts of the country. Balad was liberated from al Shabaab in June 2012, but that obviously did not guarantee peace would follow.

*For the international advisors and trainers working with the SNA and local police forces, such occurrences reflect both the difficulty of the situation and the need for more progress. Despite some of the good news coming out of Somalia, it remains an operating environment where progress on some fronts, such as the battle against al-Shabaab, is tempered by reports of other actions, such as the army and police fighting each other. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Africa's Other Carnage: Traffic Accidents

March 2014

“Road traffic injuries take an enormous toll on individuals and communities as well as on national economies... Middle-income countries, particularly in Africa, where car use is rising, have been disproportionately affected, said the World Health Organization”



By 2015 it is predicted that in sub-Saharan Africa more children will die each year from road accidents than malaria or HIV.
Source: <http://www.iafrica.tv/horrible-bus-accident-in-zambia-53-passengers-die/#.U1Fw-K9OVv4>

OE Watch Commentary: Much has been written about the brutal killings from war and terrorism in Africa, but there is another source of carnage in Africa, one that is on the rise, threatens people even in countries that are relatively peaceful, and, with a few notable exceptions, has received relatively little press coverage. Traffic accidents, as the accompanying article relates, are the eighth leading cause of death globally, comparable in impact to communicable diseases such as malaria. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that by 2030 they could be the fifth leading cause of death. Africa is the continent with the worst traffic safety record, with an average of 700 people killed each day. Many of the victims are quite young. Indeed, by 2015 it is predicted that in sub-Saharan Africa more children will die each year from road accidents than malaria or HIV.

Into this operational environment - which in many African nations consists of poorly trained drivers, unsafe vehicles, narrow roads without guardrails next to steep cliffs, nearly absent

Source: “Life and death on the world’s most dangerous roads – interactive,” The Guardian, 14 Mar 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/interactive/2013/mar/14/life-death-world-dangerous-roads-interactive>

Article:

The WHO... found that 27% of global traffic deaths are among pedestrians and cyclists – vulnerable road users who have been neglected in transport and planning policies. In low- and middle-income countries the figure is closer to 33%; in some, it is as high as 75%.

Low-income families are hardest hit by medical costs and lost wages.

Three-quarters of all road deaths are among young men – and road accidents are the leading cause of death for 15- to 29-year-olds.

More than 1.2 million people are killed on the road every year – and more than 20 million are injured, according to a World Health Organization report published on Thursday.

Dealing with deaths and injuries on roads costs billions of dollars each year, taking an estimated toll on low- and middle-income countries of 1-2% of economic output – a total across those countries of more than \$100bn a year.

“Road traffic injuries are increasing, notably in low- and middle-income countries, where rates are twice those in high-income countries. This is partly attributable to the

(continued)

Continued: Africa's Other Carnage: Traffic Accidents

traffic law enforcement, and a myriad of other dangers - American soldiers are arriving to help train local security forces to combat extremists, but who now find themselves in danger not just from terrorists but also from urban drivers. There are pills to take to prevent malaria, vaccinations against yellow fever and typhoid, and insect repellent to keep Chikungunya-infected mosquitoes from biting, but there are no such relatively easy solutions to ensure the safety soldiers travelling from point A to point B in African cities.

rapid rate of motorization in many developing countries without a concomitant investment in road safety strategies and land use planning,” said the report. of bombardments as some of the major problems which affected them.

It was learnt that the seized vehicles included those that the insurgents used for attacks and other vehicles they snatched from people.

Military sources said that the camp was well planned with boreholes, dispensary and other facilities to aid the operations of the insurgents.

The interactive map with the accompanying article, based on WHO data from 2010 (the most recent available), shows that for the U.S. there were 11.4 traffic related deaths per 100,000 population and 13.7 deaths per 100,000 vehicles. In Mali the numbers are 23.1 deaths per 100,000 people and 1672.4 per 100,000 vehicles. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the numbers are 20.9 deaths per 100,000 people and a staggering 3,932.6 deaths per 100,000 vehicles. Both Mali and the DRC are struggling with conflict within their borders, but clearly they are also struggling with traffic safety; as the numbers show, it appears they are losing that struggle.

*One interesting and relatively inexpensive approach to lowering the mortality rate from traffic accidents is being pursued by Uganda: first-aid training. Getting to the victim quickly and rendering the appropriate initial care can often mean the difference between life and death. As ambulances are few and far between in many African countries, and because of traffic jams are often slow to arrive, even when summoned, first-aid training for the general populace becomes imperative. Still, while such training can help slow the rate of rise of traffic mortalities, it alone is not enough. Until the roads are repaired, the drivers better trained, and the traffic laws enforced - which may not happen for a very long time in some nations - American soldiers being deployed to Africa might need to be reminded that while terrorists and Ebola make big headlines, everyday traffic accidents also present an enormous threat to life and limb. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)***

Ebola and Fear Strike West Africa

April 2014

“It’s the first Ebola outbreak in West Africa which is proving to be a challenge for international aid organizations.”

OE Watch Commentary: It was perhaps inevitable that Ebola, first noted in Central Africa, would be found in the West African nation of Guinea. Still, Guinea was not prepared for the large and recent outbreak of the disease, though in fairness, the country, like so many others in Africa, has very limited funds to expend on public health measures (the country ranks 178 out of 186 on the Human Development Index). Even with international assistance, Guinea has struggled to contain its Ebola outbreak, with over 60 deaths attributed to the disease at the time this commentary was written.

As the accompanying article states, the World Health Organization is describing this outbreak as one of the most challenging incidents the world has ever seen. Guinea’s southern neighbor, Liberia, has already seen ten fatalities from Ebola, and its northern neighbor, Senegal, has closed its Guinean border, much to the anger of the Guineans, who feel such an act is tantamount to abandoning a friend in need. With African borders so porous, it is uncertain that Senegal’s actions will have much of an effect on the spread of the disease anyway.

Should Ebola, which causes internal bleeding and is fatal in the majority of cases, continue to spread, it is quite possible one or more members of the American military deployed to West Africa could become infected. Maybe it will happen when an embassy marine guard at a restaurant unknowingly eats bushmeat because it was labeled beef on the menu, or an American soldier on a training mission shakes the hand of someone who just visited a relative mistakenly diagnosed with some other malady. The number of scenarios where Ebola could be transferred to an American soldier - countless; the number of scientifically proven cures for the disease - zero.

If any good can be found from this tragedy, it is the renewed call for increased funding to find a cure and/or vaccine against Ebola, as well as additional money for public health measures. Only 2 of the world’s 42 biosafety level-4 labs, which provide the amount of containment necessary for research on microbes such as the Ebola virus, are found in Africa, placing the continent at a distinct disadvantage for studying this deadly disease. As future outbreaks of Ebola are quite likely, perhaps even larger than the one presently occurring in West Africa, and the risk to deployed American soldiers grows, additional resources committed to combat this disease could prevent deaths among Africans and Americans alike. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



Bushmeat - such as bats, antelope, and monkeys - often sold at roadside stands can carry Ebola.

Source: <http://america.aljazeera.com/multimedia/photo-gallery/2014/4/photos-battling-anebolaoutbreakinguinea.html>

Source: Hilke Fischer, “Ebola virus continues to rage in West Africa, Deutsche Welle, 10 Apr 2014, <http://www.dw.de/ebola-virus-continues-to-rage-in-west-africa/a-17554825>

The World Health Organization (WHO) has described the West Africa Ebola outbreak as one of the “most challenging” incidents the world has ever seen.

“This time, in Guinea, we have cases reported from several localities inside the country which means that we need to put measures in place not in one place as it was quite often the case but in several locations,” [WHO Spokesman Tarik] Jasarevic said. It was difficult to come up with enough resources and mobilize partners, he added.

The Ebola virus is spread through the exchange of blood or other bodily fluids... They develop high fever paired with diarrhea and nausea. The infected die of severe internal bleeding, in particular of the gastrointestinal tract, spleen and lungs.

So far, Ebola outbreaks have only been recorded in Central Africa, such as in Sudan, Congo or Uganda. The disease was named after a river in the Democratic Republic of Congo where it was discovered in 1976.

Not only humans can contract the virus - wild animals such as gorillas or chimpanzees can fall ill to Ebola as well.

“There are many people in West and Central Africa who are dependent on protein from bush meat,” Sebastien Calvignac-Spencer said, a scientist working for the renowned Robert Koch Institute in Berlin.

Guinea and Liberia don’t have much experience in fighting Ebola - they also lack doctors, nurses and paramedics. International aid organizations work round the clock to help fend off further spreading of the disease. They try to find out with whom the infected interacted - a difficult task as many people contracted the disease while traveling.

New Threats of Oil-Related Piracy in Mozambique

14 April 2014

OE Watch Commentary: While the threat of Somali-based piracy in the Mozambique Channel has seen a marked decline since 2011, observers have recently been concerned about the potential uptick in piracy related to northern Mozambique's burgeoning oil and gas industry. In short, the Mozambique Channel, composed of the approximately 300-foot wide waterway between Mozambique and Madagascar, had, for some time, been a center of insecurity, primarily because of Somali piracy. Somali pirate activity peaked between 2011 and 2012. As the third of the accompanying articles notes, as Somali pirates became more brazen and began attacking further south from their points of origin in 2011, the Mozambique Channel increasingly became a hotspot (there were 75 attacks off the Somali coast, north of the Mozambique Channel in 2012 alone). In response, regional coastal states South Africa, Mozambique, and Tanzania formed a maritime alliance named "Operation Copper," which has been hailed as a success in its efforts to preempt piracy attacks: during 2013, there were only 15 attacks in the Mozambique Channel.

Despite these drops in the number of piracy-related incidents, April 2014 saw observers anticipating a renewed uptick in piracy in the coming months, not as a result of Somali pirates, but rather from other East African nationals anxious to usurp wealth from the natural gas and oil fields being developed in northern Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province. Indeed, as the first of the accompanying articles details, with the discovery of natural gas in the "sleepy" port province, the region has seen an influx of immigrants from central and eastern Africa. The fears of increased piracy are being underwritten by the maritime culture that characterizes the east African coast, particularly the deeply important presence of dhow fishing vessels. Others look to the intense turmoil that has accompanied the rise of the oil industry in Nigeria's Niger Delta region and the Abyei region of the Sudans as harbingers of insecurity.

What should be done about the potential threat is to be determined. While South Africa and Mozambique continue to cooperate to patrol the Channel – a fact that many have credited for the reduction in piracy – some members of the region, such as the author of the second accompanying article, think that South Africa, the primary benefactor, is wasting its money. Indeed, as the author notes, it is unclear whether the



Mozambique Channel. Source: World Maritime News: <http://worldmaritimeneews.com/archives/59598/ics-opposes-1000-mile-routing-measure-in-mozambique-channel-uk/>

Source: Fabricius, Peter, "Piracy Could Spread to Mozambique," IOL (South Africa), 14 April 2014: http://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/piracy-could-spread-to-mozambique-1.1675685#.U0xygVfl43U?utm_source=April+15+2014+EN&utm_campaign=4%2F15%2F2014&utm_medium=email.

A new breed of pirate could emerge in northern Mozambique to exploit the gas and oil industry that is about to boom there, unless the region addresses the problem.

Rear-Admiral Robert "Rusty" Higgs and Joao Paulo Coelho, a professor at the Aquino de Braganca Centre for Social Studies in Maputo, issued the warning at a maritime security seminar in Pretoria on Friday.

Coelho said that life in Mozambique's quiet Cabo Delgado province, on the border with Tanzania, was increasingly being disrupted by refugee flows, mostly from Somalia, and human trafficking from eastern and central Africa.

Poverty and food insecurity were rising and so was "the ghost of Islamic fundamentalism", Coelho said. This raised the question of whether piracy could evolve in the area.

The combination of the local population becoming marginalised and the culture of sailing in dhows could engender piracy, he said.

"The GULMA UAV potentially affords the Armed Forces a window of immense opportunities in its task of acquiring timely intelligence and combating criminality, especially in light of the nation's prevailing security challenges.

Mozambique's contribution to Operation Copper includes personnel stationed on the frigates or strike craft – usually a dozen personnel on the frigate and less than half a dozen aboard the strike craft.

Paxton said that Operation Copper has been very successful with no piracy incidents in the last three years that the South African Navy has been patrolling the region.

Speaking to the media in February, defence minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula said the reduction in piracy, "is as a result of our presence in the Mozambique Channel. Now they know they can't go down that far," she said. "The presence of the SANDF serves as a deterrent...if we go, the pirates may come back."

(continued)

Continued: New Threats of Oil-Related Piracy in Mozambique

reduction in piracy in the Mozambique Channel should be attributed to Operation Copper's presence or whether the reduction in Somali piracy is simply attributable to the gains in state consolidation that Somalia has made over the past three years.

While the Mozambique Channel is, as yet, relatively calm, member states will likely be paying more attention to it in the coming months.
End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)

“While the Mozambique Channel is, as yet, relatively calm, member states will likely be paying more attention to it in the coming months.”

Source: Martin, Guy, “Operation Copper now with only South Africa and Mozambique,” Defenceweb (South Africa), 24 March 2014: <http://rpdefense.over-blog.com/2014/03/operation-copper-now-only-with-sa-and-mozambique.html>

Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula has claimed that the reduction in piracy off Africa's East coast is partly as a result of SA Navy patrols in the Mozambique Channel and that it is necessary to keep up these costly patrols in order to deter pirates.

However nice it may be to applaud the SA Navy for eliminating piracy in the Mozambique Channel, the stark truth may be that piracy has declined regardless of the South African Navy's activities and that having Navy assets deployed round the clock in foreign waters is an unnecessarily expensive undertaking.

This is not the view of the Department of Defence, which has allocated money for the continuation of Operation Copper. Speaking to defenceWeb and other journalists at AFB Waterkloof in February, Mapisa-Nqakula said the reduction in piracy, “is as a result of our presence in the Mozambique Channel. Now they know they can't go down that far,” she said. “The presence of the SANDF serves as a deterrent...if we go, the pirates may come back.”

The minister cautioned that piracy is growing in the Atlantic Ocean, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea and said South Africa should maintain a presence in the Mozambique Channel until global piracy shows a reduction.

Global piracy has in fact shown a reduction – a drastic one at that. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), last year only 15 incidents of piracy off the Somali coast were reported, down from 75 in 2012. The 15 incidents attributed to Somali pirates last year include two hijacked vessels, both of which were released within a day as a result of naval actions. These figures are the lowest since 2006 when 10 attacks were recorded off the Somali coast. Internationally, there were 264 recorded attacks last year. This represents a 40% drop since Somali piracy peaked in 2011, with 237 incidents off the Horn of Africa alone.

Given the very few encounters with pirates in the Mozambique Channel, the question that should be posed to the Minister is: is it worth the cost? For the 2013/14 period, some R585 million was allocated for anti-piracy operations as part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Maritime Security Strategy. Operation Copper cost R150 million in 2011 and 2012, according to a written parliamentary reply.

This is money that is sorely needed to protect the land borders of South Africa, which see thousands of illegal immigrants cross every year, hundreds of rhino poachers skirting back and forth and millions of rands of contraband making their way into the country.

It seems like overkill to have frigates patrolling Mozambican waters in the absence of a clear threat. Perhaps it is sufficient for the SANDF to keep a maritime surveillance aircraft on station in Pemba to respond to emergencies. Another alternative is to let Tanzania and Mozambique start footing the bill for Op Copper patrols.

Contentious Dimensions in Cameroon-Nigerian Relations Over Boko Haram

14 April 2014

“Cameroon has been adamantly trying to deflect assertions by Nigeria that it is allowing Boko Haram militants to use its territory as a staging area.”

OE Watch Commentary: In Nigeria’s seemingly unending battle against militant Islamist group Boko Haram, its relations with neighboring Cameroon are taking on new importance. Indeed, tensions between the two appear to be heightening, as Nigeria accuses Cameroon of harboring Boko Haram terrorists.

Cameroon has been adamantly trying to deflect assertions by Nigeria that it is allowing Boko Haram militants to use its territory as a staging area. This is particularly true of the more sparsely populated areas of northern Cameroon, which border the northeastern corner of Nigeria, the geographic home to the Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states at the center of Boko Haram insurgency. To the extent that cross-border flows of people characterize the region, the first article details how Nigeria recently captured a Cameroonian weapons supplier, while the third article notes that Nigeria closed large stretches of its borders with Cameroon in August 2013.

While the third article emphasizes the diplomatic assertions from Cameroon (many, indignant) about its non-involvement with Boko Haram, officials in the Cameroonian capital of Yaoundé seem to be going a step further to prove their loyalty to Nigeria. Indeed, the second article highlights the very public nature of Cameroon’s desire to cooperate: it recently revealed that it had unearthed a massive weapons stash intended to go to Boko Haram. Most interesting, however, are Cameroonian citizens’ interpretations of the government “seizure.” As the chief of the village from which the weapons were allegedly found notes, neither he nor anyone else in his village had seen the seizure of weapons; he was thus adamant that the government officials were lying about the discovery. To be sure, this would be a fascinating tactic on behalf of Cameroon to assure Nigeria of its compliance, particularly given both the regional and continental prominence of the latter, which just passed South Africa as the continent’s largest economy.

Finally, it is important to note that Cameroon itself is likely to feel a serious domestic strain as a result of its neighbors’ troubles: not only will it be faced with trying to keep members of Boko Haram out, but it is also dealing with influxes of refugees from both northern Nigeria and at its eastern border with the collapsed Central African Republic. Whether it can handle the strain on its resources and social fabric is yet to be determined. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)**



Nigeria and Cameroon Source: Al-Jazeera: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/afri-ca/2014/03/boko-haram-blamed-cameroon-village-attack-20143413314679420.html>

Source: “Boko Haram: Military Captures Cameroonian Weapon Supplier,” This Day Live (Nigeria), 22 March 2014: http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/boko-haram-military-captures-cameroonian-weapon-supplier/174310/?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter

The Nigerian military in yet another evidence of growing foreign influence within the ranks of the terrorist Boko Haram sect have arrested a Cameroonian who is suspected to be a big arms supplier to the group.

According to the statement issued Friday by the Director of Defence Information (DDI), Maj-Gen. Chris Olukolade, the arrest of the Cameroonian has led to the discovery of a large cache of arms and ammunition hidden in the premises of a burnt church in Kalabalge Local Government Area of Borno State.

Olukolade said that the recovered weapons included anti aircraft guns, rocket propelled guns as well as the General Purpose and other brands of machine guns.

He disclosed that the middle-aged man who led troops on the cordon and search operation towards the recovery was one of the terrorists captured in recent raids.

He also disclosed that the weapons were stockpiled to be used in a pending attack on some communities around Nigeria-Cameroon border. “The weapons have all been evacuated while guard locations and patrols are being maintained in the general area and the surrounding localities,” he said.

(continued)

Continued: New Threats of Oil-Related Piracy in Mozambique

Source: "Cameroun: Controverse Sur Des Armes Destinées À Boko Haram," VOA (Cameroon). 14 April 2014: <http://www.lavoixdelamerique.com/content/cameroun-controverse-sur-des-armes-destinees-a-boko-haram/1893128.html>

Controversy has erupted over the allegation by the Cameroonian government that it has seized huge amounts of weapons and ammunition slated to be sent to the militant Islamist group Boko Haram.

Cameroon state radio announced on several occasions that the defense forces had seized some 5,400 firearms in the far north, and that these weapons were intended to Boko Haram. This areas of Cameroon is known as a staging area used by Boko Haram, which operates, among other places, in Borno State.

Cameroon Minister of Communication, Issa Bakary Tchiroma, said the seizure "is the best way to refute the allegations that Cameroon is the basis for insurgents to destabilize other countries."

However, locals seem to be ill-aware of the current situation.

Alim Bashir, 70, village chief of Kekte, where the weapons were seized, said he was shocked by the announcement, which he said was surely a deception by the Cameroonian government.

"They are liars. You were in all corners of the village with me. Did you see any weapons?" he asked. "I am the chief of the village. If everything that the government said was true, wouldn't my subject have informed me of it?...Don't be deceived."

Mr. Bakary Tchiroma, spokesman of the government, strongly condemned the allegations seized weapons did not exist. "Cameroon called the authors of this smear campaign to put an end to this," he said.

Source: Kindzeka, Moki Edwin. "Cameroon: Govt Says No Terrorists Training On Its Territory," VOA (Nigeria), 5 March 2014: http://allafrica.com/stories/201403051093.html?aa_source=nwsltr-nigeria-en.

The government of Cameroon has vehemently denied allegations that it has allowed its territory to be used as a training ground by terrorist groups and rebels destabilizing Nigeria and the Central African Republic. The denial comes after Nigeria closed parts of its border with Cameroon, saying that Islamic extremists were using the country as a base to launch attacks.

Minister of Communication Issa Tchiroma Bakari says Cameroon is not hosting any terrorists from its unstable neighbors: Nigeria and the Central African Republic.

"I hereby say loud and clear that Cameroon has never accepted, and will never accept, that its territory be used as a support operating base for enterprises of destabilization against other states," said Bakari.

Cameroon has been a destination for thousands of desperate people seeking refuge from Boko Haram terrorist attacks in northern Nigeria and the sectarian violence in the CAR.

At the same time, Cameroonians living near in the border areas have reported an increase in armed groups invading towns and violence - despite Cameroon closing its borders with the CAR in August and soldiers being deployed to prevent any fighting.

Last month, Nigeria closed hundreds of kilometers of its border with Cameroon, saying the move was to prevent Islamic extremists from using the country as a haven and launch pad for attacks.

Communications Minister Bakari says the media is exaggerating the situation and Cameroon should not be blamed for its neighbors' problems.

"Cameroon refuses to be used as a scapegoat by some entities that attempt to justify the difficulties that they face in their countries. Our country is ready to closely cooperate with defense and security forces of our neighboring countries to fight against terrorism and cross-border criminality, respectful of the sovereignty of each state," said Bakari.

He said Cameroon's military is working to help its neighbors to halt illegal weapons trafficking in the region and to apprehend any militants or foreign soldiers violating Cameroon's sovereignty.

Cameroon has also arrested various militants, including CAR rebel leader Abdoulaye Meskine in late 2013.

Updates on the African Standby Force

4 April 2014

“Though the ASF was originally supposed to be ready to deploy by 2008, its standup has been pushed back three times, once in 2008, once in 2010, and another in 2013.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The African Standby Force (ASF) was created in 2003 as a wide-ranging, rapid-response mechanism operating under the auspices of the African Union’s Peace and Security Council. At its inception the ASF was intended to be composed of five regional brigades – one each from north, south, east, west, and central Africa – each consisting of 5000 standby troops ready to be deployed in instances of emergency, particularly in the face of insurgencies or widespread violence. Yet the ASF has faced major roadblocks, namely, the stand up of the aforementioned regional brigades. Though the ASF was originally supposed to be ready to deploy by 2008, its standup has been pushed back three times, once in 2008, once in 2010, and again in 2013. A recent internal audit conducted by the African Union noted that it is very unlikely that the ASF will be actualized by its new standup date of 2015.*

Importantly, there is considerable variation in the readiness capabilities of the regional brigades. The western and southern African brigades are ostensibly ready to deploy. In contrast, the northern and central African brigades are both far from being able to do so. In the middle falls the East African Standby Force, which, as the accompanying article details, should, theoretically, be able to deploy into conflict situations by the end of 2014.

*The low likelihood that the ASF will ultimately be deployable in the near future, combined with the persistent violence around the continent and the desperate need for a rapid-response capability like the ASF, led the African Union to consider the standup of a new parallel force, the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC). Proposed by South Africa during the African Union’s 2013 semiannual summit, the ACIRC would be a rapid-reaction force composed primarily of voluntary contributions by individual states, and would be far less comprehensive in its mechanism or institutionalization than the ASF. Importantly, some on the continent are not pleased with the simultaneous existence of both the ASF and ACIRC, which they say are essentially the same force with different names, but which draw resources away from one another. However, in the absence of a functioning ASF, which is still waiting for its third of five brigades to stand up, perhaps the ACIRC is a necessary alternative. **End OE Watch Commentary (Warner)***



East Africa Standby Force, 2009. Source: Out on the Porch Blog: http://ootp.files.wordpress.com/2009/12/eastern-africa-standby-force-reaches-milestones_091207.png

Source: “Kenya says East Africa Standby Force to attain full deployment status by 2014,” Hiraan Online (Somalia), 4 April 2014: http://www.hiraan.com/news4/2014/Apr/53865/kenya_says_e_africa_standby_force_to_attain_fully_deployment_status_in_2014.aspx

The East Africa Standby Force (EASF) will attain full deployment status by the end of 2014, Kenya’s Defense Cabinet Secretary Raychelle Omamo said here late on Wednesday.

She said the Kenya Defense Force (KDF) has already attained rapid deployment capability which is expected to respond to the conflicts in the region.

“We are therefore working closely with the other troop contributing member states to ensure that the force is operational by the end of this year,” Omamo said during media briefing on government achievements in the past year.

Some of the members of the EASF include Rwanda, Seychelles, Ethiopia and Comoros.

She said that by the end of last year, Kenya’s defense forces were ranked as the sixth best in Africa and 46th globally.

Omamo noted that the Africa Standby Force should be also fully operational by the end of 2015. Omamo said that Kenya’s policy supports Africa to provide solutions to the continent’s problems.

“Our strategy relies heavily on multilateralism and constructive collaborations,” she said. Omamo added that Kenya’s recent execution of the Great Lakes Peace and Development Framework will enable the country to play a big role in regional peace efforts.

OE Watch Commentary: From our professional observations' newest category, "the selectively semi-transparent new world order," we offer a vignette from Colombia that OE Watch readers might find tragically comic, painfully reminiscent, didactically useful, or just plain incomprehensible. A small unit of Colombian military intelligence had been listening in on (or perhaps just hacking) some communications associated with the FARC and with the Havana peace negotiations the government of Colombia was conducting with that international terrorist organization. A leading Colombian weekly news magazine, **Semana**, outed the intelligence operation in a February article, causing an immediate public stir that promises to have lingering effects. Here, OE Watch attaches translations of brief highlights from the pertinent **Semana** articles on 3 and 4 February and from **Semana's** cover story for its 10 February edition. Also, directly below this OE Watch commentary is a transcribed and translated text of a 9 February YouTube voice-cast from a group that took a distinctly different view of the news. That voice-cast (recorded by Miguel Posada for the NGO Verdad Colombia) explains, contextualizes and defends the intelligence operation, and goes on to make some accusations regarding **Semana**. Together, the **Semana** revelation/condemnation, the rebuttal editorial by Verdad Colombia, and **Semana's** 10 February elaboration on its own report give us a meal that may seem quite familiar to many of our readers – one of complicated, if incomplete facts, diametrically opposed arguments, and unpredictable, if weighty consequences for individuals, institutions and countries. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

Source: Semana, ¿Alguien espío los negociadores de La Habana?" Semana, February 3, 2014 <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/alguien-espio-los-negociadores-de-la-habana/376076-3>

Article 1:

"In spite of the exotic combination of Lunch room and informatics education center, a secret is hidden there: beyond the façade is a communications intercept center of the National Army. According to an exhaustive investigation by Semana.com, from there, private communications were being monitored of, among others, some of the members of the Government negotiating team in the peace process that is being conducted in Havana."

Source: Semana, "Relevan a dos altos generales del Ejército por "chuzadas" Semana, February 4, 2014, <http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/chuzadas-relevan-jefe-de-inteligencia-del-ejercito/376155-3>

Article 2:

"After his meeting with Attorney General Eduardo Montealegre, the Minister of Defense, Juan Carlos Pinzón, announced four measures to come to grips with the case of illegal 'buggings' of the government negotiators in the table of negotiations with the FARC in Havana, as denounced by Semana.com."

Source: Miguel Posada Samper, "El escandalaje de Inteligencia Militar" (The Military Intelligence Non-scandal) Verdad Colombia, "El Escándolo de las Chuzadas" (The Eavesdropping Scandal) Realidades, February 9, 2014 <http://www.youtube.com/>

Article 3:

"This week, a contrived military intelligence scandal erupted with an article in the magazine **Semana** - - that there existed an undercover intelligence office. And so what? That's normal, and legal. Intelligence is done with facades. That's how the subversives do it, and the whole world. That they were listening to the government peace commissioners! Unbelievable! And necessary because there is a general, General Mesa Rangel, at the negotiating table. But, very well, it's no surprise that the subversives, in this case with the aid of **Semana** magazine, and journalists like Ricardo Calderon, try to discredit and if possible dismantle military intelligence. The intelligence organizations of the military and of the police have located dozens of FARC chiefs, now dead, and also remain aware of the activities of its logistical and political support units. Let's remember that the FARC, the so-called, in quotation marks, 'rifle bearers' are only one part of the narco-subversive apparatus. They also have, with the PCCC (Partido Comunista Clandestino Colombiano or Colombian Clandestine Communist Party) for example, infiltrated many state organs, among them the judicial apparatus, as well as universities and the press. They include powerful law firms. What horror! You are still [un-intelligible] Piedad? (Piedad Córdova, an ex-senator), alias Comandante Norma. Did the prosecutor's office, on the basis of ample evidence, not remove her for complicity with the FARC? Did the Minister of Defense not say that the Patriotic March, which she led, was promoted by the FARC? Should not the state be worried about her activities? And as well, here we have,

(continued)

Continued: Tropical Snowden Moment

Heard on this radio station, the orders of the FARC saying “You, Front Whichever, you must supply this many people and this much Money for the Patriotic March. We remember that. Here numerous [un-intelligible] of the FARC offered their support to the Patriotic March. The office [un-intelligible] the name Andromeda, was doing what is called technical intelligence, signals intelligence in English, which consists of intercepting enemy communications. That is perfectly valid, if in some cases it requires approval of the prosecutor’s office. When it’s radio transmissions it requires no permissions. When it is cell phones or internet communications permission must be sought. There is an issue here. That it requires permission of the prosecutor’s office -- because, as we know, that organization is profoundly infiltrated by the subversives. But they haven’t even shown that that absurd law was broken, and they relieved two generals. The CTI (Cuerpo Técnico de Investigación or Technical Investigation Body) carried off the computers that had been in the place. Apparently they found nothing there, but knowing the capacity of the prosecutor’s office to fabricate evidence it is necessary to be on guard, because, if they find nothing after all, they are capable of inventing it, just as they have invented witnesses. The impersonation of Corporal Villamizar in the Plazas case is a clear example of false evidence...planted in that case by prosecutor Angela Maria Buitrago to entangle a military officer. In this case they can record things on the computers in order to construct evidence. Bad thing. With a president [inaudible], the affair could be very damaging for the armed forces and for the democracy...”

Source: Semana, “Qué se ha encontrado hasta ahora,” (What has been found up to this moment) Semana 10-17 February, 2014, pp. 32-33

Article 4:

“While all of the content [of the electronic memory devices confiscated from Colombian military intelligence by the Colombian Attorney General’s Office] is decrypted and later analyzed, the information is going to be made available in a very gradual and in many cases fragmentary manner. Nevertheless, in what tiny amount has been possible to find, it is already evident that not all of the activities that were being undertaken on the second floor of that restaurant were legal.”

Corpus of Literary Beauty Ascends; Admirers Demand Obeisance from Fernanda

OE Watch Commentary: *Maria Fernanda Cabal is a Colombian politician and congresswoman-elect who identifies with many of the policies of former president and now Senator-elect Alvaro Uribe Vélez. She belongs to a political movement, the members of which are generally referred to as Uribistas, after Uribe.*

Armando Benedetti, a current senator who is from the party of current President Juan Manuel Santos, the Party of the "U," challenged Ms. Cabal for a twitter comment that she made on occasion of the death of Colombian literary giant Gabriel García Márquez. Ms. Cabal suggested that García and his long time friend Fidel Castro would be together again in hell.

Looking at a few weeks of the twitter exchanges, this might be the least of what irritates Bendetti. The exchanges do not pull a lot of punches; the tweets are a rapid go-to for finding out who is on what side of the political ledger. The Gabriel García tiff, however, exemplifies an expanding competitive propagandistic phenomenon in Colombia. Early in what might be the decent period of mourning for a Colombian icon (during the "don't speak ill of the dead" window), Ms. Cabal decided that the effusive eulogies for the leftist García were not sufferable and decided to use her command of the new media to blurt what a large portion of Colombians laments but rarely speaks -- that the Nobel laureate author was also the steadfast friend of tyrants, enemies of Colombia. She seems to have mistimed her swing.

*The trend in Colombian messaging is not so much to answer an opinion or an accusation, but to demand apologies and (beyond mere apology) actively show respect and public contrition for wrongful thought. To a degree, Ms. Cabal caved, apologizing to the family, but reiterating her messages. At the time of this writing the **El Tiempo** editorial that favorably reported Bendetti's demand seemed to be in the process of itself being electronically disappeared. The whole episode is a micro-reflection of the presidential electoral battle that will resolve itself at the end of May. How the Uribistas and their opponents fare in the realm of narrative may be everything to the future of the FARC, and at least to the future of the ongoing negotiations between the government and the FARC in Havana.*

*Gabriel García Márquez is now immortal, and while he may be a universal hero of the Spanish language, a world patrimony, and a point of Colombian national pride, he was in flesh a supporter of the radical violent left. How his legacy gets painted, even in the near-term, weighs on the ideological narrative. The Colombian electorate, however, is capable of working through considerable ambivalence. We may find that electorate quite comfortable in elevating García and his shining beauty of magical realism, and at the same time digesting the mundane political truth about which the Uribistas remind them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)***

Sources: Anne de Saint-Amand "La face cachée de Gabriel García Márquez," (The other face of Gabriel Garcia Marquez) *Le Figaro*, Paris December 12, 2009? (marked January 1, 1970) <http://www.lefigaro.fr/livres/2009/12/12/03005-20091212ARTFIG00179--gabriel-garca-mrquez-.php> (book review of Martin, Gerald. *Gabriel García Márquez: A Life*. New York: Vintage, 2010.

"To close this essay -- one might remain ignorant of the nature of the relationship that García maintained with his two sons, fail to understand his vision of women, wonder why Kurosawa never put *The Autumn of the Patriarch* to film, but one thing is sure, as Thomas Pynchon said of him, 'Oh boy, does he write well!'"

Sources: *El Tiempo*. "Piden 'penitencia' para uribista que criticó a Gabo," (Uribista critical of Gabo is asked to make amends) *EITiempo.com*, April 20, 2014, http://www.eltiempo.com/politica/ARTICULO-WEB-NEW_NOTA_INTERIOR-13853756.html.

"The senator from the 'U,' Armando Benedetti, who leads the campaign (to extract a public apology from Cabal) and has been a tough critic of the position taken by the representative-elect of the Democratic Center, asserted that it was necessary that Cabal apologize to Colombia, but with real action and not by way of a 'simple' communiqué. ...The campaign is being promoted via Twitter with hashtag #LaPenitenciaDeCabal and is on the senator of the 'U's web page."
<https://twitter.com/MariaFdaCabal/media> "These are the beasts"

Sources: María Fernanda Cabal. "Comunicado de Prensa" (Press Communiqué). *Periodismo sin Fronteras*, April 19, 2014, <http://www.periodismosinfronteras.org/comunicado-de-prensa-de-maria-fernanda-cabal.html>

"I regret if I offended, and offer apologies. I was thoughtless of the mourning family of Nobel Gabriel García Márquez, but magical realism cannot cover up the reality lived by all those who in this moment remain without voice, those who have to shoulder the abuses and excesses of the exposed dictatorships of socialism that increasingly cause damage to the region."

Challenge in Exploiting Shale Oil Reserves in Northern Mexico

5 April 2014

OE Watch Commentary: For 75 years Pemex, a Mexican state-owned petroleum company, has enjoyed a monopoly on crude oil production. This all changed, however, in December 2013 when Congress, with support of President Enrique Peña Nieto, removed this monopoly and formally welcomed private investment into the country's oil, gas and electricity sectors. Of particular interest to foreign oil companies are the vast reserves of shale oil in northern Mexico. In fact, Mexico has the world's fourth-largest reserve of shale gas, which, if tapped, could result in huge revenues for the Mexican government. However, the ever imposing presence of drug cartels has raised obvious security issues that may influence private investors to look for shale oil reserves elsewhere.

Drug Cartels and the Threat they pose to Foreign Investors:

The vast majority of shale oil reserves are located in Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila, states which are almost exclusively controlled by the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas. And while oil drillers commonly face innumerable dangers during the drilling process, the threat of kidnapping, theft, and extortion may be dangers foreign companies are not willing to take. Los Zetas are already heavily involved in the theft of Pemex crude oil, gasoline, diesel, and liquefied petroleum. In 2011 alone, Los Zetas stole \$250 million worth of fuel at market prices, a quantity that translated to nearly one million barrels of fuel. In 2012 Pemex employees discovered 539 siphons from their pipelines in Tamaulipas.

The same can be said of coal mining in Coahuila. In the last few years Los Zetas have assumed control of this once legally run enterprise. They use their own poorly paid workers to mine the coal or they buy it at rock bottom prices from legitimate coal miners who are forced to comply. Los Zetas then re-sell the coal to a state-owned company at a profit 30 times greater than the initial investment. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)**

Source: "El dilema de la extracción de gas shale en México." Imagen Radio. Accessed on February 23, 2014 from <http://www.imagen.com.mx/el-dilema-de-la-extraccion-de-gas-shale-en-mexico>

Challenge in Exploiting Shale Oil Reserves in Northern Mexico

During the recent North American Leader's Summit, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and US President Barack Obama discussed how the Mexican government could play a critical role in tapping shale oil reserves located in Northern Mexico. As a sign of desire on the part of the Mexican government to participate in wide-sweeping energy reforms, Peña Nieto has pushed through a dramatic reversal of the country's seven-decade-old ban on private oil and gas drilling in hopes of joining the energy boom and stimulating the Mexican economy. In doing this, Peña Nieto aims to lure companies that are drilling in the deepwater Gulf of Mexico and the Texas shale patch to lead the development of Mexico's potential 42 billion barrels of oil.

Where Does Mexico Stand in Terms of Current Oil Production?

Mexico is the world's number 7 producer of oil, but its output is decreasing. The country hit its peak in 2004 when it was producing 3.4 million barrels per day. Today, Pemex is producing around 2.5 million barrels per day as new technology has thwarted the company from accessing untapped reserves. According to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), Mexico most likely has up to 680 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in natural gas reserves. Early Pemex studies are more conservative than the EIA estimate and acknowledges the possibility of between 150 and 459 tcf of shale gas in five different geological provinces.

But according to Jordy Herrera, Mexico's Energy Minister, "Even in the most conservative scenarios, exploiting these shale gas resources could and should spark the development of a national industry without precedent." He further added that the shale industry could attract investment of between \$7 billion and \$10 billion a year. Without shale, national production of natural gas is only expected to grow 0.5 percent over the next 15 years, while demand is seen rising 2.5 percent. That would mean expanding imports at a constant rate of 6.5 percent to keep up.

Where are the Most Promising Shale Reserves?

The Eagle Ford formation in Mexico's Burgos basin is by far the most promising shale reserve with between 27 and 87 tcf of dry gas and liquids-rich resources, according to a Pemex presentation. Eagle Ford alone produces some 1.2 million barrels of oil a day, and half of the 38,000 square mile field lies within Mexico. While no other nation has managed to duplicate US and Canadian success in hydraulic fracturing—the method used to drill shale oil and gas, Mexico has perhaps the best shot because it can access the Eagle Ford.

Possible Problems Associated with the Extraction of Shale Oil Reserves

The first and most pressing issue to foreign investors regarding shale oil extraction is the presence of Mexican drug cartels in shale rich regions; principally Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, and Coahuila. The presence of these groups poses a threat to foreign investors as they may be targets of kidnapping, extortion, and outright theft. A second issue faced by shale extractors is the vast amount of water needed to drill reserves. In Coahuila where a vast quantity of the untapped shale is located, the water supply is scarce. In fact, Coahuila is Mexico's second driest state and agriculture activities alone require three-quarters of the state's total supply.

There are no specific national regulations in place yet for shale development, as they are set to be finalized by mid-March 2014. Still, even if shale exploration does become a reality in Mexico, US companies wishing to become involved will face hurdles in terms of drug cartels and a limited water supply; both of which are factors that could ultimately undermine their profit margins.

The Picuda: A Wave Breaking Go-Fast Wonder That Defies Radar Detection

28 February 2014

OE Watch Commentary: *The ocean remains a popular transit route for traffickers because it lacks the sensors, manpower, and cameras that authorities are able to use on land. Furthermore, maritime drug shipments can be thrown overboard and/or dropped or buried on a beach or island for later pick-up in case a vessel is interdicted. These are just some of the reasons drug-trafficking organizations, especially those based out of Colombia, have continued their modernization of maritime transport vessels and are now building a new go-fast-boat known as the “Picuda.” The use of go-fast boats to transport drugs is not a new modus operandi for drug-trafficking organizations, but the creation of a new and enhanced prototype to transport drugs is. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel and Gonzalez)***



A picture of the interior portion of a ‘Picuda’ boat and its empty compartments.
Source: <http://www.diarioextra.com/Dnew/noticiaDetalle/220111>

The Picuda: A Wave Breaking Go-Fast Wonder

Colombian traffickers are known to refurbish offshore Eduardoño Corvina fishing boats into go fast-boats, but when these traditional vessels are compared to the Picuda, the latter comes out on top for multiple reasons. First, the Picuda is constructed completely out of fiberglass whereas only the hulls of traditional go-fast boats are made of this material. The use of

fiberglass is important for multiple reasons, but a key reason is that it is difficult for radars to detect.

Second, the Picuda is said to be lighter, faster, and more spacious than the Eduardoño. For example, when comparing the time it takes for an Eduardoño and a Picuda to do the same trip, the Picuda is two times faster meaning it can complete a 1 hour trip in 30 minutes. In terms of longer trips, the Picuda is able to travel to Jamaica from Costa Rica in two days. This same trip would take the Eduardoño three days.

Third, the Picuda consumes less gas. This is of obvious importance because less gas consumption means that fewer gas cans are necessary. The end result: more drugs can be loaded onto a boat. A fourth reason the Picuda is more appealing than the traditional Eduardoño is that the back end is square shaped. This is significant because it provides additional stability in choppy waters. Finally, the proa of the Picuda is thinner than that of the Eduardoño Corvina. This modification allows the Picuda to travel at faster speeds and to cut through water with added precision. For this reason, the Picuda has been nicknamed the “Wave Breaker.” As for size, Picudas measure between 32-38 feet and are generally equipped with (3) 200 horsepower motors. An Eduardoño Corvina generally measures between 22-32 feet and depending on the model, may be equipped with single 50 horsepower motors or multiple motors in varying horsepowers.

Load Capacity: The Picudas vs. the Eduardoño Corvina

Picudas are capable of carrying up to one metric ton of drugs. Some are also equipped with double bottomed storage areas which are used to transport additional cocaine or marijuana in gunny sacks. Select Eduardoño offshore Corvina boats also have high load capacities and are able to carry shipments ranging between 3,000 and 5,000 pounds.

Tucano Diplomacy: Brazil's Growing Ties in Sub-Saharan Africa

OE Watch Commentary: *Brazil has quietly but markedly increased its ties and influence in sub-Saharan Africa over the past year. The move is understandable, as Brazil considers its Navy the guarantor of security in the South Atlantic, and Coastal Africa is ringed by lusophone nations (Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, and Mozambique) that Brazil considers cultural kin. More unexpectedly still is that the Ministry of Defense has taken the lead in the effort, with Brazil's Foreign Ministry assuming a backseat role.*

The Ministry of Defense's role comes into focus when one observes that the range of involvement and engagements with Sub-Saharan countries is not singular in purpose. Instead, they mirror domestic Brazilian national security objectives. The donation or sale of aircraft to African coastal states, for example, strengthens Brazil's partner efforts in securing the free passage of vessels in the South Atlantic, an objective that has taken on new importance since the recent discovery and exploitation of significant offshore energy deposits. Donated Brazilian equipment, typically outdated by Western standards, is perfectly suited for use in Africa, especially if conducting anti-piracy operations or countering low-grade insurgencies. By using the transfer of arms and defense equipment as a diplomacy tool, Brazil also guarantees both the government and industry access to the recipients for the lifespan of that equipment. Finally, Brazil has listed the development of domestic defense industries as a national security goal. The export market, particularly in Africa, will play a critical role in the success of that goal.

In South Africa the relationship is different. The Brazilian government sees in South Africa a BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) partner with converging goals for the development of domestic defense industries and South Atlantic security. Brazil, still a net defense importer, has aspirations of being the primary supplier of arms to Latin America one day. However, its industries, specifically their R & D departments, still remain far behind the traditional heavyweight Western states and Russia. Hence, technology transfers and co-production were the hinge points in the selection of the Grippen NG as Brazil's next frontline fighter aircraft. By partnering with South African industries, Brazil sees an opportunity to close the technological gap while sharing the associated costs.

Timeline:

- In April 2013, Brazilian Army LTG Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz took command of the United Nations Mission for the Stabilization of the Congo (MONUSCO) and its 21,900 peacekeepers. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/facts.shtml>

- In October of 2013, the Rousseff administration sought and gained congressional approval of a transfer of 3 T-27 (Tucano) training aircraft to the Mozambique air force. (<http://www.defesanet.com.br/geopolitica/noticia/12795/Brasil-vai-doar-avioes-T-27-a-Mocambique/>).

- On 19, November, the MoD, Celso Amorim, inaugurated the permanent Brazilian Naval Mission in the Cidade da Praia (Beach City), Cape Verde; a facility designed to assist and train the Cape Verde Coast guard. In addition he committed to the transfer of two EMB-111 Bandeirulha aircraft to the Cape Verde Navy. <http://www.defesanet.com.br/defesa/noticia/13139/Ministro-brasileiro-da-defesa-terminou-visita-a-Cabo-Verde-/>

- On December 02 2013, Investigators from the U.N. actually cited Brazil for the sale of non-lethal arms and munitions to the Ivory Coast, in violation of an existing Security Council Arms Embargo. Brazil eventually demonstrated to the United Nations that the arms were actually sold to Burkina-Faso with a contract addendum explicitly prohibiting the resale and exportation of both the Arms and Munitions. The non-lethal arms package included 700 non lethal grenade launchers and thousands of rounds of non-lethal munitions and was valued at \$2.7 million. Reais.

<http://www.defesanet.com.br/geopolitica/noticia/13303/Armas-do-Brasil-violam-embargo-afirma-ONU-/>

- In a March 20 214 visit to South Africa, Celso Amorim, and his South African Counterpart, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, agreed to further intensify defense industry R and D collaboration, increase Cyber and Intelligence data sharing, increase exchange officers in each other's Military Education Systems, and a committal to annual Cabinet level meetings between the respective Ministers of Defense. At the heart of the joint south African and Brazilian R and D efforts is the A-Darter short range (12km) Air-to-Air missile which is in the final stages of development and expected to enter production in the first quarter of 2015. The missile has already been tested on South Africa's Grippen Air superiority fighters and are expected to be deployed on the Grippen NGs that Brazil has just purchased from Sweden.

<http://www.defesanet.com.br/gripenbrazil/noticia/14681/Brasil-e-Africa-do-Sul-fortalecem-cooperacao-na-area-de-Defesa/>

- Following an 10 April 2014 visit by Celso Amorim to Maputo, Mozambican and Brazilian officials agreed to Brazilian upgrades to Mozambican naval bases at Pemba, Beira, and Maputo. The Mozambican defense minister also discussed his interest in purchasing an unknown quantity of A-29 SuperTucanos. <http://www.defesanet.com.br/africa/noticia/14932/Novos-meios-militares-de-Mocambique-tem--sotaque--brasileiro/>

Continued: Tucano Diplomacy: Brazil's Growing Ties in Sub-Saharan Africa

Finally, in the United Nations stabilization mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Brazil's interests again shift. By contributing to the Congo mission, as well as the Haiti and Lebanon UN missions, Brazil is exercising its Armed Forces in the art and practice of peacekeeping operations, an art with significant practicality at home. Brazil's Armed Forces still regularly contribute in domestic police actions, particularly in the Favela Pacification Program in Rio de Janeiro. On 8 April Brigadier General Mauro Sinott, formerly of the 6th Armored Infantry Brigade, assumed command of the brigade-sized task force pacifying the Complex de Mare Favela. Both he and many of the units within the task force are veterans of the UN Mission to Haiti. The benefits of UN mission participation far exceed just expanding the honor and pride of the Brazilian Armed Forces. The lessons learned painfully abroad are brought home.

The African states get reliable, though not necessarily modern equipment at bargain basement prices from a country that does not attach many political strings. The Brazilians do not bring the exploitive or parasitic stereotype associated with other global powers, nor are they afraid or unwilling to transfer and share defense technologies. The alternate options (United States, Russia, and China) all fall short in one regard or another when compared to that bar. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grilo)**



Figure 1- The A-29 Super Tucano light attack aircraft. The Brazil's Defense Minister, Celso Amorim, has just committed to selling an undisclosed number of these aircraft to the Mozambican Air Force. Brazil committed to the donation of three training variants, the T-27, to the Mozambican Air Force in November. Picture provided by: <http://www.defesanet.com.br/embraer/noticia/13709/Libano-estuda-compra-de-avioes-Super-Tucano-da-Embraer/>

Figure 2- The Fifth Generation A-Darter AAM. It is being jointly developed by South Africa and Brazil. Initial deployment is expected in the first quarter of 2015. Picture provided by: <http://www.defesanet.com.br/gripenbrazil/noticia/14681/Brasil-e-Africa-do-Sul-fortalecem-cooperacao-na-area-de-Defesa/>

“The IRNSS satellites will be useful for land, sea and air navigation. They have civil and defence applications.”

OE Watch Commentary: As reported in the September 2013 edition of *OE Watch*, India launched the first satellite in its planned Regional Navigation Satellite System on 01 July 2013. On 04 April 2014 the India Space Research Organization (ISRO) launched the second satellite in this constellation. This launch is being viewed as a significant achievement by India in two ways.

As article one describes and as article two highlights, the launch of IRNSS-1B is another in a series of successes for India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle platform and, with it, India's domestic space launch program. Continued success for domestic launch platforms is important because it establishes India's credibility in a perceived Asian Space Race.

IRNSS-1B also was the next step to India actualizing independence in satellite navigation – at least on a regional level. According to article three, the remaining satellites are to be on station by mid-2015, meaning a regional alternative to the ubiquitous US. Global Positioning System could be operational before 2016.

India is not the first country to deploy a navigational satellite system, as article four indicates. However, the global expansion of navigation technology has implications for the US, even if it is not directly about the US. As more alternatives to the GPS become available, the GPS will increasingly be viewed as a national resource for the US. rather than a global resource provided by the US.
End OE Watch Commentary (Freese)



IRNSS-1A. Source: http://igsbc.jpl.nasa.gov/projects/mgex/Status_IRNS.htm

Source: T.S. Subramanian, “ISRO Gears Up To Launch Second Navigation Satellite,” *The Hindu Online*, 4 April 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/isro-gears-up-to-launch-second-navigation-satellite/article5869566.ece>

... it will be the 25th consecutive successful launch of a PSLV, the ISRO's trusty workhorse. This launch vehicle is the PSLV's XL version, armed with more powerful strap-on booster motors than in the standard PSLV, which will put the 1,432-kg IRNSS-1B into its orbit. The IRNSS-1B is India's second dedicated navigation satellite ... All the seven satellites, which form the IRNSS, will be in orbit by 2016...The exercise is the third round of the “hand-in-hand” drills that the two countries initiated in 2007 in Kunming, in southwestern Yunnan province. The second round was held in Belgaum, Karnataka, the following year.

....Last month, both sides signed a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) aimed at expanding confidence-building measures and preventing the recurrence of face-offs, by formalising rules such as no tailing of patrols and widening direct contact between military commands.

“By middle of 2015, India will have all the navigational satellite system.”

Source: T.S. Subramanian, “PSLV Puts Navigation Satellite in Orbit,” *The Hindu Online*, 5 April 2014 <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/pslv-puts-navigation-satellite-in-orbit/article5874160.ece>

India marched towards establishing its own navigation system ... when its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C24) put into precise orbit the country's second navigation satellite, Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS-1B). The 1,432-kg IRNSS-1B will form part of a constellation of seven navigation satellites. It was the 25th success in a row for the PSLV...

The IRNSS satellites will be useful for land, sea and air navigation. They have civil and defence applications.

(continued)

Continued: India Navigation Satellite Deployment Continues

“With this launch, India has become the sixth nation to have achieved this feat after the U.S., Russia, Europe, China and Japan.”

Source: Staff Author(s), “Two More Satellite Launches This Year: ISRO Chief,” The New Indian Express Online, 5 April 2014, <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Two-More-Satellite-Launches-This-Year-ISRO-Chief/2014/04/04/article2149572.ece>.

Two more navigational satellites will be launched this year, said ISRO chairman K. Radhakrishnan Friday after an Indian rocket successfully placed in orbit the country’s second navigation satellite. ... “By 2014 we will launch two more navigational satellites - IRNSS-1C and IRNSS-1D. Three more navigational satellites will be launched early 2015. By middle of 2015, India will have all the navigational satellite system.”

Source: Staff Author(s), “India Launches Navigation Satellite,” Xinhua, 4 April 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/sci/2014-04/04/c_133239417.htm.

India on Friday launched into space its navigation satellite IRNSS-1B -- the second in a series of seven -- from the southern spaceport of Sriharikota in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The state-owned space agency’s indigenous Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle-C24 (PSLV-C24) rocket ... blasted off at 5.14 p.m. (local time) from the Satish Dhawan Space Center. ... IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigational Satellite System), dubbed as India’ version of “GPS”. ...

With this launch, India has become the sixth nation to have achieved this feat after the U.S., Russia, Europe, China and Japan.



India Space Research Organization Logo Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Space_Research_Organisation_Logo.svg

“The “zero option” that Washington has enunciated, if executed, will create a power vacuum in Afghanistan.”

OE Watch Commentary: *Uncertainty, apprehension, and hope are the order of the day in Afghanistan as the U.S. awaits the final outcome of the national election and disposition of the Bilateral Security Agreement. The some 50,000 NATO troops (34,000 U.S. forces) still serving in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) are scheduled to continue their departure from Afghanistan in 2014. A speculative editorial by retired Indian Army General S.K. Chatterji provides a broad analysis of how regional nations may respond to the winding down of Western involvement in Afghanistan. This piece from **The Diplomat** is well worth reading in its entirety. Our main interest in this edition of OE Watch is to examine how the role of India is perceived within the region, as the drama unfolds.*

*An article from Pakistani online news service **Pakistan Ka Khuda Hafiz (God Be Your Guardian)** speaks to Pakistani concerns with the role India may play in the next phase of transition that Afghanistan must live through. Much is made of similar events in the past, when the former Soviet Union removed troops from the country and supported the standing Afghan government. Pakistani news sources are consistent in reminding their readers that the U.S. “abandoned” Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, intimating that the burden for stability in Afghanistan may fall on Pakistan.*

*Another article from **The Diplomat** points to a possible nexus of both India and Iran to assume a role of support to Afghanistan, both economically and politically. Other regional voices such as Dr. Shanthie D’Souza, a research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, call into question India’s ability and even desire to pay the long term costs to remain engaged effectively in Afghanistan. However, the official rhetoric of the government of India is still very positive on the efforts it is willing*

Source: The Diplomat, “Afghan Stability: New Equations”, April 9, 2014 <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/afghan-stability-new-equations/>

... with Afghan National Security Forces left almost entirely in charge. The Taliban would doubtless attempt to fill the vacuum....

Among Afghanistan’s more powerful neighbors is Iran... Following the 1979 Russian takeover and Afghan resistance, Iran provided support for the Persian-speaking Shia groups. When the Taliban came to power, Iranians supported the Northern Alliance partners. In 1998 ... Iran deployed its Army along its borders with Afghanistan....

In the recent past Iran has sought to increase influence primarily through economic avenues. It has built roads, improved infrastructure, and provided concessions enabling Afghans access to Chabahar Port, allowing Kabul to avoid relying solely on Karachi... Afghanistan has agreed to a friendship and cooperation pact with Iran....

The Central Asian Republics (CAR) have deep interests and substantial stakes in Afghan stability...

China has hitherto displayed only an economic interest in Afghanistan. Beijing is cognizant of the threat of an unstable Afghanistan and the possible destabilizing influence it could have in China’s west. Its huge economy would be well served by the vast mineral deposits of Afghanistan, and China is presently pursuing infrastructure links through the neighboring CAR countries, with rail and road projects already underway....

When it comes to political influence, China can deploy a slew of economic incentives while also leveraging what influence Pakistan has to achieve its objectives...

As far as Pakistan is concerned, its traditional philosophy of Afghanistan providing it strategic depth in a confrontation with India makes it imperative that any regime in Kabul be subservient to Islamabad...

Afghan Security Forces Image Credit: REUTERS/Omar Sobhani

http://thediplomat.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/thediplomat_2014-04-09_03-38-09-386x275.jpg



(continued)

Continued: India and Afghanistan Relationship

to put forth on Afghanistan's behalf. This is seen clearly in an article in the **Press Trust of India**.

The current Afghan government has enjoyed a decade of aid and advice from the Indian government and can count on continuing goodwill. However, other actors such as the Taliban and Pakistan will have a voice in how this relationship matures. **End OE Watch Commentary (Welch)**

Pakistan will also contest any move by India to establish strong political and military influence in Afghanistan....

...Still, India maintains a good image among Afghan citizens. Should Iran play a major role in Afghanistan, India may have an opening to step up its role. Indians and Chinese could also work together: Both countries want a stable Afghanistan, have invested substantial capital in the country, and anticipate business opportunities...

Afghanistan will in all likelihood require the deployment of outside forces to maintain stability after the ISAF withdrawal...

The dynamics of such a force would likely be stormy...

Source: PKKH, "Post – 2014 Indian Influence in Afghanistan," March 4, 2014, <http://www.pakistankakhudahafiz.com/reports-analysis/post-2014-indian-influence-afghanistan/>

“India’s deepening influence in Afghanistan is not new, but after 2014, it is surely going to create a more bitter environment of mistrust and apprehensions between the two neighbors having nukes in hands.”

... India is also looking for her interests in the region... Besides huge Indian investment, reconstruction work, defense and security ties and training of Afghan National Security Forces, there is, somehow, an inevitable Indian presence in Afghanistan that is posing some serious questions and threats for regional peace and stability.

As the US withdrawal is approaching, the memories from the past haunt Pakistan, as it felt abandoned after the Soviet defeat ... The US reinforcement of India as a power in south Asia is an extra worrisome move that is disturbing Pakistan...

...The increasing interest and influence of India in Afghanistan and the US support to lift India as a regional power definitely will polarize the strategic environment in the region. India and Afghanistan also reached a strategic partnership... It is also important to note that due to this growing Indian influence in Afghanistan (and for a few other security reasons), Pakistan has deployed over 150,000 troops along the Afghan border for first time in history.

If the United States is leaving... polarization and hostile environment will prove fatal for the region in general and in particular for India and Pakistan.

India’s deepening influence in Afghanistan is not new, but after 2014, it is surely going to create a more bitter environment of mistrust and apprehensions between the two neighbors having nukes in hands. Pakistan certainly has not any problems with “India-Afghanistan Friendship” ... but when Afghan soil is used by India to create instability and chaos in Pakistan, then it certainly has its repercussions and impact. ...As the US/NATO are steadily losing influence in Kabul, India is gearing up all her activities and power to stay in the loop. India invested a great deal, both politically and financially, in Afghanistan to secure and guarantee its long term interests in the region....

India is exploiting the volatile situation in Balochistan, and there are evidences of Indian meddling in Balochistan via Afghanistan....



Afghan president Hamid Karzai and the Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi
<http://www.khaama.com/afghanistan-india-sign-economic-cooperation-pacts-1164>

(continued)

Continued: India and Afghanistan Relationship

Pakistan is well aware of the Indian games and proxy planned via Afghanistan, as insurgents cannot survive without proper material support and sustenance, of which India has taken the burden for quite some time.

Both India and Pakistan see Afghanistan as a battleground to defeat each other, but for now, things have to be re-examined and re-judged in order to create an environment of trust and cooperation. If after the US/NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India continue to play their proxies, then in the near future, a stable and peaceful region is nowhere to be seen. So, India needs to examine her policies and initiatives that are creating suspicions. ... Pakistan cannot further stand Afghan soil being used by India to pursue her 'long term aims of being a regional power'. The growing Indian presence in Afghanistan is something not desirable at the moment, and if India will pursue her national interests at the cost of regional stability and peace and will threaten Pakistan's security and stability, then Pakistan will have to devise some counter strategy to stand Indian moves and plans accordingly.

Source: The Diplomat, "Could Iran and India be Afghanistan's 'Plan B?'" February 14, 2014 <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/could-iran-and-india-be-afghanistans-plan-b/>

“Amidst disagreement with the U.S., Karzai seems to be looking at other post-2014 options.”

This is a landmark year for Afghanistan. After more than a decade of war, the country is set to transition into a new era.... Over the coming year, Afghanistan is scheduled to undergo a ... security transition (already underway), with the full withdrawal of international combat troops by the end of this year.

... Karzai is looking at "Plan B" options. In this context, Iran and India may have a role to play. Given their strategic interests in Afghanistan as well as trends over the past months, these two countries could well offer Afghanistan a critical lifeline during a period of transition and uncertainty.

... given the absence of any clear initiative by the U.S. ... India and Iran could be key players.

Take Karzai's trips to India and Iran in December last year. ... While in Iran, Karzai found support ... agreed to sign a "pact of friendship and cooperation," ... This would complement a separate border and security agreement signed earlier in August.

Karzai's visit to India immediately after this, on December 13, was aimed not only at consolidating support but also at pleading for increased military assistance. ... India confirmed its commitment to deepening defense and security cooperation, through enhancements in training, meeting the equipment and infrastructure needs of ANSF and opportunities for higher military education in India for Afghan officers...

While Iran and India have always been potential alternatives for Afghanistan, it is only in the past few months that Kabul seems to have been getting traction on this option. The Iran nuclear deal has perhaps unshackled some of the constraints India may have felt seeking Iran's support in finding an optimal solution for Afghanistan. ... With India as its most trusted ally and an "all-weather friend" and Iran as an immediate neighbor and part of its political and cultural history, Afghanistan is clearly working on a simultaneous plan to secure its post-2014 future... With their strategic interests and cordial relations with Kabul, India and Iran will be critical to a peaceful transition for Afghanistan post 2014 and could well be that country's Plan B.



<http://archives.deccanchronicle.com/130111/news-businessstech/article/india-cashes-iran-isolation>

(continued)

Continued: India and Afghanistan Relationship

“India has always been and will remain committed to assisting Afghanistan in its reconstruction. We have no exit strategy and we will continue to work in partnership with the Afghan government.”



Afghanistan and India Flags

<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/13501-india-advocates-for-post-2014-troop-presence>

Source: Press Trust of India, “India has no exit strategy in Afghanistan: Foreign Secretary,” April 9, 2014, http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-has-not-exit-strategy-in-afghanistan-foreign-secretary-114040901381_1.html

India today said it was committed to continuing assistance to Afghanistan in its reconstruction and has no “exit strategy”.

Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh said India would like to see a strong and stable Afghanistan and exuded confidence that the country will manage its transition in 2014 and beyond...

We truly believe that strong and stable Afghanistan is in our national interest. India is confident that Afghanistan will manage its transition in 2014 and beyond,” she said at a book release function.

The presidential elections were held in Afghanistan on April 5 to elect a successor of incumbent Hamid Karzai who had come to power after fall of the Taliban in 2001.

“India is committed to building a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. It is in our interest for Afghanistan to succeed,” she said.

Earlier she released a book on Afghanistan titled ‘Afghanistan 2014: Weathering Transition’. The book has been published by the Delhi Policy Group.

Edging Closer to Civil War in Thailand

“The group was looking for healthy men between 18 and 25 who were willing to fight together and sacrifice their lives to uphold ideology.”

OE Watch Commentary: A recent plan to recruit 600,000 men into the new pro-government Democracy Protection Volunteers Group this year has raised concerns that Thailand could be heading closer to civil war. According to the following article, Suporn Attawong, who is the deputy secretary-general to the prime minister and red-shirt leader (pro-government group), announced the plans in February. The group is said to be “looking for healthy men between 18 and 25 who are willing to fight together and sacrifice their lives to uphold ideology.”

Thailand has been experiencing government protests since November of last year, when the country's lower house passed a controversial amnesty bill that critics feared would allow former leader Thaksin Shinawatra to return without serving jail time for corruption charges. Thaksin had been ousted from the government by a military coup in 2006 and eventually fled the country. Due to Thaksin's continued strong following in Thailand, his sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, who headed a pro-Thaksin party, won the majority of parliamentary seats in the general elections and became the prime minister in August 2011. The amnesty bill, which had been proposed by Yingluck, was rejected by the Senate. Despite this, anti-government protests continue, insisting that the current government step down due to the perception that corruption still exists and is harming the Thai economy.

According to Mr. Suporn, the volunteer force of 600,000 is necessary to protect the constitutional monarchy, and all volunteers would receive “tactical training,” for one month, although he did not elaborate on what “tactical training” meant.

There seems to be no end in sight in the increasing conflict between both sides. The new volunteer force possibly portends increased conflict among political parties and is worthy of continued monitoring. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

Source: Prasit Tangprasert, Chakrapan Natunri, and Wassana Nanuam, “Red Shirt Hardliner Seeks 600,000 Men,” Bangkok Post, February 27, 2014, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/397339/red-shirt-hardliner-seeks-600000-volunteers>

Red Shirt Hardliner Seeks 600,000 Men

Deputy secretary-general to the prime minister and red-shirt leader Suporn Attawong on Thursday announced plans to recruit 600,000 young men to join the new pro-government Democracy Protection Volunteers Group this year, a move that raises concerns about the possibility of the country descending into civil war...

Given that the group's political movement would destroy democracy and people's power and, if successful, could lead to civil war, Mr. Suporn said the founding of the volunteer force was necessary to protect the constitutional monarchy...

The group was looking for healthy men between 18 and 25 who were willing to fight together and sacrifice their lives to uphold ideology.

All volunteers would receive “tactical training” for a month, he said without elaborating...



Suporn Attawong, is targeting 600,000 volunteers to join the new pro-democracy movement in Thailand. Source: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/local/397339/red-shirt-hardliner-seeks-600000-volunteers>.

China Reacts to WTO Ruling Against PRC Rare Earth Export Quotas

“Even after the dust has settled on the rare earth case, still more gaming over other strategic resources will follow. Therefore, China must get strategically prepared and also rethink relevant measures in the country at present that could ‘give others a handle against it...”

OE Watch Commentary: Last month the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled against China in a case that has lasted for more than two years involving the restriction of export quotas of rare earth elements and other essential raw materials. The WTO found that export taxes, quotas, and bureaucratic delays imposed by Beijing on overseas sales of the various minerals had artificially raised prices and created shortages for foreign buyers. According to a WTO panel, China is accused of breaking international trade law by restricting the export of rare earth elements and other metals crucial to modern manufacturing.

The two highlighted articles are a good representation of China’s reaction to the ruling. They share a commonality in their perception that the ruling was unfair, showed favoritism to those countries that challenged China, and seemed to show no concern for the environmental damage the rare earth industry is causing in China.

In the first article, an unattributed expert reportedly said that the ruling “is extremely favorable to the EU, the United States, Japan, and other countries as it can be taken as the opening for penetration (into the industry).” The second article, which originated from **Xinhua**, stated that “one with justice on his side [China in this case] doesn’t always win.”

The author of the first article stated that “even though rare earth resources are important, their exploitation brings an enormous burden on the resource environment. Therefore, many Western countries adopted the protective measure of ‘sealing them up from extraction’ and buying rare earths from other countries.”

China’s rare earth industry has been plagued with illegal and inefficient operations, and the goal has been to have more control over it. China is reportedly accomplishing this by consolidating and tightening up the industry, merging companies and getting rid of others. Zhang Anwen, Deputy Secretary General of the China Society of Rare Earths, is pushing China to “increase the momentum of reorganizing



Chinese Laborers at a Nancheng county rare earth mine in Jiangxi province.

Source: Huan Jia, “本国资源“封而不采” 强迫中国放开出口 稀土官司凸显西方“规则歧视” (热点聚焦) [Rare Earth Lawsuit Clearly Shows ‘Rule Discrimination’ by West – Sealing Up Domestic Resources From Extraction, Forcing China to Decontrol Exports (Spotlight)],” Renmin Ribao, March 28, 2014, http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2014-03/28/c_126325967.htm

Rare Earth Lawsuit Clearly Shows ‘Rule Discrimination’ by West – Sealing Up Domestic Resources From Extraction, Forcing China to Decontrol Exports

... The United States and the EU would constrain only other countries but not themselves. An expert pointed out: Even though China cannot refuse to execute the ruling, it can still look for an adaptive way to get around it to break the “rule discrimination” by the West.

... An expert held: The ruling that our country violated the rules by restricting exports of rare earths and other products following a similar ruling in the case involving the nine kinds of raw materials is extremely favorable to the EU, the United States, Japan, and other countries as it can be taken as the opening for penetration. Our country’s export regime for strategic resources may be confronted with impact.

...The expert pointed out: Even though rare earth resources are important, their exploitation brings an enormous burden on the resource environment. Therefore, many Western countries adopted the protective measure of “sealing them up from extraction” and buy rare earths from other countries.

“Even after the dust has settled on the rare earth case, still more gaming over other strategic resources will follow. Therefore, China must get strategically prepared and also rethink relevant measures in the country at present that could ‘give others a handle

(continued)

Continued: China Reacts to WTO Ruling Against PRC Rare Earth Export Quotas

and consolidating the rare earth industry and at the same time strengthen environmental protection law enforcement to further advance the effective management and sustainable utilization of the resources.” Some outsiders, however, see this consolidation as a ploy to give the government more control over a critical resource and therefore a greater ability to use it as a bargaining chip.

Rare earth elements are critical to the production of hundreds of high-tech applications, ranging from everyday products such as laptop computers and cell phones to green technologies and critical military technologies, which have contributed to U.S. military superiority. China has been reducing export quotas since about 2006, yet the country’s production rate has remained fairly steady until about 2011, according to US Geological Survey figures. If these figures are accurate, this begs the question that if China were so concerned about its industry, why has it only been cutting back quotas during this time frame and not also been cutting back on mining and production?

*Reports are now emerging that China will appeal the ruling. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)***

against it,” said Tu Xinquan, deputy dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics.

... “China should increase the momentum of reorganizing and consolidating the rare earth industry and at the same time strengthen environmental protection law enforcement to further advance the effective management and sustainable utilization of the resources,” indicated Zhang Anwen, deputy secretary general of the China Society of Rare Earths.

Source: “China Voice: WTO Rare Earth Ruling is Unfair,” Xinhua, March 31, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-03/31/c_133227553.htm

China Voice: WTO Rare Earth Ruling is Unfair

One with justice on his side doesn’t always win. This is again the case for the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) rare earth ruling last week.

The ruling against China’s regulation of its rare earth exports has sparked disappointment and dissatisfaction among the Chinese public, as they hold China has been unfairly treated.

...Western countries, equipped with the world’s most sophisticated export restriction systems, can, without breaking any rules, restrict exports of high-tech products such as precision machinery and semiconductors, particularly, to China.

The United States, with one of the world’s largest rare earth reserves, dominated this market from the mid 1960s to late 1980s, and then started to gradually close down mines, citing huge environmental and resource costs.

This dominating status came at a huge price -- in some small towns in east China’s Jiangxi Province, where reserves of precious ion-absorbed-type rare earths abound, lavish exploitation of the metals since the late 1980s has not only destroyed local landscapes, but also poisoned streams and crops.

OE Watch Commentary: *The North Korean government has continually tried to increase its asymmetric power against South Korea because it recognizes its relative weakness against the capabilities of the US-South Korean military alliance. Although it has been more than 60 years, memories of the Korean War remain vivid. At that time the persistent US strategic bombing campaign impressed upon the leadership in Pyongyang its overall conventional military weakness. Since then North Korea has focused upon developing an asymmetric response (via WMDs and submarines) or by achieving tactical and strategic surprise against South Korea (via terror and assassination). Not surprisingly, given their stealth and potential, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) have become a top priority of asymmetric power for North Korea.*

*As the excerpt makes clear, through official and unofficial channels North Korea has purchased or captured UAVs from Russia, China and the US, including the Pchela-1T, VR-3, ASN-104 and MQM-107D. North Korea has developed its own UAVs by deconstructing and redesigning foreign UAVs. Recently, during a televised military parade the North Korean leadership showed off some of its asymmetric power tools, including UAVs. In terms of cost-benefit analysis, UAVs are much more effective than conventional military weapons for North Korea's traditional tactics and strategy – intimidation, stealth and terror. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kim)***



North Korean UAV in Military Parade, 2013. Source: blog.jinbo.net

Source: Yi Yo'ng-wan and Cho'n Hyo'n-so'k: "North Korean Drone Loaded With Small Bomb Can Even Strike Target 250km Away," Chosun Ilbo Online, 2 April 2014. <http://www.chosun.com>

North Korean Drone Loaded With Small Bomb Can Even Strike Target 250km Away

...North Korea has been putting efforts into the drone development since early 1990s. It has reportedly developed drones by bringing in and remodeling designs and prototypes from China and former USSR countries. At a large-scale military parade held in Pyongyang on the occasion of Kim Il Sung's [Kim Il-so'ng] 100th birthday (Sun's Day) in April 2012, North Korea displayed unmanned self-destructing attack drones on mobile launchers, together with its new intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) with a range of 12,000km. A military source said "The fact that North Korea displayed unmanned aerial vehicles together with ICBMs at the military parade can be seen as its expression of pride in its drone technology."

North Korea reportedly has a number of drones that are variations of drones made in the United States and Russia. They include "Panghyo'n I" and "Panghyo'n II," which are remodeled versions of a Chinese drone, "D-4 (ASN-104)."

North Korea brought in US target drone, MQM-107D, through Syria and developed it into an unmanned self-destructing attack drone. This target drone, also known as "Striker," is 5.5m long with a wingspan of 3m, and it can fly up to 925km per hour by installing a jet engine. North Korea reportedly remodeled a target drone by loading small bomb, so that it can carry out a self-destructive attack at a target as far as some 250km away.

North Korea also reportedly has "Pchela-1T," short-range surveillance patrol drone brought in from Russia. Its operation radius is 60km and its flight duration time is 2 hours. A TV camera can be attached. It is launched from a separate track launcher, and it lands by using a parachute.

North Korea is also assumed to have VR-3, Russian unmanned reconnaissance plane. This drone was reportedly introduced in the late 1990s from the Middle East. It can fly as high as 5000m, and its operation radius is 90km....

Chinese Currency: Growing Systemic Importance to Global Finance

OE Watch Commentary: In its bid to reform its economy, China's government is pushing forward on a number of fronts related to the international use of China's currency, the renminbi, and the flow of all currencies across its borders. China's currency operations and the nature of cross-border financial transactions are important for at least two reasons. First, greater use of the renminbi outside China would mean that Chinese investors face lower costs and greater efficiencies in acquiring overseas assets (e.g., companies, goods, and technologies). Second, it is a necessary and substantial step on the long road to the renminbi becoming a globally systemic reserve currency alongside the Japanese yen and euro, if still a distant second from the US dollar.

China is already the largest player in bilateral trade and investment but it remains tiny on a multilateral level. Though China is the number 1 or 2 trading nation with Australia, Japan, the EU, Brazil, and Africa, economic exchange between parties not directly involving China is done either in one of the exchanging parties' currency or, more likely, in the US dollar. This means that China's importance to, and therefore influence over the system of global finance remains quite limited compared to Japan or the EU, let alone the US. As the renminbi is used more often in more places for more types of economic exchange, China's influence will likewise grow in sectors as disparate as IMF policy decisions, Western pension fund investments, and the influence of Chinese banks in allocating and monitoring global capital flows.

The first article speaks to the growing number of money centers around the world where economic transactions (i.e., investment as well as trade) can be done in renminbi. Though on a global scale still quite modest, the ability to transact locally in China's currency improves the financing operations of the local branches of Chinese companies, as well as the familiarity foreigners have with working in renminbi.

The expectation is that this becomes a self-reinforcing cycle that improves the function, information, and therefore frequency of off-shore renminbi usage.

The second article addresses an issue of even greater import for both China and global finance. The Shanghai free trade zone is the spearhead of the Communist Party of China's efforts to integrate its heretofore very protected domestic financial economy with global finance. The intent is for foreign investors to operate inside China with rules and regulations similar to a global financial center like London



Source: "China says to ease restrictions on overseas investments", Straits Times, 11 April 2014. <http://www.straitstimes.com/st/print/2261686>.

China expands network of offshore Renminbi trading centers to Australia

Starting from May 8, Chinese firms planning to invest less than US\$1 billion will only need to register with authorities rather than seek approvals from the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the commission said in a statement late on Thursday. Lengthy approval times, which can take up to six months, have dented the competitive edge of privately-owned Chinese firms in their overseas acquisitions, since other foreign companies can adjust to changes in economic conditions at a much quicker pace, analysts have said.

Source: "Evolving reforms at Shanghai FTZ push financial opening," Xinhua, 26 March 2014. <http://english.people.com.cn/business/8579437.html>

Shanghai FTZ could become a true offshore market for free capital flow and Renminbi convertibility

Pilot financial liberalization schemes in Shanghai free trade zone (FTZ) will soon include a free trade account and a capital market for foreign investors. Specific rules on the free trade account that allows full convertibility of the yuan and facilitates offshore financing will be rolled out in the second quarter. Trading of crude oil futures on the Shanghai International Energy Exchange will begin by the end of this year.

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Continued: Chinese Currency: Growing Systemic Importance to Global Finance

*or New York. The other side of this coin is the potential for Chinese investors, both private and government-controlled, to bring capital out of China. Chinese capital invested overseas can have both an economic and political purpose. The third article looks at the outbound side of China's financial reforms and warns of the dangers to the fragile Chinese financial system of misaligned or too rapid a reform. It uses the example of the role of currency liberalization in the 16th century overthrow of the Ming Dynasty to highlight the dangers to China's political stability if reforms to outbound engagement exceed the management capacities of domestic institutions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zandoli)***

Source: "Internationalization of the Chinese Renminbi: Good for the Economy?," Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business, 26 February 2014. <http://knowledge.ckgsb.edu.cn/2014/02/26/economy/is-internationalization-of-the-chinese-renminbi-good-for-the-economy/>

Article: Growing internationalization of Renminbi brings challenges to China as well as world

Since 2009, the People's Bank of China (PBOC), China's central bank, has signed currency swap agreements worth RMB 2.5 trillion with 23 countries and regions; and offshore RMB markets have expanded from Hong Kong to Singapore, Taipei and London, with cities like Paris, Sydney and Toronto waiting to join the game. In December, a report released by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) ranked the RMB as the second most-used currency in trade finance in 2013.

Safeguarding Investments and Influence: China and Nigeria's Navy

“The stealth performance of F91 is essential for coping with non-traditional security threats.”

OE Watch Commentary: In the past decade China has increased its oil and mineral reserves in Africa through oil-for-infrastructure deals, especially in countries like Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo. More recently China has sought to expand its oil reserves in Nigeria, a country where for decades Western oil companies dominated most oil blocks. In 2012 the managing director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation announced that China was an alternative market for Nigerian crude oil and that China would be a good replacement for the United States, whose crude oil imports from Nigeria have been decreasing since the late 2000s.

Related to economics, a new trend in Nigerian-Chinese relations is China's growing interest in partnering with Nigeria's Navy. An article in Nigeria's **Premium News** detailed how China plans to export an F91 stealth patrol ship to Nigeria in 2014, which will help Nigeria guard its coastline, protect exclusive maritime economic areas, and carry out marine search and rescue. The article quoted Chinese Major General Yin Zhuo, who said that the ship is “essential for coping with non-traditional security threats,” such as countering terrorists and pirates.

There are likely three main reasons why China is seeking to enter the Nigerian defense sector market. First, China – as an emerging superpower – seeks to protect and secure its economic investments in the Gulf of Guinea. Second, exporting new naval supplies to African countries like Nigeria can help improve China's bilateral relations. Third, in January 2014 Nigeria assumed membership of the UN Security Council for a two-year term, and it will be able to support China on issues ranging from disputed territories in the South China Sea to non-recognition of Taiwan.

This tightening military relationship between Nigeria and China, as evidenced by the sale of the F91 stealth patrol ships, therefore has important military, diplomatic and economic consequences. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



China is exporting a new patrol ship to Nigeria, which will not only help China safeguard its investments in the Gulf of Guinea but also score China diplomatic credit through Nigeria's seat on the UN Security Council. Source: <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=11&id=20140221000032>

Source: “China to export new-type patrol ship with stealth performance to Nigeria,” peopledaily.com.cn, 21 February 2014.

China to export new-type patrol ship with stealth performance to Nigeria

The first new-type patrol ship F91 that China plans to export to Nigeria has been launched. It will be delivered in the middle of 2014 as scheduled. It will become the first ship of the Nigerian navy's P18N project. During an interview, Major General Yin Zhuo made particular mention of the vessel's stealth performance.

The first F91 stealth patrol ship was successfully launched on January 27. Its major missions include patrolling and guard duties along the coastline, protecting exclusive maritime economic areas, carrying out marine search and rescue, and preventing marine pollution. According to relevant data, the F19 patrol ship has a full length of 95 meters and a waterline length of 89 meters. With two diesel master engines, and a top speed of about 39 km/hour, it can navigate on the sea for 20 consecutive days.

On the stealth performance of F91, Yin Zhuo pointed out that an 1,800-ton ship with stealth capacity will have the radar reflection area of a ship of about 500 tons; it can be discovered only when it is very close to the radar of enemy, and cannot be observed if an appropriate distance is kept from the enemy radar.

Modern terrorists have a growing capacity for counter-reconnaissance and a strong combat capacity. While at sea, the stealth performance of F91 is essential for coping with non-traditional security threats.

“...Russia’s economy has already begun to experience serious difficulties...For CIS neighbors, this means that they should not expect major Russian investment in exchange for political loyalty”

OE Watch Commentary: The governments and people of Central Asia have been following the events in Ukraine over the past several weeks, and, as the accompanying article shows, there are some specific concerns about how the situation will affect them. The article notes how members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) should consider what will happen if Russia’s economy goes into a recession because of the situation with Ukraine, namely that Russian investment in Central Asian infrastructure or militaries will decrease. It is very unlikely that Russian security assistance would disappear entirely, but if it were to decrease, it could be a few years before the full impact is felt. Considering the statements that the Russian government has made about security in Afghanistan in 2014, security assistance for Central Asia would likely continue to be a priority for Russia.

One issue related to a possible Russian economic recession that the author does not mention is the number of migrant workers from Central Asia who remit money back to the region. The loss of this income would have a quick impact, in addition to the several hundred thousand migrant workers (mostly men) in Russia at any given time during the year, who could return to Central Asia without jobs. This happened to some effect during the worldwide economic problems in 2008-2009, but it did not have as negative an impact on Central Asia’s economies or lead to civil unrest as predicted. Regardless, this would still be an issue worth watching.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the article is how the author (from Tajikistan) believes that the situation in Ukraine can serve as a lesson for other CIS countries. In short, a CIS member’s disloyalty to Russia could result in a crisis like Ukraine’s. This is one unofficial perspective of the situation, but the comments by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (a Russian official) mentioned in the article have not alleviated any concerns across the region. It is not the first time that Zhirinovskiy has made similar



“Vladimir Zhirinovskiy serves food to migrant workers at a construction site near Moscow in June 2013 during a public relations event for the Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia. Zhirinovskiy has been outspoken in his views of Russia’s relationship with former Soviet republics.”
Source: http://ldpr.ru/events/Vladimir_Zhirinovskiy_met_with_migrant_workers/

Ukrainian lessons for the countries of the CIS

Today, the attention of the world media is focused on what is happening in Ukraine; the recent accession of Crimea to Russia has been called the start of the restructuring of the entire system of international agreements created after the dissolution of the Soviet Union...What lessons can other countries of the CIS learn from the Ukrainian crisis?

...In early March units of “green men” with select weapons and without insignia, identified themselves as “self-defense forces of the Crimea” blocked all local military bases of the Ukrainian Army. On March 16 an all Crimean referendum was held in which the residents voted to join Russia and the next day the Russian Duma unanimously voted to annex Crimea...

...The main question that is now engaging the world community – will Vladimir Putin go on or stop here?...there are three options being discussed the most:

Option 1 – the status quo. The annexation of Crimea has already taken place and been adopted de-facto by the international community...In this case the new Ukrainian government is likely to stay in power...In getting Crimea, Russia loses Ukraine (to the west)...

Option 2 – the return of the pro-Russian government...In this case the emphasis is on a “Russian Spring” – a protest movement in the Russian speaking regions of the country...Russian political scientist Anatoly Nesmiyan (aka El Murid) describes it: “if resistance in the South-East will form in the next month or two, Kiev cannot oppose them, as it failed in Crimea. It will be necessary for these forces to take control of the

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Continued: A Central Asian Perspective on the Situation in Ukraine

statements: as recently as February 2014 he said that the Central Asian republics should be grouped together and brought under Russian control as the Central Asian Federal Region. Ultimately, Central Asians are closely watching what is taking place in Ukraine, and while they are not taking sides, they are concerned about future partnerships. End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)

organs of power, the police, and perhaps the army, to try to liberate Kiev.”...

Option 3 – the exit of Russian speaking provinces from Ukraine. If the “Russian Spring” fails at the national level, the pro-Russian movement could “restrict” movement into a few of the South-Eastern provinces...The problem is that the last two options will be difficult to carry out without direct military intervention by Russia...

Ukrainian lessons

On the day of Crimean referendum a Russian talk show hosted (Vladimir) Zhirinovskiy, who said that he considers changing his last name to “Crimean.” The presenter suggested that in the future Zhirinovskiy would have to change his last name to “Belarusian” or “Kazakhstan”...the enthusiasm and unity of what was said from the participants of the show, from the Communists to United Russia, from officials and diplomats, (was) without any regard for political correctness or possible reaction from CIS countries.

...Russia will continue to look (even less) to the West in its relations with former Soviet republics. Therefore, if Russia’s immediate neighbors rely on the international community to guarantee their sovereignty, now the possibilities for “multi-vector” foreign policy will be much less...a state with an independent economy, like Kazakhstan, may be able to obtain more or less acceptable conditions. However, countries with “symbolic” armies and mutilated, corruption economies have already proposed to accept Russian conditions.

...Russia’s economy has already begun to experience serious difficulties...For CIS neighbors, this means that they should not expect major Russian investment in exchange for political loyalty. In these new conditions, Russian diplomacy will be forced to “non-economic” measures. In other words, those countries that try to follow the example of disloyal Ukraine might face a government crisis.

At a recent conference in Dushanbe, a Russian analyst said that in 2016 a scenario similar to Ukraine could be played out in Kazakhstan, where “American organizations have strengthened relations with Kazakh nationalists.”...Great powers compete for influence in the region, and regional governments turn their heads left and right, trying to guess where danger is coming from – Russia, the U.S., or China?...

Concerns about Poppy Cultivation in Northern Afghanistan

“The drug trade means well-trained and armed groups with the most advanced weapons. And with respect to the situation in Central Asia, it is still a cause of instability.”

OE Watch Commentary: Since 2011 heroin production in Afghanistan has increased each year. The country currently supplies about 75% of the global heroin trade, and it could provide up to 90% after 2014, according to the United Nations. While provinces in southern Afghanistan, such as Helmand and Kandahar, are the key poppy cultivators, northern Afghanistan is also seeing an increase in poppy cultivation (as well as drug addiction) in provinces bordering Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Drug trafficking in Central Asia and Xinjiang is also expected to increase after the U.S. withdraws most of its troops from Afghanistan in 2014.

A Russian-language article from Kyrgyzstan's paruskg.info discussed the risks that poppy production in northern Afghanistan poses to Central Asia. The article distinguishes the drug trade today from the Soviet era, when it was led by “a few, seasoned drug barons.” Today, in contrast, the trade has “turned into a traditional craft for many Afghan citizens.” The article blames President Karzai, whose family members and administration are associated with leading drug lords. Typical of Russian-language media in Central Asia, the article also alleges, without providing evidence, that the U.S. is connected to cartels which work with local drug traffickers in Afghanistan.

The article emphasizes that the “poppy crop is unconventional” in northern Afghanistan, but there may now be more than 100 heroin laboratories in the region. The key threat is that “well-trained and armed groups with the most advanced weapons” maintain these drug-trafficking operations and will connect with Central Asian cartels and militants.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)

Source: “Афганская игла (Afghan Needle),” paruskg.info, 18 February 2014. <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/ukrainskie-uroki-dlya-stran-sng>

Афганская игла (Afghan Needle)

Due to the impending withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan, the media has published many different articles devoted to this issue. Among the themes in question is drug production. During the Soviet era on the Afghan-Soviet border smuggling was in containers of boxes of raisins and transited to Europe in stashes of tens to hundreds of kilograms of narcotics. But that was back in the days when the drug trade was the lot of a few, seasoned, drug barons, and now this has turned into a traditional craft for many Afghan citizens.

It is reported that President Hamid Karzai's clan and even his closest relatives are involved in the heroin business. There are also dozens of representatives of the executive and legislative authorities, officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Afghanistan [in the heroin business].

Local drug traffickers and their backers have long been part of international drug cartels, including the U.S., and remain virtually inaccessible not only for intelligence and law enforcement agencies of [Afghanistan], but also for the relevant services of the international level. Therefore, they have a thriving business.

It is no accident that NATO troops occupied Afghanistan, but for the third consecutive year records have been set for the production of opium poppy. According to the report of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2013 crops in Afghanistan cover the maximum area and collectively account for more than 200,000 hectares, which is more than a quarter more than last year. Opium production reached the 5,500-ton mark. If we compare this figure with 2012, the increase was almost 50 percent!

Afghan heroin now accounts for 90 percent of world production, or hundreds of billions of dollars. That is why the poppy can already be seen not only in the south but also in the north. Poppy plantations appear in such provinces of northern Afghanistan as Balkh and Faryab, where the poppy crop is unconventional. That is why the country has established and continues to grow a network of heroin laboratories. Today, there are more than a 100.

In this situation, can the Americans and their allies can talk about peace and security in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region as a whole? After all, the drug trade is not only the production and marketing of potions, but it also relies on well-trained and armed groups with the most advanced weapons. And in modern conditions and with respect to the situation in the Central Asia, it is still a cause of instability and threat. And not only for Afghanistan, but also for neighboring countries through which the trafficking routes pass.

Reflecting on the facts, you catch yourself thinking that Americans want to use drug expansion in [Central Asia] as a tool to destabilize the situation in those countries.

Kyrgyz Public Opinion Polls on Post-2014 Security

“The most dangerous religious organization, according to the respondents, was Hizb ut-Tahrir.”

OE Watch Commentary: In recent years Kyrgyzstan, like other countries in Central Asia, has seen a rise in religious extremism. Kyrgyzstan now has more members of Hizb-ut-Tahrir than its neighbors, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. According to a public opinion poll carried out by **Vecherniy Bishkek**, Kyrgyz citizens are more worried about purportedly nonviolent Muslim extremist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir than avowedly violent groups with a record of attacks in Kyrgyzstan, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

The reason why one-third of those polled believe Hizb ut-Tahrir is the “most dangerous” religious group is that Hizb ut-Tahrir and similar groups like the Tablighi Jamaat are ones that Kyrgyz encounter on an everyday basis. On International Women’s Day in February 2014, for example, Islamists in Osh Bazaar in Bishkek (a popular meeting point for Tablighi Jamaat members) attacked a feminist group whose logo resembled a cross. Weeks earlier, a group of Islamists also held a protest outside the U.S. embassy, accusing U.S.-funded NGOs of supporting a “gay agenda” and being “foreign agents.” Hizb ut-Tahrir has also forged an alliance with Syrian jihadist groups, and Kyrgyz are concerned it is helping to recruit dozens of Kyrgyz youths, particularly ethnic Uzbeks, to fight in Syria.

Only 4.5% of those polled believed that the IMU is the “most dangerous” religious group. The IMU is now based in Pakistan and has carried out several major attacks in northern Afghanistan against Afghan politicians and NATO troops and is involved in trafficking drugs from Afghanistan to Central Asian hubs, such as Osh, southern Kyrgyzstan. However, the IMU has not carried out an attack in Kyrgyzstan for more than 10 years. This may explain why Kyrgyz are more concerned about imminent ideological and political threats from intolerant groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir than the IMU. In addition, the survey was carried out only in Bishkek, but the IMU cells that the Kyrgyz security forces have broke up in recent years, as well as politicians connected to IMU drug traffickers, are almost all located in southern Kyrgyzstan.

It may therefore be result of incorrect assumptions or insufficient knowledge that most of the people surveyed said they do not expect the U.S withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 to impact on Kyrgyzstan’s security, but at the same time most of them expect an increase in drug trafficking emanating from Afghanistan after 2014. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



The logo of ‘Feminist SQ’— a group that was attacked by Islamists on International Women’s Day in Bishkek because its logo contained images that resembled a cross. One of the attackers reportedly said, “I’m wearing a Kalpak [traditional Kyrgyz hat]. That means I’m a Kyrgyz. Kyrgyz are Muslims.”(<http://bishkekfeminists.wordpress.com/>)

Source: “Соцопрос: верующие бишкекчане хотят видеть Кыргызстан светским” (Opinion Poll: The Bishkek Faithful Want to See Kyrgyzstan Secular),“ vb.kg, 28 March 2014.

Соцопрос: верующие бишкекчане хотят видеть Кыргызстан светским (Opinion Poll: The Bishkek Faithful Want to See Kyrgyzstan Secular)

The study involved 200 of Bishkek’s residents. Despite the fact that the sample is small, it is representative, as was stratified by sex, age, nationality and religious affiliation. Interestingly, in addition to Muslims and Christians, the survey included atheists and representatives of various faiths.

Almost half of respondents (47%) evaluated the religious security in the country as the average. 21% of respondents believe that the situation in this area is very severe. 20%, in contrast, believe that there are no problems in this regard. 12% say it is difficult to give any assessment .

The most dangerous religious organization, according to the respondents, was “Hizb ut-Tahrir.” At the same time, Muslim organizations are often suspected of radicalism, terrorism and the desire to seize power. Their evangelical brothers are accused of deception, fraud and imposition of ideas.

The researchers also wanted to know what are the predictions of Bishkek residents on the withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan. It turns out that they are very optimistic: almost two thirds of respondents (62%) believe that the withdrawal will not affect security in Kyrgyzstan. The pessimists (38%) had quite typical predictions: there will be an influx of militants like the “Taliban,” drugs and weapons, radicalism, terrorism and extremism as well as the activities of foreign agents from Afghanistan and America.

Hungarian Nationalist Party Fueling Ethnic Tensions in Hungary and Romania

12 March 2014

“The Roma minority in [Hungary] face an unprecedented amount of violence and discrimination.”

OE Watch Commentary: *The ultra-nationalist Jobbik Party in Hungary and Romania seeks the good of Hungarians in a manner that institutionalizes discrimination against Jews, Roma, and Gypsies, using its political power to limit minority rights. The Jobbik Party is the third largest political party in Hungary and is gaining political support from an increase in negative views toward minorities. The report mentioned in the first excerpt found that 60 percent of Hungarians believe criminality is in Gypsy blood and 40 percent support the banning of Roma in bars.*

*As the second excerpt indicates, this growing nationalism is leading to greater discrimination against minorities, seeping across the border into Romania. Ethnic Hungarians, supported by the Romanian Jobbik Party, are pushing for greater autonomy. These political views exacerbate ethnic tension, leading to violence in the case of a recent rally, resulting in demands to ban the entire political party from Romania. The Jobbik Party, using its political support to push a Hungarian-nationalist agenda, is meeting both fierce criticism and increasing support. In both Hungary and Romania the Jobbik Party is an ever increasing source of political and ethnic tension. **End OE Watch Commentary (Jackson)***

Source: Woodruff, Sasa. “Increased Hostility Against Jews And Roma In Hungary.” NPR. 9 Mar. 2014. Web. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/03/09/287342069/increased-hostility-against-jews-and-roma-in-hungary>

Ahead of next month’s parliamentary election in Hungary, a report published in February found the Roma minority in that Central European country face an unprecedented amount of violence and discrimination. While prejudice against Roma, pejoratively known as Gypsies, is widespread throughout Europe, the report says Hungary is more anti-immigrant and hostile toward minorities than elsewhere.

“In the last five years in Hungary, the establishment of vigilante groups and hate crimes against Roma and other minority groups has characterized a climate of increasing social and economic exclusion,” according to the report, from the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University.

. . . In the last year and a half, [Margaret] Matache [one of the reports authors,] says she and her colleagues have observed a decrease in rallies and violence against Roma, which she considers a good sign. But that trend has been coupled with legislative changes that worry her. The report says that changes to the constitution limiting minority rights and free speech should be cause for concern, even as violent attacks decrease: “In other countries such as Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, similar trends have been recorded: outright violence has been supplanted by anti-minority policies and legislation.”

Source: Popescu, Irina. “Romanian President Asks Government, Parliament to Ban Hungary’s Extremist Party Jobbik.” RomaniaInsider.com. 12 March 2014. Web. <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-president-asks-govt-parliament-to-ban-hungarys-extremist-party-jobbik/117170/>

Romanian President Traian Basescu has asked the Romanian Government and Parliament to ban Hungarian “extremist” party Jobbik and its members from the country . . . “Their behavior in Targu Mures justifies such a measure against Jobbik,” said the Romanian President.

Thousands of people participated Monday (March 10) at the events organized in Targu Mures to commemorate the Szeklers (Hungarians living mostly in the Szekler Land) killed in 1854 . . . During the events, people also asked autonomy for the ethnic Hungarians living in Romania . . . The rally turned violent when extremists started to push the gendarmes and throw firecrackers, as reported by the local media.

OE Watch Commentary: In a 15 January 2014 pronouncement, Kirill Barsky, Russia's envoy to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), stated that the SCO is not prepared to assume the responsibility of ensuring security in Afghanistan itself. The accompanying article discusses SCO preparations for the upcoming pullout of NATO forces from Afghanistan, and makes it clear that although the SCO has no plans to replace NATO in Afghanistan, SCO member states (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan) are aware that instability in Afghanistan could spill across Afghan borders, and they are investing in border security to prevent as much spillage as possible from flowing north.

In particular, the Russian strategy for preventing instability from crossing its southern borders from Afghanistan and Pakistan involves stopping instability from crossing into its southern, former Soviet neighbors. Tajikistan is Russia's first line of defense with this strategy. Russia has already increased the size of its forces in Tajikistan by upsizing the 201st Motorized Rifle Brigade (MRB) to a full-sized division, and is moving one of the new regiments closer to the Afghan border. Within the last month the 201st MRB has received 40 URAL-4320 trucks and 14 BTR-80s (armored personnel vehicle), and has increased training on the "Granat" and "Zastava" UAV reconnaissance platforms.

Russia is not only increasing its presence, but also building new infrastructure for its forces in Tajikistan, indicating plans to remain in the region for an extended period. As US and NATO investments in Central Asian security decrease, Russia increasingly finds itself needing to fill the security gap. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“We do not share the optimism of Western countries in their estimates of the prospects of a stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan. The activity of international terrorist and Islamic extremist organizations in the country remains high.... We forecast the increased activity of terrorists in proximity to Russia's borders...”

-Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu

Source: Vladimir Mukhin, "Buffer Mini-States Are Emerging in Central Asia. The SCO Countries Are Concerned at the Threats That Will Arise Following the Withdrawal of the International Force from Afghanistan," Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online, 2 April 2014, <http://www.ng.ru/>, accessed 15 April 2014.

Buffer Mini-States Are Emerging in Central Asia. The SCO Countries Are Concerned at the Threats That Will Arise Following the Withdrawal of the International Force from Afghanistan

...Yesterday the participants in the session analyzed the results of cooperation in the past year and considered the further development of interaction among the defense ministers of the SCO states. The ministers approved the general scenario of the Peace Mission joint anti-terrorist exercise, which will take place this year on the territory of the PRC. At the same time, the situation in Afghanistan was subjected to a detailed analysis...

“We do not share the optimism of Western countries in their estimates of the prospects of a stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan. The activity of international terrorist and Islamic extremist organizations in the country remains high,” RF Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu said in his speech...

The Russian minister said that an increase in the activity of the armed opposition in Afghan areas where a handover of responsibility to national security entities has occurred is observed. “We forecast the increased activity of terrorists in proximity to Russia's borders,” he added. It was learned here that the Russian defense department fully supports the Chinese initiative on the formation of the SCO Anti-Terror Center... Sergey Smirnov, first deputy FSB director, said at its outcome that the RATS SCO was concerned at the likelihood of a weakening of control over the security situation both on the territory of Afghanistan and in neighboring states, among which are SCO members Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The participants in the function adopted a decision on joint countermeasures to these negative trends. “We are planning serious measures, including monitoring in the border area and within Afghanistan.” The details of such plans are not being disclosed but it was stated at the SCO official level that Russia and China would be conducting a joint border operation in Afghanistan in 2014...

“One cannot exclude future Russian Federation involvement in a regional or a large-scale war...”

-Lieutenant-General Vladimir Ostankov

OE Watch Commentary: *The Russian Federation’s struggles with military manning issues began soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when former Russian President Boris Yeltsin decreed that the conscription system would be abolished and replaced with a system of full contract manning. Over the last twenty years there have been several pronouncements stating that the end of the conscription system was imminent, yet it is still alive and well. The debate to abolish conscription has generally been settled: the conscription system will continue, augmented by contract sergeants.*

The debate has now shifted to what mix of contract sergeants and conscripts is best for the Russian Armed Forces and how these personnel should be distributed throughout the ranks. The term “contract sergeant” is something of a misnomer; it implies these individuals are comparable to Western armies’ sergeants, and there is often a Western assumption that Russian contract sergeants are distributed throughout the ranks and are placed in positions of leadership over conscripts. A more accurate term for Russian contract sergeants would probably be “contract soldier,” because in the Russian system, units are designated as either “conscript” or “contract sergeant,” and there is apparently little mixing of these enlisted personnel types.

Due to the relatively short period of conscription, conscripts are being used less in combat roles, as generating effective performance in combat positions is generally believed to take substantially longer than the one-year conscription period. Instead of placing conscripts in combat positions, Russia is experimenting with placing them in just combat support and combat service support positions (cooks, drivers, laborers, etc.). There has been recent reporting that this method is

Source: Lieutenant-General Vladimir Ostankov, “There Are No Strategic Reserves: Problems of Manning and Building up Military-Trained Manpower Mobilization Resources and Ways of Solving Them,” VPK Voenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer Online, 19 March 2014, <http://vpk-news.ru/>, accessed 15 April 2014.

There Are No Strategic Reserves: Problems of Manning and Building up Military-Trained Manpower Mobilization Resources and Ways of Solving Them

On the whole, problems of manning and building up military-trained manpower mobilization resources require urgent resolution of a number of contradictions. On the one hand contradictions between limited RF conscripted manpower resources (fit for military service) and large manning requirements of the Armed Forces and other RF troops. On the other hand, contradictions between the requirement for military-trained manpower mobilization resources needed for deploying the requisite composition of troop (force) groupings to repel aggression against the Russian Federation, and insufficient Armed Forces capabilities for training and building them up in peacetime. One also should not forget about resolving the contradiction between Armed Forces financial and economic needs, particularly current expenditures, and RF capacities for meeting them...

Solvable Contradictions

For many years a resolution of this contradiction was seen in the transition to a contract method of manning the RF Armed Forces... But this solution contradicted the principle of citizens’ equal responsibility for defense of the state and was not backed up financially and economically. In particular, the low level of pay and social conditions of contract service was the main reason for failure of the experiment for RF Armed Forces transition to this method of manning... All this dictated the need for RF Armed Forces transition to a mixed method of manning, but this raises a problem of substantiating a reasonable ratio of privates and sergeants in conscripted and contract military service. The permissible size of the annual draft and of citizens’ recruitment for military service, acceptable (reasonable) socioeconomic conditions of servicemen’s service and everyday life, worthy pay, and corresponding social guarantees and benefits obviously can be the criteria for an effective solution.

Strategic Reserve

We know the Armed Forces order of battle and structure depend on the nature of wars in which it is planned to employ them. The RF Armed Forces currently are capable of performing missions only in armed conflicts and partly in local wars by general-purpose forces without substantial mobilization deployment. Meanwhile, one cannot exclude future RF involvement in a regional or a large-scale war, which will differ from armed conflicts and local wars not only in political and military-strategic objectives, but also in considerable spatial scope and long duration (from several months to several years)... The RF Armed Forces composition and structure which took shape as a result of the reforms of 2008-2012, however, permit only an insignificant wartime buildup of the order of battle of troop (force) groupings through complete mobilization of the arms and equipment storage and repair depots, and the absence of strategic reserves substantially limits the possibility of the Supreme High Command influencing the preparation and conduct of large-scale military operations. Therefore in the

(continued)

Continued: Russian Military Mobilization Capability

being tried, and favorably viewed, in the elite Russian Airborne and SPETSNAZ, and may already be being tried in the regular Ground Forces.

*As the accompanying article explains, the capability for mass mobilization to fight the large-scale wars of the last century is still on the minds of today's Russian military planner. The country's capability for mass mobilization is still a high priority as Russia struggles to find the right mix of forces to face the current threats of terrorism, separatism, and small-scale regional conflict, while also maintaining a capability to fight a large, drawn out conventional war if required. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)***

future, along with the strategic deterrence forces and general-purpose forces, there must be strategic reserves as part of the RF Armed Forces... Based on the size of peacetime Armed Forces, it is proposed to have permanent-readiness formations and military units in the strategic deterrence forces; permanent-readiness, reduced-strength, and cadre-strength formations and military units in the general-purpose forces; and cadre-strength formations and military units in the strategic reserves. In terms of functional purpose, those formations and military units are to be subdivided into immediate-employment forces with readiness times up to 24 hours, rapid-reaction forces with readiness times up to mobilization day +10, and reinforcing troops from the Operational Strategic Command (Military District) reserves and priority strategic reserves -- with readiness times of mobilization day +30 and from mobilization day +30 to mobilization day +60 respectively.

Russian Armed Forces Capability to Induct and Train Contract Personnel and Conscripts (Assuming a 54% Contract Personnel Staffing Level)

Information about military training and ascensions	Figures at end of target period		
	2016	2020	2025
Total strength of Armed Forces	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Percentage of enlisted personnel	78%	78%	78%
Number of enlisted personnel	780,000	780,000	780,000
Percentage of contract personnel	54%	54%	54%
Number of contract personnel	421,200	421,200	421,200
Length of conscripted military service	1 year	1 year	1 years
Length of contract service	5 years	5 years	5 years
Length of service in reserve	15 years	15 years	15 years
Duration mobilization resources remain in the reserve	3 years	4 years	5 years
Annual capacities for training and accumulating	443,040	443,040	443,040
Mobilization capacity for target period	1,329,120	1,772,160	2,215,200
Natural loss for target period (15%)	199,368	265,824	332,280
Mobilization resources at end of target period	2,089,752	3,038,821	3,908,801
Requirement for mobilization resources	1,820,000	2 800 000	3,900,000
Shortfall of mobilization resources	269,752	238,821	8,801
Required size of annual conscription call-up	443,040	443,040	443,040

(continued)

Continued: Russian Military Mobilization Capability

Russian Armed Forces Capability to Induct and Train Contract Personnel and Conscripts (Assuming a 100% Contract Personnel Staffing Level)			
Information about military training and ascensions	Figures at end of target period		
	2016	2020	2025
Total strength of Armed Forces	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Percentage of enlisted personnel	78%	78%	78%
Number of enlisted personnel	780,000	780,000	780,000
Percentage of contract personnel	100%	100%	100%
Number of contract personnel	780,000	780,000	780,000
Length of conscripted military service	1 year	1 year	1 year
Length of contract service	10 years	10 years	10 years
Length of service in reserve	15 years	15 years	15 years
Duration mobilization resources remain in the reserve	3 years	4 years	5 years
Annual capacities for training and accumulating	78,000	78,000	78,000
Mobilization capacity for target period	234,000	312,000	390,000
Natural loss for target period (15%)	35,100	46,800	58,500
Mobilization resources at end of target period	1,158,900	1,115,060	1,074,873
Requirement for mobilization resources	1,820,000	2,800,000	3,900,000
Shortfall of mobilization resources	-661,100	-1,684,940	-2,825,127
Required size of annual conscription call-up	78,000	78,000	78,000

Russian Armed Forces Capability to Induct and Train Officers			
Information about military training and ascensions	Figures at end of target period		
	2016	2020	2025
Total strength of Armed Forces	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
Percentage of officers	22%	22%	22%
Number of officers	220,000	220,000	220,000
Length of regular service of officers on active duty	20 years	20 years	20 years
Length of service of officers in reserve	15 years	15 years	15 years
Period mobilization resources remain in reserve	3 years	4 years	5 years
Annual capacity of military academies	11,000	11,000	11,000
Mobilization capacity resources for target period	33,000	44,000	55,000
Natural decline during the period (15%)	3,300	4,400	5,500
Mobilization resources at end of target period	149,700	149,380	149,087
Requirement for mobilization resources	430,000	650,000	950,000
Shortfall of mobilization resources	-280,300	-500,620	-800,913
Required ROTC capacity in civilian institutions	93,433.3	71,517.1	66,742.8

OE Watch Commentary: *The leadership of Russia's Republic of Tatarstan and Japan discussed bilateral cooperation in late March. As the accompanying excerpts show, Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov stressed to Japanese counterparts and business leaders that Tatarstan is a highly developed economy which can be helpful to Japan, and that Japan's investments will boost not only Tatarstan and other regions close to Europe, but also Russia's Far East.*

Tatarstan, by some accounts, emerged as one of Russia's most economically prosperous regions. Minnikhanov made his comments in the context of increasing cooperation between Japan and Russia in recent months.

In previous years relations between Russia and Japan have been strained, primarily because of a dispute over four uninhabited islands between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific. Soviet forces seized these islands from Japan on the tail end of World War II. Russia calls them the Southern Kurils and Japan—the Northern Territories. Feelings surrounding these islands were so high in both countries that Moscow and Tokyo did not sign a treaty ending World War II hostilities. Hostile relations persisted for decades afterwards. Only four years ago the then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev threatened to militarize these islands and received a strong protest from Tokyo.

Yet in recent months Japan and Russia turned a new leaf and began to cooperate in the face of a greater common threat—China. Tokyo is concerned about China's military growth, while Moscow is worried about China's economic growth and encroachment in its Far East, in addition to its military strength.

The Kremlin is seeking Japanese investment, especially in the oil and gas sector in the Far East, where Russia feels most vulnerable to China. Such investment is advantageous to Japan: given its geographic proximity to this region, Japan can cut costs for importing its energy, which it sorely needs. This is most likely why Minnikhanov stressed that Japanese investments could boost this region.

*Russia and Japan also increased military and security cooperation. For example, in September 2013 the two countries' foreign and defense ministers signed agreements on counterpiracy and counterterrorism cooperation. They also agreed to more regular consultation between their maritime staffs. Russia's other regions may soon follow Tatarstan's example when it comes to increasing ties with Japan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)***

Source: “РТ и Япония могут сотрудничать в растение и животноводстве - Р.Минниханов,” [Tatarstan and Japan can cooperate in crop and animal husbandry - R.Minnikhanov] Rt.rbc.ru, 19 March, 2014. http://rt.rbc.ru/tatarstan_freeneews/19/03/2014/912141.shtml

In Tatarstan, all conditions will be created to ensure long-term mutually beneficial cooperation for the benefit of both countries...Tatarstan's President noted that investments in agribusiness sector give a good push to development not only in the Far East, but in regions of the European part of Russia, such as Tatarstan, which should be no less interesting for Japanese partners because of their geographical position...

... “The history of cooperation between Tatarstan and Japan is based on the petrochemical, oil refining, machinery. Animal husbandry, crop production, processing of agricultural products – these are the directions that may become new vectors of our mutually beneficial partnership,” said [Tatarstan's President Rustam] Minnikhanov. As an example, [he] talked about the investment project for construction of an industrial complex for deep processing of the rapa seed, implemented on the territory of the republic.

Source: “Президент Минниханов рассказывает о Татарстане в Японии,” [President Minnikhanov Talk about Tatarstan in Japan] Regnum.ru, 19 March 2014 <http://regnum.ru/news/fd-abroad/1779947.html>

...Panel discussion “Improving the investment climate in Russia and the opening of new areas of investment cooperation between Russia and Japan,” held at the [6th Russo-Japanese Investment Forum in Tokyo], brought together representatives of Russia's and Japan's public authorities, regions and prefectures, leaders of major national corporations, financial institutions, and scientific and public organizations both countries. Moderator, senior columnist of TV channel NHK Ichiye Ishikawa, reminded the audience of the main objectives of the Forum - the promotion and strengthening of trade and economic relations and investment. Providing the floor to Rustam Minnikhanov, he noted that Tatarstan is a highly developed region, which embodies the real road maps for economic modernization.

Minnikhanov confirmed in his statement that Tatarstan is aimed at creating an innovation-oriented economy integrated into the global system. He assured the panelists that the Republic guarantees to investors all the necessary conditions for success : good infrastructure , land , developed roadmaps , professional staff , as well as the maximum attention from the government of the republic...

Russia-China Gas Deal: Implications for Western Sanctions against Russia

OE Watch Commentary: Russian President Vladimir Putin will travel to China in May. According to Russian and Western press reports, his visit may culminate in a historic gas deal, ending ten years of difficult negotiations between the two countries. The accompanying excerpts present the Russian media perspective.

China's National Petroleum Corporation and Russia's Gazprom, its national state oil and gas monopolist, have been negotiating an agreement which, if signed, will be the first accord of its kind between Russia and China. The agreement would provide for building a gas pipeline from Russia to China, ensuring the supply of Russian gas to China. Historically, the price of gas has been the stumbling block in these discussions.

Last year, in particular, Chinese and Russian officials intensified discussions. According to a 16 October *Xinhua* report, Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli said that China is willing to expand all-around energy cooperation with Russia; he hopes the two sides can work together to ensure the increase of Russian oil supplies to China, expand cooperation in upstream oil projects and set a refinery joint venture in Tianjin as a pilot project.

According to the second excerpt, from **Torgovo-Promyshlennye Vedomosti (Commerce and Trade News)**, a publication of Russia's Commerce and Industry, Russia wants not only to sell gas to China but also to gain access to broader Chinese markets. For its part, China, as a major gas consumer whose energy needs are growing, would like to benefit from Russia's gas. According to Western press reports, China is also interested in developing energy projects in Crimea.

Torgovo-Promyshlennye Vedomosti adds an important political context. If the deal goes through, according to the publication, it will diminish the impact of Western sanctions on Russia in response to Putin's annexation of Crimea. Some Western press reports have missed this connection. **End OE Watch Commentary (Borshchevskaya)**



Russian proposed oil and natural gas pipelines to China. Eiichi Hasegawa, 20 March 2014. Source: US Energy Information Administration

Source: “Россия и Китай могут подписать газовый договор в мае” (Russia and China May Sign a Gas Contract in May) Interfax.ru, 25 March, 2014. <http://www.interfax.ru/world/367064>

During the upcoming May visit to China by Russian President Vladimir Putin, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Gazprom may sign a contract to build a gas pipeline from Russia to China and to supply Russian gas [to China], Interfax, announced the supervisor of the economic bloc minister-counselor of Chinese embassy in Moscow, Zhang Di.

According to him, judging by how the current in discussions are going between the two companies, we can conclude that the parties' positions are converging quickly, and the progress is obvious. “Therefore, the signing of the contract during the visit of Russian President to China in May is quite possible,” said the diplomat.

However, he noted that, “as before, what can become a major obstacle is that the price of gas has not yet been agreed upon.”...

(continued)

Continued: Russia-China Gas Deal: Implications for Western Sanctions against Russia

Source: Sergei Turin, "Россия и Китай в ожидании подписания газового контракта века" (Russia and China Awaiting Signing the Gas Contract of the Century) *Torgovo-Promyshlennye Vedomosti* (Commerce and Trade News), 9 April, 2014. http://www.tpp-inform.ru/analytic_journal/4482.html

Energy - main and breakthrough priority

The mechanism of coordination and cooperation in the oil and gas sector at the level of deputy heads of government - "Energydialog" - was formed in 2008 during a visit to China by President Dmitry Medvedev.... In general, energy is considered by the Chinese partners as a breakthrough field of Russian- Chinese cooperation.

Geopolitical contract

The project of "geopolitical importance" - the signing of the gas contract. One of the major and most anticipated projects - the signing of an agreement on deliveries of Russian natural gas to China: about 38 billion cubic meters annually, which is nearly a quarter of natural gas consumption in China in 2013 and over 20% of Russia's gas exports.....

According to experts' opinions, the signing of this contract will mean that the center of world development is shifting to the East, and Western sanctions may not be as significant for Russia (in the case that they go beyond "personal" sanction wars and point measures)

Contract negotiations have been going on for over ten years. And this will be the first major gas deal between the two countries: Russia now exports to China only liquefied natural gas from the Sakhalin (within the framework of the project Sakhalin -2).

Experts note that the price is not a major issue in gas negotiations, although it is important. China is interested in gaining access to resources by not just buying and involved in mining. Russia is ready to provide access, but not solely to enable China to buy gas. Russia wants to get more opportunities in the Chinese market, which it will continue to develop.

OE Watch Commentary: From 1 April through 15 July Russian defense officials plan to conscript 154,000 young Russian men into military service. Given the 24/7 patriotic rhetoric in the Kremlin-controlled media over the past couple of months, one could easily surmise that defense officials will have little problem meeting this quota. According to many of the Russian media, the country is on the verge of war, and all Russians must be prepared to defend against the “neo-Nazi threat” in neighboring Ukraine.

However, even with the menace of possible conflict, defense officials continue to face manpower challenges, primarily stemming from a shrunken demographic pool of available young Russian men. The current cohort was conceived during the economically strained late 1990s. This smaller manpower pool is aggravated by a continued reluctance to serve in the military. The communist experiment, followed by a decade of economic and political instability, distorted the social contract between the state and citizen among many Russians. As the first excerpt points out, draft-dodging remains a problem and likely reflects the skepticism among young Russian men (and their parents) that the state is genuinely concerned about their health and welfare when they serve in the conscript military.

Over the past decade Russian defense officials have implemented a number of reforms to address this skepticism. Whether allowing draftees to use cell phones or encouraging parents to visit their sons during their conscript training, the Russian military leadership has worked hard to improve the image and trust of the military. The second excerpt, taken from an interview with Major General Aleksandr Linkov, Chief of the Central Military District Organization and Mobilization Directorate, indicates overall progress in this area.

Alongside the patriotic rhetoric there have been a number of genuine improvements in Russian conscript duty. Not only have draftee living conditions improved (e.g., showers on demand, better food, etc.), but the government has also now tied completion of military service to state employment and advanced educational opportunities. Slowly but surely trust and the prestige associated with wearing a military uniform are returning to Russian consciousness.

End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)



Young Russian men report for conscript duty in Stavropol, April 2014. Source: stavropol-eparhia.ru

Source: Natalya Zvereva “На Южном Урале с каждым годом становится всё больше уклонистов,” [Every Year There Are More Draft Evaders in Southern Urals] Argumenty i Fakty Online, 25 Mar 2014.

...There were twice as many evaders in the oblast’s military enlistment office during the last autumn call-up as in the preceding spring. ...

“We have very many conscripts who did not respond properly to the summons to the military enlistment office,” Gulin said. For more than a year now the military enlistment offices have been short of 8,353 conscripts. They have been put on the wanted list. Clearly, most of those youngsters were aware that their summons had arrived. We urge employers not to employ dishonest young people and the management of higher education establishments to promptly report expelled students.”

Source: Yuriy Belousov, “Государством Хребет,” [The State’s Backbone Region] Krasnaya Zvezda Online, 6 March 2014.

One should also add to this the increased activeness of conscripts’ parents, who today take advantage of the right that they have been granted to attend sessions of draft commissions when decisions about their sons are being made. Thus, in the course of the fall draft campaign 432 representatives of public organizations and more than 5,600 parents participated in the work of draft commissions on a permanent basis. It can be said without false modesty that this is a worthy indication of our openness to society. When conscripts’ parents complete the joint procedures there is most often a decline in the number of possible requests for clarification and unclear questions that are put to us.

OE Watch Commentary: For the past two months the Russian information sphere has been packed with high visibility stories, dealing first with the successful Winter Olympics in Sochi and second with all the events surrounding the situation in Ukraine and Crimea. Under the onslaught of this information overload, the announcement that the corruption charges against the former Russian Minister of Defense Anatoliy Serdyukov were being dropped barely received the attention it merited. Indeed, in a calmer information environment this story would have made the top headlines.

The focus of the charges against Serdyukov dealt with allegations of misappropriation of government funds. When the story was initially reported in October 2012, many Russian commentators suggested that such a high-level investigation and subsequent removal of the defense minister were proof that the Kremlin was serious about fighting corruption. As the inquiry continued, many sordid details emerged, and it appeared certain that Serdyukov and some of his close associates would be punished accordingly. (For background on this incident, see the Special Essay in December 2012 OEW, "Russian TV Media and the Removal of the Russian Defense Minister.") As 2013 drew to a close, most Russian military commentators assumed that it was merely a matter of time before trial proceedings on corruption charges would begin against Serdyukov.

During the year-long media frenzy and despite intense public pressure, Serdyukov never wavered in his support of the Kremlin leadership. When he was appointed as defense minister in 2007, one of his primary mandates was to clean up the corruption within this ministry. Prior to this appointment he had worked as the country's chief tax inspector, and in both of these positions he likely had access to considerable compromising information on other high-level officials. His reticence and continued loyalty to the current administration have been noteworthy and presumably played a role in his amnesty.

As the excerpt from the accompanying article suggests, the decision to downplay this decision was predicated upon concerns that Serdyukov's amnesty would cast doubts on the government's current campaign to fight corruption. Fortunately for the Kremlin leadership, the Russian information space has been filled with more urgent matters. Once the present furor subsides, however, the decision to pardon Russia's defense minister could prove to be problematic. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Former Russian Defense Minister A. Serdyukov.
Source: runews24.ru

Source: "Ex Defense Minister's Amnesty Kept Secret in Order not to 'Upset' Russian Public," RIA Novosti, 7 March 2014.

Ex Defense Minister's Amnesty Kept Secret

The anticorruption campaign conducted by the Russian authorities will not be curtailed in the wake of former Defense Minister Anatoliy Serdyukov's amnesty but demonstrative punishment won't be the main scenario of the fight against corruption, according to experts polled by RIA Novosti.

Earlier it became known that Serdyukov was amnestied at the beginning of this year but information to this effect was not made public on agreement between the investigation and the defense. The amnesty was kept secret, according to the ex-minister's lawyer, because the investigation and the defense did not want "to upset the public." Serdyukov was charged under Part 1 Article 293 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (negligence). According to the investigation, he gave instructions to build an automobile road, using budget money, to an island where the Zhitnoye non-commercial partnership is located (in Astrakhan Region).

According to Vladimir Slatinov, an expert with the Institute of Humanitarian and Political Studies, the case of the former defense minister was "a heavy burden that lay on the authorities." "They could not just drop it because it was the Serdyukov case that became the indicator the public used to judge the seriousness of the Russian authorities' anticorruption intentions," he said.

According to president of the National Strategy Institute Mikhail Remizov, Serdyukov was a landmark case. "The fact that he is not liable will be perceived by society as a signal from the negative side," he said. . . .

Serdyukov's lawyer Genrikh Padva said at a sitting of the Defense Lawyers' Club. . . . "Indeed, some time ago the case of my client Anatoliy Serdyukov was dropped under an amnesty. There was a gentlemen's agreement between the investigation and the defense to the effect that for the time being this fact should not be widely publicized. . . . The best thing to do was to quietly drop the case. The [Sochi Winter] Olympics were about to start, everyone was busy with the Olympics and there was no time for us. It was decided that in the circumstances extra publicity would only do harm," the lawyer said. . . .

OE Watch Commentary: In March 2012, shortly after being appointed as Vice Premier in charge of Russia's defense industry in December 2011, Dmitry Rogozin was also assigned as the Kremlin's special representative for the quasi-independent region of Transnistria (Dniester Region) in Moldova. Over the previous two decades Rogozin has been one of Russia's more vocal defenders of this enclave, visiting the region on numerous occasions and assuring the approximately 200,000 ethnic Russians living there that the Kremlin would never abandon them.

Since the brief, though vicious war between Moldova and Transnistria in 1992, Russia, along with Moldova, has maintained a robust peacekeeping presence in the region. Today there are some 1500 Russian military stationed in this region, both providing peacekeeping support and guarding vast weapon and ammunition supplies. Although the fighting has long ended, tensions remain, and there has been little progress in determining the final political status of this unrecognized statelet. While Moldova hopes to incorporate this region back within its borders (though granting it wide autonomy), local officials from Transnistria have continued to argue for either independence or unification with Russia.

Russia's ongoing conflict with Ukraine has now exacerbated this situation. Shortly after Russia seized Crimea in early March, Ukrainian authorities closed their borders with Transnistria, effectively cutting this region off from much needed Russian supplies. As the brief excerpt makes clear, the pro-Russian leadership in Transnistria under the breakaway region's president, Mr. Sevciuk, is calling for a "civilized divorce" from Moldova. He claims that the Kremlin has an obligation to protect Russian citizens in the region. Similar to the Kremlin's stance, Sevciuk is against Moldova's movement toward the EU and/or Romania. On repeated occasions the leadership in Transnistria has again proclaimed its independence from Moldova and its desire to be reunited with Russia. This stance resembles the formula used by



Source: Anton Krylov, "Reservation Must Not Be Organized in Center of Europe; Dniester Region President Relates How Russia's Reunification With Crimea Will Affect Tiraspol's Status," Vzglyad Online, 30 March 2014.

Interview with Eugen Sevciuk, president of the Dniester Region

[Krylov] Can it be said that the Dniester Moldovan Republic is currently being blockaded by Ukraine?

[Sevciuk] The Dniester Region has been the object of permanent blockades practically throughout its existence.... Today the situation has been exacerbated by the fact that restrictive measures now extend to citizens' freedom of movement. In particular, this affects Russian citizens and men of draft age. These restrictions are painful for us because there are approximately 200,000 Russian citizens living in the Dniester Region.

[Krylov] How will Russia's reunification with Crimea affect relations between Russia and the Dniester Region?

[Sevciuk] Relations between Russia and the Dniester Region are enjoying positive development dynamics. An agreement was concluded last year between Dmitriy Olegovich Rogozin, vice premier of the Russian Federation Government and the Russian Federation president's special representative for the Dniester Region, and the president of the Dniester Region to widen socioeconomic cooperation. Within the framework of this agreement the Russian side is planning to give assistance in creating the conditions to improve the lives of Russian citizens resident in the Dniester Region and compatriots.

As for Crimea, we residents of the Dniester Region wholly support the position of the Russian Federation leadership in that every state is obliged to protect its citizens, wherever they may be. All civilized countries do this. The Russian Federation also does this. In our view, it cannot be otherwise.

[Krylov] What forecasts can you make with regard to the development of the situation around the Dniester Region?

(continued)

Continued: Russian Intentions Outside Ukraine?

the pro-Russian leadership in Crimea in March 2014, where locals held a referendum to pledge their allegiance to Russia.

The Kremlin has adopted a multi-vector approach to resolving this issue in its favor. They continue to support this separatist movement, while hindering any proposal which would place this region back under Moldova's control. To break or circumvent the blockade of Transdnistria, Russia has now been working to change the political structure of Ukraine. Kremlin authorities argue that, given the relatively high percentage of ethnic Russians living in Ukraine's eastern and southern regions, the country must adopt a federation form of government. Such a model would presumably grant greater authority in the pro-Russian, eastern and southern regions of Ukraine, while keeping the central government in Kiev pointed toward Russia. The federation would also provide the Kremlin with open access in and out of Transdnistria.

*For the past 20 years nationalist leaders like Dmitry Rogozin have been arguing that the Kremlin has a responsibility to protect ethnic Russians living abroad in republics of the former USSR. Up until quite recently these statements were mostly designed for rhetorical purposes and domestic politics. However, Russia's annexation of Crimea, its ongoing involvement in Ukraine and more vocal support of Transdnistria indicate that the Kremlin's rhetoric may lead to further instability outside of Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***

[Sevciuk] We can see how events are developing. It is obvious today that Moldova intends to delegate significant powers to the EU in the sphere of the economy. Ukraine is also advancing dynamically in the same direction. Moldova is also widening military cooperation with Romania, while at the same time having no interstate treaty on borders with it. In our opinion, Moldova is to all intents and purposes delegating its military powers through Romania to the corresponding bloc of states. In our view external conditions and the risks that are emerging in connection with the adoption of such decisions by our neighbors predetermine the need to consider the socioeconomic and political aspects.

I believe that a reservation must not be organized in the center of Europe because the people of the Dniester Region have their own preferences and convictions. The will of the people, the opinion of the citizens who live here, must be respected. I believe that the formula of a civilized "divorce," which I have aired repeatedly, is one of the best options for a settlement both for Moldova and for the Dniester Region. There have been such examples – the Czech Republic and Slovakia. We must appreciate the reality of the situation, not prevent one another from developing our own economy, and set about shaping the conditions for developing the human potential within the state....

OE Watch Commentary: *In response to Russia's annexation of Crimea, Western countries have levied economic sanctions against key Russian individuals and institutions. Should Russia press further into Ukraine, the West is threatening to expand and widen these sanctions. These economic penalties are designed to impress upon Russian officials the high costs of their aggression against Ukraine. There are doubts, however, as to the effectiveness of this form of economic punishment, and, according to some Russian experts, sanctions against the Kremlin could ultimately serve to weaken the dollar as the global reserve currency.*

For the past decade certain pro-Kremlin economists have been advocating the development of a new international reserve currency to replace the dollar. Economist and presidential adviser Sergey Glazyev has argued that the current global economic system provides the US with an unfair advantage. Many countries use the dollar as part of their currency reserves, and much international trade is denominated in dollars. According to Glazyev, since the dollar is no longer fixed against a stable commodity (e.g., gold), US officials can run their currency presses virtually non-stop. He contends that international faith in the dollar has weakened as the US debt expands, and that Russia should not only liquidate its dollar holdings, but also encourage other countries to do likewise. He also contends that Russia must conduct its international trade (especially fossil fuels) using either the ruble or other non-US currency (e.g., Euro or Chinese yuan). According to Glazyev, now that the US has applied economic sanctions against Russia, the Kremlin leadership should respond asymmetrically by redoubling its efforts in promoting a different global currency.

*Whereas in the past most international energy commodities were traded in dollars, the brief excerpt points out that China and Russia may now trade using their own currencies. Glazyev hopes to convince his Chinese counterparts that if they truly want to attain economic independence, they should also begin to replace their dollar reserves with other currencies like the ruble. According to this Russian economist, the blowback from the economic sanctions against Russia could weaken the overall strength of the US dollar as the global reserve currency. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)***



Presidential economic adviser, Sergey Glazyev. Source: RIA Novosti

Source: Olga Samofalova, "За нефть и оружие," [For oil and weapons] Vzglyad, 2 April 2014. <http://www.vz.ru/economy/2014/4/2/680216.html>

For oil and weapons

...The fact that Russia must extend the ruble zone and move to settlements in rubles with our European partners, said presidential aide Sergei Glazyev earlier in March. He is convinced that the threat of economic sanctions against Russia gives positive motivation to finally solve the long-standing problem of creating internal mechanisms of economic growth.

In his opinion, it is necessary to deal with the dollar oligarchy. "Unfortunately, those people who sell oil and gas, are accustomed to trading in the dollar currency. It is convenient. Developed a whole system of maintaining these calculations, many are interested in them"....

According Glazyev, the transition to the calculations of export oil and gas in rubles, "would create a powerful incentive for the expansion of our financial opportunities to monetize our economy, to enhance the value of loans"...

...Therefore, a gradual transition of Russian exporters and importers in the ruble calculations - this is only the first step that will protect at least the Russian financial system against hostile U.S. actions. But this step should be accompanied by new actions....

Russia should join at least with China not only in terms of ruble settlements, but also to convince Beijing to store rubles as a reserve. Ultimately, as rightly points out Glazyev, the ruble must be transformed if not into the global, then at least into the leading Eurasian currency. ...

Russia Expands World's Largest Icebreaker Fleet

“Near Ice Breaking Deal: The state nuclear power company Rosatom is about to reach a deal with United Shipbuilding Corporation on the construction of two powerful icebreakers...”

OE Watch Commentary: Russia already has the world's largest icebreaker fleet and largest icebreaker. It is about to construct two new nuclear-powered icebreakers that will be the most powerful in the world. Apparently the goal is to provide the means to keep the Northeast Passage open for transit year round. The Northwest Passage, north of Canada, has been open for two weeks in September during six of the last seven years. Both routes can save 3000-4000 miles in transit between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to the benefit of commerce and fleet reinforcement.

Year-round use of the Northeast Passage would provide major economic and security advantages. Since 1989 the icebreaker fleet has offered Arctic tourism—a three week cruise on a large icebreaker for \$25,000. Drawings of the new icebreakers indicate ample room for the tourists. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

Source: Olga Samofalova, “За нефть и оружие,” [For oil and weapons] Vzglyad, 2 April 2014. <http://www.vz.ru/economy/2014/4/2/680216.html>

Near Ice Breaking Deal

The Russian newspaper Kommersant reports that after lengthy negotiations, two Russian state enterprises are about to compromise. Two LK-60 icebreakers will be built at the Baltic Ship Yard in Saint Petersburg for a price of 2 billion rubles below the original estimate. The long negotiations between the sides have already put the project one year behind schedule.

In early 2013, the Russian government allocated 86.1 billion rubles for the project. However, Rosatom insisted that the two vessels should cost only 77.5 billion, an offer which was declined by the Baltic Yard. A second offer with an adjusted starting price of 84.4 billion rubles was announced in December 2013. According to Kommersant, this is the final price which has now been agreed on by all the sides.

The new icebreakers will be the most powerful in the world and are key instruments in Russia's enhanced activity level in the Arctic.

Russian Airborne Troops Explore North Pole and Franz Josef Land

OE Watch Commentary: *A past issue of OE Watch discussed the successful drop of airborne vehicles and equipment, as well as a parachute battalion from the 98th Airborne Division, on Kotelny Island. The airborne are now conducting extended reconnaissance in the region. The Arctic has been designated an Operational-Strategic Command, and activity in the region increases. End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)*

Source: <http://www.ng.ru/> Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online in Russian, April 7, 2014. Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online is the Russian-language website of the daily Moscow newspaper featuring varied independent political viewpoints and criticism of the government.

A reconnaissance group of Airborne Troops [VDV] in cooperation with Russian Air Force transport aviation and the Expeditionary Center of the Russian Geographical Society has begun active exploration of the Arctic. Their mission includes “testing the suitability of drifting ice floes for landing people and cargo in Arctic latitudes in order to conduct search and rescue operations.” A mass landing by army units on the Arctic ice cap has not yet been done by any state in the world. However, according to the Defense Ministry, such a possibility is being studied by the VDV headquarters.

President Vladimir Putin stated “Russia is ever more actively opening up this promising region, is returning to it, and must have all the levers there to protect its security and national interests.” At the end of 2013, Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu reported to Putin that airfields and berthing facilities will be restored in the Arctic in 2014, in Franz Josef Land and the New Siberian Islands, plus airfields in Naryan-Mar, Alykel, Amderma, Anadyr, Rogachevo, and Nagurskaya (Franz Josef Land). In turn, Navy Admiral Viktor Chirkov announced that the Russian Army’s nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence group of forces will also expand in the Arctic as the “polar areas could potentially be used to generate new threats to the entire territory of Russia.” According to the commander, the Arctic is an area of exceptionally important political, economic, and security interests of Russia, protection of which is an important role belongs to the Northern and Pacific Fleets and Aerospace Defense Troops. In turn, Air Force Lieutenant-General Viktor Bondaryev announced that Tu-95MS strategic aviation aircraft patrol parts of the Arctic Ocean.

Now the airborne infantry is also building up in the region. Last Saturday [5 April] a reconnaissance group of the VDV command was airlifted on an Air Force An-74 military transport aircraft from Olenegorsk (Murmansk oblast) to the Russian drifting polar station, Barneo. This station is less than 100 kilometers from the North Pole and was launched on 3 April 2014. According to the Defense Ministry, the first group of VDV specialists on military transport aviation aircraft will circumnavigate the shoreline and waters of the Barents Sea, followed by the shoreline of Franz Josef Land and the central waters of the Arctic Ocean. The exploration of the ice will continue until mid-April...

UN Recognition for Arctic Expansion

17 March 2014

OE Watch Commentary: On 14 March the UN officially recognized Russia's resource rights to the Sea of Okhotsk's continental shelf area and handed over documentation that recognized Russia's claim, as announced by Russian Minister of Natural Resources Sergei Donskoi. The UN's Boundary Commission approved of the ownership claim on 11 March. According to the article, the borders established by the Commission are final. Since the territory extended beyond 200 nautical miles, the maximum distance off the coast that allows for a country to have resource rights, as set by the UN's 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, the UN required Russia to go through the approval process. Russia submitted the bid to legally claim ownership of the area in 2001. The region is about 52,000 square kilometers and, as reported by Russia's foreign minister, is rich in valuable minerals. With the UN's approval, Russia now has the exclusive development rights to this region.

Russia has sought this resource-rich area since 2001, when it submitted its official bid for its ownership. According to Donskoi, this is the first step towards Russia achieving its Arctic goals, which, as stated in the accompanying article, will be prepared in the near future. The amount of funding for the Arctic program, "Socio-economic Development of the Arctic Zone until 2020," is about 1.8 trillion rubles, about 623 billion of which are from the federal budget, according to the related article. The program includes four development facets: developing the extractive and high value industry sectors of the economy; developing supportive Arctic infrastructure; developing vital local infrastructure in the Arctic; and creating a system to manage state legislation implementation in the region's economic development. According to the accompanying source, the program currently focuses on four Arctic regions: the Murmansk region and the Nenets, Yamal-Nenets, and Chukotka autonomous districts; it also partially includes the Arkhangelsk region, Krasnoyarsk, and Yakutia.

In the past Russia has increased its focus on building a strong military, economic and political presence in the Arctic. Acquiring this resource-rich territory only furthers that goal. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kangas)**

Source: ООН признала 52 тысячи кв км Охотского моря частью российского шельфа," [UN recognizes 52,000 sq. kilometers of the Okhotsk Sea shelf as part of Russia)] RIA Novosti, March 15, 2014, <http://ria.ru/economy/20140315/999591890.html>

On Friday, the UN Commission on Russia's continental shelf officially handed over a document recognizing the enclave of 52,000 square kilometers in the middle of the Sea of Okhotsk as Russian territory said the head of the Ministry of Natural Resources, Sergei Donskoi.

Previously, the continental shelf was unclaimed by any country, but now the resources of the region will be under Russia's jurisdiction. "Russian law now applies to resources that are located under the bottom of the Sea of Okhotsk," said the Minister.

The funding for the state program "Socio-economic development of Russia's Arctic zone until 2020" amounts to 1.8 trillion rubles, of which about 623 billion will come from the federal budget. The program includes four sub-programs: the development of priority economy sectors (mining and manufacturing sectors), development of the supporting infrastructure in the Arctic, Arctic local development of vital-infrastructure, and creating a system of managing implementation of state policy in the Arctic's socio-economic development.

Source: "Признанный российским шельфом участок Охотского моря богат ископаемыми," [Russia's Sea of Okhotsk's continental shelf rich in fossil fuels] RIA Novosti, March 17, 2014, http://ria.ru/arctic_news/20140317/999854684.html

The UN- recognized Russian Sea of Okhotsk continental shelf, a land area of about 52,000 square kilometers, is rich in valuable minerals, reported Russia's Foreign Minister.

On March 11, the Boundary Commission of the continental shelf unanimously approved Russia's claim in relation to the continental shelf in the Sea of Okhotsk. The Commission agreed with Russia's technical and legal justification for the request. According to the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the borders established by a coastal state and approved by the Commission are final and binding.

"Russia's bid for the enclave in the central part of the Okhotsk Sea was satisfied. It was a plot of the continental self with an area of about 52,000 square kilometers located beyond 200 nautical miles from the coast of Russia. It's been estimated that the area is rich in valuable minerals and other natural resources, of which the exclusive development rights now belong to Russia," said the Foreign Ministry.

The Return of the “Dead Hand”

“The “Perimetr” checks for the presence of four conditions: whether or not a nuclear attack occurred and whether or not there are communications with the General Staff. If the communications exist, the system is turned off. If the General Staff does not answer, the “Perimetr” queries the “Kazbek” system. If there is no answer, the artificial intelligence transfers the right to make the decision to a person located in the command bunker. And only after this does it begin to operate.”

OE Watch Commentary: In 2009 David Hoffman, a contributing editor at the **Washington Post**, wrote a book titled, **The Dead Hand**. Hoffman explained how in the 1980s Soviet leaders feared they could perish in a decapitating nuclear attack before having a chance to respond. To guarantee a response, leaders drew up plans for a fully automated system, known as the Dead Hand, where a computer alone could issue an order to launch. After much soul searching Soviet leaders adjusted their thinking and created a modified system. The decision to launch land-based missiles was placed on a small crew of duty officers who theoretically would survive a nuclear strike. Located deep underground, the system was tested in November 1984 and placed on duty a few months later.

Now, some five years after the publication of Hoffman’s book, the Dead Hand is back in the news. Three articles have recently appeared in the Russian media about the system. The first, written in January 2014 by Anton Valagin in **Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online**, calls the Dead Hand system, known as “Perimetr” in Russia (the Japanese call the system the “Hand from the Grave”), a Third World War deterrent. The system, he notes, was based on the UR-100UTTKh missile, known in NATO as the Spanker missile. The “Perimetr” system is a reserve system, which can be launched in case the “Kazbek” main strategic missile command and control system and the “Cheget” nuclear suitcase are destroyed. The system is based on command ballistic missiles that fly over Russia with transmitters in their payloads that disseminate a command to launch available combat missiles based on the reception of specific criteria. Of special (and distressing) note is that Valagin states that the human factor is excluded or is minimal in its operation. Yelena Slobodyan, writing in March 2014 in **Argumenty i Fakty Online**, wrote a shortened version of Valagin’s article, and it is cited here. Finally, in late March, Valagin wrote a more detailed explanation of the system in which he noted that information is transmitted by enciphered symbols that are impossible to jam, and that there are three Chegets constantly on combat alert (Head of State, Minister of Defense, Chief of the General Staff). **End OE Watch Commentary. (Thomas)**

Source: Yelena Slobodyan, “What Is the Perimetr System and How Does It Work?” **Argumenty i Fakty Online**, 17 March 2014.

“Perimetr,” or “Dead Hand” as it is called in the USA, is a Strategic Missile Troops (RVSN). system for automated command and control of a massed nuclear strike. In the summary broadcast of Vesti Nedeli, the host Dmitriy Kiselev said that “Russia can transform the USA into radioactive dust” using its “Perimetr” system of guaranteed nuclear retribution. **Argumenty i Fakty Online** has explained what this system is all about.

What is the “Perimetr?”

The technical assets and software of this system allow the initiation of missile launches under any conditions. According to the concept of the creators of “Perimetr,” the preparations for the launch and the launch itself of missiles can be accomplished even if no one is left alive on Earth. A retaliatory nuclear strike is possible given the complete destruction of the command centers and the lines of communications. This function of the system explains its unofficial name abroad, “Dead Hand.”

When was the “Perimetr” System Created?

The development of a guaranteed retaliatory strike system began at the height of the Cold War, when it became known that electronic warfare means could block the command and control system for the strategic nuclear forces. The “Perimetr” system is a reserve system. It is launched in the event of the destruction of the “Kazbek” main strategic missile command and control system and the combat command and control systems for the RVSN, the Navy, and the Air Force. In essence the “Perimetr” system is an alternative command system for all combat arms having nuclear warheads in their inventories. According to unconfirmed data the “Perimetr” system, developed around 1983, has no less than four command missiles, which duplicate each other’s functions. A system similar in function exists in the USA. It is called the Emergency Rocket Communications System.

How does the “Perimetr” System Operate?

The “Perimetr” System is based on command ballistic missiles, but they do not fly toward the enemy, but above Russia, and instead of thermonuclear warheads, transmitters are located in their nose cones, which send a launch command to everyone having combat missiles: in silos, aircraft, submarines and in mobile ground-based systems. After the receipt of the signal from such a missile an automatic launch is conducted.

(continued)

Continued: The Return of the “Dead Hand”

Related article: Why is Russia deploying new radar stations along the perimeter of the country?

The launch of the command missiles is accomplished using a complex software system based on artificial intelligence. The system was initially designed to be fully automated and in the event of a massed attack it is capable of independently making the decision for a retaliatory strike, without the participation (or with minimal participation) of a human. After receiving the signal the automated system analyzes a multitude of various information: concerning seismographic and radiation activity, atmospheric pressure, the intensity of radio exchanges on military frequencies, data of the missile attack warning system, etc. On the basis of such analysis the system makes a conclusion and in the event of necessity it is activated and it launches the command to prepare for missile launches.

Immediately prior to launching of a retaliatory strike, the “Perimetr” checks for the presence of four conditions: whether or not a nuclear attack occurred and whether or not there are communications with the General Staff. If the communications exist, the system is turned off. If the General Staff does not answer, the “Perimetr” queries the “Kazbek” system. If there is no answer, the artificial intelligence transfers the right to make the decision to a person located in the command bunker. And only after this does it begin to operate.

The “Kazbek” system, or the “nuclear briefcase,” is a device that stores the codes for putting the nuclear arsenal into action. It was created in the USSR at the beginning of the 1980’s based on an analogous USA system. The system allows the head of state to obtain information concerning a missile attack and to give the command for a nuclear strike, regardless of where he is located, with the help of the so-called “nuclear briefcase” and a radio electronics terminal named “Cheget.” From it an encoded personal Presidential codeword is sent to a central command center and is further disseminated to command and control centers for ground-based missiles and missile submarines.

Crimea Does not Deflect Russian Attention from the Arctic

“We proceed from the premise that polar areas may potentially be used to create new threats to the entire territory of the Russian Federation. Bearing in mind the military geographic conditions of the Arctic theater of operations, forces of the North and Pacific Fleets and the Aerospace Defense Forces of the Russian Armed Forces will have the leading role and make the biggest contribution to the provision of military security of our country in the Arctic. The Arctic is a sphere of crucial political, economic, and defense interests of our country under modern circumstances.”

OE Watch Commentary: For the past three or four years Russia has focused increasing attention on the Arctic. Some of the headlines in 2014 underscore this focus and include the following: new strategic command to be created based on the Northern Fleet; new communications system developed for servicemen in the Arctic; application finalized for an Arctic economic zone expansion; new military grouping planned for the Arctic; military presence in the Arctic to expand by the end of 2014; airborne and artillery troops conduct huge exercises in the Arctic, etc. This focus has continued, even as events in Crimea unfolded. For example, President Vladimir Putin noted recently, after the annexation of Crimea, that the next stage of Russian Armed Forces training should include developing a combat group in the Arctic region. On 21 March Admiral Viktor Chirkov, at a conference on ways to maintain Russian security in the Arctic, stated that Russia will gradually upgrade its Northern and Pacific Fleet forces expected to serve in the Arctic, including both the Navy’s strategic nuclear and non-nuclear deterrence force. Continuing to play the threat gambit, Chirkov stated that the Navy’s goal was to play a key role in confronting new threats to Russia. However, he never stated what “new” threats were present. It will be important to continue to watch the Arctic and see, like Crimea, what kind of threats “develop” there. **End OE Watch Commentary. (Thomas)**

Source: Interfax, in English, 21 March 2014 (cited below), and Interfax-AVN Online, in English, 21 March 2014 (cited above in the key quote)

A military strategic prognosis for the Russian Arctic in the period until 2030 was put on the agenda of a conference, which started in St. Petersburg on Friday. “Key issues subjected to a detailed analysis at the conference include a military strategic prognosis for the Russian Arctic in the period until 2030 and military threats to the Russian Federation,” a Navy spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry’s press service and information department told Interfax-AVN on Friday.

The delegates are also debating the assignment of naval forces to distant oceanic zones on strategic missions of global defense and national security, key vectors of the development of the system of naval forces’ deployment in the Arctic region in the period before and after 2020 and some other issues.

Navy Commander Admiral Viktor Chirkov initiated the conference. It is being attended by members of the central military command of the Russian Defense Ministry, the Navy Command, the North Fleet command, the commanders, researchers and pedagogues of the Navy Academy, representatives of the Economic Development Ministry, the Regional Development Ministry, the Transport Ministry, the Communications and Mass Media Ministry, the Emergency Situations Ministry, the Federal Space Agency and the Russian Academy of Sciences, and heads and workers of research centers and civilian high education establishments.

The conference “The Development of the System for the Implementation and Protection of National Interests and the Provision of Security in the Russian Arctic” is taking place at the Navy training center, the source reported.

Has Iran Overplayed its Hand in Iraq?

Al Qaeda's seizure of Ramadi and Fallujah in January 2014 propelled questions of sectarianism in Iraq to the forefront of Iraqi politics. Sectarianism, of course, is nothing new in Iraq. While some analysts attribute the 2003 U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq with unleashing sectarianism, the tension between Sunni and Shi'ite Iraqis long predates Operation Iraqi Freedom. Baathism, the ideology that late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein embraced, was inherently sectarian. While it embraced Arabism as its central pillar, Saddam and many of his aides saw true Arabism through a sectarian lens. He suspected Shi'ites of harboring loyalty to Iran; indeed, he often labeled Iraqi Shi'ites "Safawi," the Arabic name for the 16th century Safavid dynasty which converted Iran to Shi'ism. Beginning in the 1960s with the Baathist seizure of power and then in the 1980s with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, the Baathist regime stripped tens of thousands of Shi'ites of Iraqi citizenship and deported them to Iran. The Shi'ites, however, have from the beginning of Iraqi statehood considered themselves and their more traditional tribal ways as representing a more pure Arab identity.¹

Iraqi Shiites have experienced a religious renaissance since a U.S.-led coalition ousted Saddam, but the idea that the Iraqi Shi'ite community seeks for sectarian reasons to attach themselves to or be dominated by Iran misunderstands Iraqi history and politics and the attitudes of Iraqi Shi'ites. Rather than separate from their country, Iraqi Shi'ites have for decades worked both to integrate themselves into Iraqi society and to resist Iranian attempts to subvert their communal independence. Despite attempts by Iran to dominate Iraq politically, culturally, and economically, Iraqi Shi'ites have in recent years been successful at resisting Iranian attempts at dominance. That does not mean that Iraqi Shi'ites will be pro-American or anti-Iranian, but only that they will not allow themselves to be puppets of a foreign state.

Ethnicity vs. Religion

The Iraqi-Iranian border is not only a political boundary, but an ethnic one as well. Iraq is overwhelmingly Arab, although Kurds predominate across the north of the country and Turkmen maintain centuries-old communities in and around Kirkuk and Tel Afar. In Iran, in contrast, ethnic Persians now represent only slightly more than half the country, and Azeris and other Turkic minorities another fifth. Only about two percent of Iran today is Arab.²



Iranian religious pilgrims in Karbala, January 2004. Source: Author

(continued)

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In 1963 the Iranian Shah launched the White Revolution, a modernization drive toward which he tolerated little dissent. However, as the Shah moved to impose women's suffrage, encourage literacy and public health, and undertake land reform, he clashed with more conservative Iranian clerics like Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, whom he ultimately expelled from Iran. After a year in Turkey Khomeini settled in Najaf, where he began to teach and preach. It was here that he resurrected the older clerical notion of a wilayat al-faqih (guardianship of the jurisprudent), which he developed most notably in a 1970 series of lectures later compiled into *Hukumah al-Islamiyah* (Islamic governance).⁷ While Khomeini's peers largely rejected his arguments, he imposed his philosophy by force on Iran after the Islamic Revolution. Many other cleric in Najaf—and, indeed, many in Iran as well—gravitated more toward the writings and philosophy of Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadr, a senior cleric who outlined the idea of wilayat al-umma (guardianship of the people), which preached that man could be the trustee of God (Khilafat al-insan). While Khomeini claimed that a Supreme Leader should act as the Deputy of the Messiah on Earth and rule over man, Sadr argued that governance was “a right given to the whole of humanity.”⁸ Sadr wrote frequently on political and social issues of the day, parrying not only Khomeini's religious arguments, but also deconstructing the Marxism which many Iraqi intellectual embraced, and encouraging the publishing of booklets and pamphlets outlining an Islamic take on the primary social and political issues of the day.⁹

Khomeini was ideologically intolerant, and developed personal enmity to Sadr for rejecting Khomeini's notion of clerical rule in favor of empowering ordinary people. Khomeini's enmity—coupled with that of Saddam Hussein—ultimately sealed Sadr's fate. While Sadr supported the Islamic Revolution in Iran and recognized Khomeini as a Grand Ayatollah, Khomeini refused to affirm Sadr's religious rank and refused him shelter in Iran once Saddam began his crackdown on the Islamic Da'wa Party, for whom Sadr served as the spiritual mentor.¹⁰ Saddam Hussein's regime subsequently imprisoned, tortured and, on 9 April 1980, executed him.

Sadr's views shaped the development of the Da'wa Party, which he founded in 1958, but historically Da'wa has been fractious. Da'wa initially attracted Shi'ites predominantly from the educated middle class, the very constituency whose political consciousness Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party found most dangerous. Sadr did not exclude Sunnis from his vision; he encouraged Da'wa to establish and maintain relations to Sunni Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb al-Tahrir, thus augmenting the danger which Sadr's activism posed to the Baathist regime.¹¹ Accordingly, Baghdad outlawed Da'wa and deemed membership to be a capital offense.

As Saddam's secret police began targeting Iraqi Shi'ite political activists, Da'wa activists fled the country, many finding uneasy refuge in Iran, with smaller communities establishing themselves in the United Kingdom or Syria. Those who fled to Iran were quickly disenchanted by the Shi'ite paradise they sought in the newly-formed Islamic Republic. Khomeini measured loyalty not in religious devotion, but in the embrace of his own religious philosophy. Those who dissented quickly found themselves targeted by Khomeini's security agencies. Many held true to Sadr's ideas but had little choice but to remain silent; they could not continue the political debate in which their counterparts in the United Kingdom engaged. This exacerbated divisions in Da'wa that became clear when the two sides reunited after Iraq's liberation. Prior to that day, however, British-based Da'wa activists found themselves effectively muzzled out of fear that Khomeini might respond to any direct challenge to his interpretation by targeting the Iraqi Da'wa members who had effectively become his hostages. Khomeini's overbearing attitude—and the poor treatment of many Iraqi refugees in Iran—did not endear the Islamic Republic to Iraqi Shi'ites. While many of those Iraqi refugees returned home in the wake of Saddam's ouster, their lingering resentment to Iran continues.

Shi'ites are not monolithic, and not all Iraqi exiles remained true to Sadr and his emphasis on popular sovereignty. Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, who had worked closely with Sadr until Sadr's execution, did receive refuge in Iran. Rather than resist Khomeini's vision of clerical rule, Hakim embraced it. He split from Da'wa, and formed a new group, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), now renamed the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) dedicated to ousting the Baathist regime in Iraq and replacing it with a Khomeini-style theocracy.

Repression increased against the Iraqi Shi'ites throughout the 1980s against the backdrop of the Iran-Iraq War. The Iraqi government, questioning the loyalty of both its Shi'ite and Kurdish communities, forcibly displaced many who sought university placement or state jobs, sending Shi'ites north into Kurdish regions, and forcing Kurds south into predominantly Shi'ite cities like Basra, Najaf, or Diwaniya. The aftermath of Operation Desert Storm and the U.S.-led liberation of Kuwait compounded the problem. During a 15 February 1991 campaign stop President George H.W. Bush called for “the Iraqi people [to] take matters into their own hands and force Saddam Hussein the dictator to step aside.” Iraqis listened, and rose up against Baathist rule in 14 out of Iraq's 18 governorates. Ironically, this U.S.-encouraged 1991 uprising marked the first significant Shi'ite uprising in Iraq against the Iraqi government.¹²

Perceptions in the Middle East can mean more than reality. Whatever the logic behind and actuality of subsequent policy decisions in Washington, Iraqi Shi'ites almost universally see betrayal: the United States did not intervene as Saddam moved to crush the uprising. While the United States, in conjunction with France and Great Britain, sponsored a safe haven for Iraqi Kurds, there was no corollary pro-

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tection for Iraqi Shi'ites: the southern no-fly zone did little to stop Iraqi tanks from crushing the uprising. Shi'ites also sense conspiracy in the fact that the U.S. military released Republican Guard prisoners of war against the backdrop of the uprising, enabling Saddam's forces to regroup and move against the Iraqi rebels. As Saddam augmented sectarian repression in the wake of the 1991 uprising, Iranian officials whisper that the American betrayal of Iraq's Shi'ites was deliberate and that, whether Iraqi refugees liked Iran or not, the Islamic Republic is the only trustworthy protector of the Shi'ites. Hence, Iran's state-controlled press often pushed conspiracy theories, such as secret visits by George W. Bush to Saddam's prison to plot Saddam's return in order to betray and repress Iraq's Shi'ites once again. Whereas Iraqi Shi'ites may have embraced the American military in 1991, the bitterness of perceived betrayal and more than a decade of sustained Iranian propaganda led to sustained resentment among the majority, and active hostility among a smaller cadre.

Post-Liberation Shi'ite Dynamics

Such resentment became apparent upon Iraq's 2003 liberation. While Iraqi Shi'ites reveled in their newfound religious freedom, their embrace of the American troops who had liberated them was far less enthusiastic than in 1991, when U.S. forces had first pushed back Saddam's Republic Guards.

In Iraq (and also in Iran) there is a clerical aristocracy with a few families producing generations of renowned scholars and marrying either cousins or into other elite theological families. Of course, family name is not everything, and not every family member distinguishes himself with mastery of existing Shi'ite scholarship and writing of new treatises. Some family members become black sheep and embarrassments to family name and reputation. This has been the case with Muqtada al-Sadr. Muqtada was a son-in-law to Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and the fourth son to Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, Iraq's preeminent ayatollah in the 1990s until his assassination in 1999. Muqtada never excelled at scholarship and was paid little heed either by his father or Iraq's other top ayatollahs. After all, he had three older brothers. No one imagined that, thanks to Saddam's murderous campaign against the clerics of Najaf, Muqtada would be the only one of his generation of Sadr's to survive.

Not surprisingly, the American government had very little sense of Muqtada prior to Iraq's liberation. This ended on 10 April 2003, when a mob loyal to him set upon rival cleric Sayyid Abdul Majid al-Khoei in the Imam Ali Shrine, Najaf's holiest site, and hacked him to death. Khoei, the son of and successor to a prominent and popular ayatollah who had fled in 1991, had returned to Najaf with American assistance. Khoei embraced Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr's notion of popular rule and so stood in sharp contrast to the theological interpretations embraced by Khomeini and his successor, Ali Khamenei, in Iran.

Muqtada al-Sadr and the Iranian leadership might not have agreed completely on theology, but they did have a common grievance. The United States was effectively seeking to restore the power of the Iraqi Shi'ite religious hierarchy. This presented not only a challenge to Iran's concept of clerical rule, but also undercut Muqtada al-Sadr's personal ambition, since he could not compete in prestige or rank to the top ayatollahs in Najaf. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps did not hesitate to co-opt and channel Sadr's resulting anti-American fervor. Sadr's embrace of Khomeini's wilayat al-faqih was seldom enthusiastic or consistent, but the Iranian regime was looking more for a tool with which to wage undeclared war against the Americans, than simply a theological clone.

Whether with regard to Muqtada al-Sadr, who never left Iraq prior to the U.S.-led invasion, or SCIRI founder Muhammad Baqir Al-Hakim, who spent a lengthy exile in Iran, Iranian authorities soon realized their influence was more limited than they expected. For all of Hakim's rhetoric while residing in Iran, as soon as he returned to Iraq he abandoned his previous embrace of wilayat al-faqih. "Neither an Islamic government nor a secular administration will work in Iraq but a democratic state that respects Islam as the religion of a majority of the population," Hakim declared upon his return after 23 years in exile.¹³ While a car bomb killed Hakim on 29 August 2003, neither his brother Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, who succeeded him, nor Ammar al-Hakim, who took ISCI's mantle upon Abdul Aziz's death in 2009, has returned the party to its one-time embrace of wilayat al-faqih.

Indeed, this has been a consistent pattern in post-liberation Iraq, much to the chagrin of authorities in Tehran. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps trained or helped organize multiple Iraqi militias, most prominently Muqtada al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (Army of the Messiah, JAM) and ISCI's Badr Corps. Sponsorship of multiple political groups and militias might seem counterproductive to Western policymakers, who traditionally seek to streamline decision-making and policy execution, but it is part and parcel of traditional Persian statecraft: duality enhances control because it enables the Iranian leadership to make patronage a competition and play clients off each other for Iran's broader interest. This in effect creates a see-saw or cyclical effect, as one group rises while the other falls, but neither group ever either fails completely or gains enough strength to become truly independent. The competition between the Badr Corps and JAM illustrated well Tehran's struggle for control: while both retained their staunch anti-American and anti-occupation positions, after returning to Iraq many Badr Corps commanders ceased following direct Iranian orders and instead began to allow Iraqi nationalist attitudes to color decisions which lumped both the United States and Iran as "the other." So long as the Badr Corps was willing to hunt down and murder Iraqi Air Force pilots who

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had participated in the bombing of Iran during the Iran-Iraq War, Tehran would fund ISCI generously and provide enough weaponry to give ISCI a qualitative and quantitative edge over other Shi'ite groups. However, as soon as the Badr Corps began acting too independently of Iranian interests or dictates, Tehran's largesse would shift to Muqtada al-Sadr. Sadr, who always embraced Iraqi nationalism, even if he harbored a different vision of it than that put forward by liberal Iraqis and established clergy. He did not hesitate to accept Iranian largesse, even if it came at a cost to his independence, but as soon as he asserted himself too much or believed he could continue without heeding his Iranian minders, he would find himself cut-off from resources. Hence, during the years of American military occupation, Hakim and Sadr seemed to alternate their position of Iranian favor repeatedly.

Is Shi'ism Iran's Achilles' Heel?

While some American policymakers and many military analysts conflate all Shi'ites under the Iranian umbrella, waging insurgency against Coalition troops was not the only objective of Iran-trained militias. Shi'ism is not only the Islamic Republic's *raison d'être*, it is also revolutionary Iran's Achilles' heel. Saddam Hussein's suppression of Najaf and Karbala had ironically strengthened the Iranian regime because it prevented any real religious challenge to Khomeini and, subsequently, Khamenei's authority.

The Iranian security apparatus, meanwhile, works to suppress religious dissent at home. Iranian authorities, for example, kept Grand Ayatollah Husayn 'Ali Montazeri under house arrest until his death and banned publication of his memoirs.¹⁴ Iraq's liberation reinvigorated Shi'ite practice and scholarship inside Iraq. Long-constrained political and theological debates resumed, as Da'wa exiles from London, Damascus, and Tehran reunited in Baghdad. Millions of Iraqi Shi'ites marched in religious processions long prohibited by the Iraqi regime. Najaf-based Grand Ayatollahs like Ali Sistani (himself an Iranian) could once again preach openly and communicate with not only Iraqi followers, but also Iranian religious pilgrims.

Sistani recognizes that the Islamic Republic is just as vicious toward dissenting clergy as Saddam Hussein was. Sistani survived Saddam's rule by understanding who controlled the guns outside his house. He is no chameleon: he will not parrot those in power, but he will calibrate his vociferousness in the challenge to that power. He was noticeably more restrained in his willingness to challenge Iranian dictates when Badr Corps or JAM militiamen controlled the streets of Najaf than he was during periods of U.S. military or Iraqi Army control. Hossein Kazemeyni Boroujerdi, a prominent Iranian ayatollah who opposes clerical rule, remains in poor health in prison after his 2006 arrest in Qom for opposing *wilayat al-faqih*. Iran maintains a Special Clerical Court to prosecute clergy who stray from the Iranian Supreme Leader's approved line.¹⁵ In February 2013 Iranian security forces arrested prominent Iraqi religious scholar Ahmad al-Qubanshi during a visit to Iran. Qubanshi had for more than 30 years published articles and books criticizing the theological arguments at the basis of Iran's Islamic Republic.¹⁶ Iran fears that should Iraqi Shi'ites achieve an independent space to conduct theological discourse independent of Iranian control, the result might be theological challenge to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's notion of himself as the primary source of emulation and the deputy of the Messiah on Earth.

By sponsoring militias inside Iraq, Iranian authorities try to impose through force of arms what is not in the hearts and minds of ordinary Iraqis. Hence, Badr Corps militiamen posted themselves outside girls' schools in the Kadhimiya district of Baghdad to enforce a dress code not enshrined in Iraqi law or custom, and Muqtada al-Sadr's militiamen harassed, detained and beat university students in Basra participating in a spring social. The Iranian strategy has not worked, however. Both the Badr Corps and JAM have antagonized more Iraqis than they have rallied. Across southern Iraq Shi'ite leaders acknowledge that the twenty-somethings who embraced sectarian Shi'ite parties with enthusiasm after Iraq's liberation have come to recognize that they offer no panacea to Iraq's myriad woes. This does not mean that Iraqi youth are turning away from sectarian parties on political Islam, but they do not approach such institutions with the revolutionary fervor that Iranian authorities can more easily exploit.

Trade or Exploitation?

If militias represent a kinetic strategy to control and subordinate Iraqi Shi'ites, economic domination represents a softer lever of power which, of course, aims to control not only Baghdad and southern Iraq's Shi'ite population, but, more broadly, Iraqi society as a whole. Close economic ties are natural. The two countries share a 900-mile frontier, and Iran's population is perhaps three times that of Iraq. Economic relations have expanded exponentially since Saddam Hussein's fall. While Iran-Iraq trade was negligible from the war years of the 1980s through the days of sanctions, by 2004, the first full year after Saddam's fall, bilateral Iran-Iraq trade was just \$800 million. By 2012, the last year for which statistics are available, bilateral trade had reached an estimated \$12 billion.¹⁷

While Iraqis welcome the millions of dollars which Iranian religious pilgrims spend in the hotels, shops, and restaurants of Najaf and Karbala, trade is largely one-way. Iraqi Kurdistan, Kirkuk, Baghdad, and Al-Amarah have spent hundreds of millions of dollars for Iranian electricity even before a July 2013 four-year bilateral \$14.8 billion deal for Iran to supply Iraq with natural gas to power its electrical plants.¹⁸

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In addition, Iran floods Iraq with manufactured goods, agriculture, and foodstuffs, harming Iraqi industries.¹⁹ Iranian merchants do not hesitate to undercut Iraqi competition, further stymying Iraq's economic recovery, leading to a great deal of resentment toward Iran not only in the Kurdish north of Iraq, but also in Baghdad, and even in predominantly Shi'ite areas in southern Iraq, like Basra and Nasiriya. Iraqi businessmen, whether Sunni, Shi'ite, or Kurdish, regularly complain that they cannot access the Iranian market or, indeed, travel easily to Iran in order to conduct business because of the sometimes onerous and arbitrary Iranian permit process invoked more for Iraqi Shi'ites than other Iraqis. It is one of the ironies of post-war Iraq that Iraqi Kurds find it easier to travel to Iran than do their Shi'ite counterparts, for whom Iranian authorities make border crossing permits difficult to acquire, largely out of fear that Iraqi Shi'ites might harbor subversive religious views.

Iranian contractors have developed a reputation for seeking inflated prices for substandard goods. Many Iraqis have accordingly begun to seek alternatives to Iranian business and increasingly seek to encourage American and European firms to bid on contracts. Despite the resentment that its business practices build, Iran does not hesitate to utilize its Iraqi clients to hamper competition. SCIRI and Sadrist officials at the Basra Airport, for example, have sought to saddle American and European businessmen with non-existent regulations in order to hamper their operation. This has only antagonized relations further, as Iraqi businessmen feel themselves forced into deleterious partnerships with Iranians, whom they dislike. Indeed, Iran's willingness to play hardball has even led many Iraqis to reconsider their attitudes to the American military. After an Iranian squad seized a Fakka oil well in the Maysan governorate in January 2010, Iraqi papers called on the United States to help Iraq protect its territorial integrity.²⁰

Conclusion

Decades of war and sanctions eviscerated the Iraqi economy and Iraqi power. The United States managed in a matter of weeks to do what Iran could not do, even after eight years of unrestricted warfare: oust Saddam. Iraq essentially became a vacuum which multiple forces sought to fill. The United States and the coalition it led hope to rebuild Iraq and allow the country to rejoin the international community as an Arab democracy; Al Qaeda sank roots in Al-Anbar, Mosul, and Baghdad and propagated a radically different vision; Iran sought to assert its dominance over Iraq's Shi'ites and the central government; and Turkey sought unsuccessfully to fill Iraq's economic vacuum.

The new Iraqi government, for its part, was too weak to fight off all competing interests, and instead sought to create space for independent action by playing regional interests off each other: Iraqi officials would tell both Iranian and American diplomats and military officers that their actions were constrained by the other, and then pursue policies which made neither Tehran nor Washington happy. The December 2011 American withdrawal upset Baghdad's traditional balance and undercut Iraqi politicians' ability to resist Iranian demands. That said, Iraqi Shi'ites continue to make clear their resentment of what they see as Iran's overbearing attitude. When Khalaf Abdul Samad, the governor of Basra, sought to inaugurate a new bridge over the Shatt al-Arab on 4 June 2013, Iranian officials warned him to choose a different date, as 4 June marked the commemoration of Khomeini's death. Abdul Samad responded by simply increasing the fireworks display, so that Iranians, who can see the lights of Basra from their homes, could witness the Iraqi celebrations on what, for the Islamic Republic, was a day of mourning.

Such independence and insults do not pass without a cost. Even though Abdul Samad was popular in Basra for the development projects he initiated and was the top vote-getter in provincial elections, the Iranian government pushed ISCI and the Sadrists into an uneasy coalition to oust him shortly after. Raw power can still trump hearts and minds.

For that reason, Iran—and those inside Iraq whom it co-opts and coerces—will still pose a risk to U.S. regional security interests. Banners in Basra announce the obituaries of those killed fighting for Syrian regime forces or Hezbollah in Syria, a conflict in which the Iraqi government is officially neutral. Iraqi officials acknowledge the problem of Iranian recruitment inside Iraq, but say they are simply too weak to roll back Iranian influence without a countervailing one. They also first face more existential threats, given the resurrection of Al Qaeda and potential Kurdish separatism.



The new bridge across the Shatt al-Arab, Basra, June 2013. Source: Author

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As individuals, some Iraqi Shi'ites might embrace militias backed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps for ideology or privilege. Iraqi politics are, however, far more complicated than the all-Shi'ites-are-Iranian-puppets narrative would allow. As Iranian-backed militias augment their presence in Iraq, they either force a backlash within the communities they seek to represent or they lose their ideological purity to the more powerful seductive forces of Iraqi nationalism. Iranian leaders may want a compliant little brother or even a puppet in Iraq. No matter what their caricature in the West, however, Iraqis Shi'ites show no desire to oblige.

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