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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



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ON THE COVER:

18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China

Source: Dong Fang via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:18th_National_Congress_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China.jpg, Public Domain.

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Shoygu on the Changing Character of War

OE Watch Commentary: The two accompanying excerpted articles from *Moskovsky Komsomolets* and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discuss Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu's views on the changing character of warfare. The passages feature insights gleaned from Shoygu's remarks at the opening speech of the "Army-2019" International Military-Technical Forum, a scientific-practical conference with the Russian Federation Armed Forces' leadership.

The first passage from *Moskovsky Komsomolets* discusses General Shoygu's comments that the West is increasingly using information warfare to contain Russia. First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov expands on this view by stating that "the risks of confrontation using military methods have receded [with the West, because] ...they [the West] were unable to do anything with us in a military confrontation... but confrontation using non-military methods has not ceased even for a second. This is the expansion with regard to language, faith, culture, and history."

The passage from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses Shoygu's views on the importance of developing new approaches to armed conflict due to rapidly developing science and technology and the increasing pace of combat operations. "The armed conflict experience of recent decades shows that the character of warfare is undergoing significant changes. This is associated with the rapid development of science and technology, and also the emergence of new weapons, which impact forms and methods of troops' operations. Methods of employing troops and their operations must evolve along with the arrival of high-tech weaponry and combat equipment..." Of particular interest, Shoygu mentions specific capabilities of Russia's *Strelets* system, noting that the "Strelets command-reconnaissance strike system makes it possible to destroy targets practically on a real time basis -- 8-12 minutes after detecting them..." **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Official Portrait of Sergey Shoygu.

Source: Mil.ru via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Official_portrait_of_Sergey_Shoigu.jpg, CC BY 4.0

“New-generation conflicts are a combination of classic and asymmetric combat conduct strategies. Combat operations in these are fast moving, and there is simply no time for correcting mistakes.”

“The Strelets command-reconnaissance strike system makes it possible to destroy targets practically on a real time basis -- 8-12 minutes after detecting them...”



Continued: Shoygu on the Changing Character of War

Source: Sergey Valchenko, “Минобороны начинает наступление на информационном фронте (The Ministry of Defense Is Beginning an Offensive on the Information Front),” *Moskovsky Komsomolets Online*, 28 June 2019. <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2019/06/26/shoygu-za-snos-zarubezhnykh-pamyatnikov-nashim-voinam-dolzno-byt-nakazanie.html>

The participants of the conference, which occurred within the “Army-2019” International Military-Technical Forum, discussed the pressing issues of information countermeasures. Having opened the conference, Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu pointed out that the West is increasingly using information warfare systems in the policy of containing Russia. And the Russian military department does not intend to sit back on its heels but is prepared to transition to offense on this information front.

Sergey Shoygu explained how Russia has displeased the West. In his words, our country has actually returned to itself the status of the second pole, which maintains the world in the global equilibrium that was lost after the disintegration of the USSR. “With what has this entire death throe of the West been associated?” – the Defense Minister posed the question and immediately answered it: “With the birth of the second pole of the world order. Which they would allegedly lay low, everything already – they made a monument, they prepared a small fence and wreaths... And here they have suddenly once again resolved to give birth the second poll. And, well, it is being born”. In his words, the world is once again becoming multipolar. “And, of course, the West doesn’t like this. At the same time, the West does not understand for the time being that it is simply impossible to take what you wish and begin to rule today’s world”, the Minister stressed.

In his turn, Russian First Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov pointed out that the “the risks of confrontation using military methods have receded” in relations with the West and “they were unable to do anything with us in a military confrontation”. “But confrontation using nonmilitary methods has not ceased even for a second. This is the expansion with regard to language, faith, culture, and history”, the First Deputy Defense Minister said...

Source: Ivan Petrov, “Времени на ошибки не будет Шойгу: Конфликты нового поколения скоротечны (There is No Time for Mistakes: New-Generation conflicts Are Short-Lived),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 18 June 2019. <https://rg.ru/2019/06/18/shojgu-rasskazal-o-voennyh-konfliktah-novogo-vremeni.html>

Russian servicemen will have to develop an approach to carrying out military operations in the midterm. Russian Defense Minister, Army General Sergey Shoygu assigned this task to his subordinates on Tuesday, during the opening of the scientific-practical conference with the Russian Federation Armed Forces’ leadership. Moreover, the Minister specified that it should become the main task for the Ministry of Defense leadership staff.

According to Shoygu, today it is important to understand that modern wars require entirely new approaches. “New-generation conflicts are a combination of classic and asymmetric combat conduct strategies. Combat operations in these are fast moving, and there is simply no time for correcting mistakes,” the head of the Russian Defense Department explained.

According to Sergey Shoygu, modern technologies and new weapons have significantly changed the character of armed struggle and modern warfare. “The armed conflict experience of recent decades shows that the character of warfare is undergoing significant changes. This is associated with the rapid development of science and technology, and also the emergence of new weapons, which impact forms and methods of troops’ operations. Methods of employing troops and their operations must evolve along with the arrival of high-tech weaponry and combat equipment,” the war minister set the goal...

“...At the same time, new Russian reconnaissance systems currently arriving in the inventory have qualitatively enhanced our troops’ capabilities. The Strelets command-reconnaissance strike system makes it possible to destroy targets practically on a real time basis -- 8-12 minutes after detecting them. The employment of unmanned aviation provides new capabilities for reconnaissance and destruction of enemy assets,” said Sergey Shoygu.

In conclusion, the Defense Minister noted that the results of Tuesday’s conference will contribute to the further development of Russian military strategy and operational art.

Let us recall that in February of this year, Sergey Shoygu has already made a statement about changes in ways of conducting modern military conflicts. “First of all, the spectrum of military conflicts, which the Armed Forces must be ready for, is expanding. Secondly, the character of combat operations is drastically changing. In particular, the confrontation in Syria is a completely different type of warfare, fundamentally distinct from classic wars, in which regular armies were the enemy,” the Minister noted.

In this regard, Shoygu demanded that the leaders of all military command and control levels not only have “broad and diverse knowledge, but also develop the ability to see and introduce all new and best practices, skillfully utilize combat experience, and understand the developmental prospects of the Army and the Navy”.



Maneuverable Defense and Initiative at the Tactical Level in Russian Military Training

OE Watch Commentary: Russian military exercises of all types are regularly reported in the Russian military newspaper *Red Star*. As noted in the accompanying article, countering “superior enemy forces” with “maneuverable defense” was featured during recent battalion level maneuvers at the Yurginsky training facility in the Kemerovo Region (Central Military District).

One of the main purposes of the training was “to once again decide on common approaches for introducing forms and methods of training troops.” This reference to forms and methods is a professional term of Russian military science that indicates what Western observers understand as operational doctrine for the force. During the exercise, units were described as maneuvering rapidly and frequently from position to position, while being able to inflict damage and avoid entrapment.



Units of a separate motorized rifle brigade of the Western Military District (ZVO), stationed in the Polar Region, work on maintaining tactical maneuvering defenses.

Source: Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, http://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=11345675@egNews, CC BY SA 4.0

A featured event described how, during the difficult live-fire part of maneuver training, deviations from the training scenario and “bold and non-standard decisions” were made and executed. The article went on to explain that this was necessitated because of the complexities injected by the attachment of other units during the live-fire. In the Russian tactical orders process, the staff provides the expertise in conveying the commander’s plan, not providing the commander with a plan and courses of actions, such as in US and NATO operational art.

The training emphasis on flexibility while combining units with different commanders and still providing common tactical consistency in drills to validate the operational “forms and methods” gives context to the kind of initiative that the Russian military wants to build. Still, this sort of training initiative indicates a higher level of professional expectation and performance at the tactical command and staff level, and it results in more agility with battle drills. It is not the sort of development of mission command that leads to the broad-based initiative that is a characteristic of Western forces. In this vein, it is also worth mentioning that all of the approximately 2000 participants were professionals and not conscripts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)**

“This [training] requires not only tactical knowledge but also bold and non-standard decisions.”

Source: Тарас Рудык, “Испытание манёвренной обороной (Test of maneuverable defense),” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 20 March 2019. <http://redstar.ru/ispytanie-manyovrennoj-oboronoj/>

...there were several goals during the battalion training exercise: to check the combat readiness of the brigade units, to give their commanders practice in deploying their units, and to improve coordination among the units in defensive and offensive engagements as well as improving the skills of commanders in managing their subordinate units and attached units in difficult battlefield situations.



Aerospace Forces to Form Mobile Reserve Regiments for Air Defense

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses Russian plans to put a high mobility air defense regiment in each of the Aerospace Forces' Air and Defense Armies. Russia has one of these armies in each of its five military districts. These regiments are intended to be a mobile reserve that can rapidly be deployed to defend hostile air corridors. The concept of a mobile reserve for air defense has been around since the early 1990s. The first such formation was the 14th Mobile Air Defense Division, consisting of nine battalions of S-300PS (SA-10B/ Grumble B) surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems. The unit was first based in the Baltics, then relocated to the Moscow region, and later disbanded. Another such unit, the 1721st SAM Regiment armed with Pantsir-Ss and Buk-M2s was stood up in 2013 to provide support for the 2014 Winter Olympics, but was disbanded afterwards. The current implementation of the concept is based on Russia's Syria experience, as explained by *Izvestiya*.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)



Russian Aerospace Forces Emblem.

Source: Russian government, Ministry of Defence Medium emblem of the Военно-воздушные силы Российской Федерации.svg: F l a n k e rEight-pointed star 16 radial lines.svg: AnonMoosDerivative work: Serhio Magpie via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_aerospace_forces_emblem.svg, Public domain

“A mobile reserve consisting of an air defense regiment will appear in each Air and Air Defense Army.”

Source: Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, “В засадном положении: Минобороны создает мобильные резервные части ПВО Специальные полки усилят противовоздушную оборону на опасных направлениях (In an Ambush Position: Defense Ministry Is Establishing Mobile Reserve Air Defense Units: Special Regiments Will Reinforce Air Defense on Threat Axes),” *Izvestiya* Online, 2 July 2019. <https://iz.ru/892760/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/v-zasadnom-polozhenii-minoborony-sozdaet-mobilnye-rezervnye-chasti-pvo>

Serious reform awaits the national air defense system. A mobile reserve consisting of an air defense regiment will appear in each Air and Air Defense Army. These units, activated from scratch, will receive Pantsir air defense missile-gun complexes in the inventory, Izvestiya was told by Defense Ministry sources. It is planned that the new regiments will cover important strategic facilities and will reinforce already deployed air defense subunits. A SAM regiment of the mobile reserve will be established in the Aerospace Forces (VKS) structure before the end of 2019. Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu recently announced the appearance of the first such unit...

The mobile reserve units will fill voids in the defense and will operate from ambushes, Lieutenant General (Reserve) Aytech Bizhev, former Air Force deputy commander-in-chief for the Joint Air Defense System of CIS countries, explained to Izvestiya.

“Relying on intelligence, the command element must determine the threat level and assign missions to mobile air defense units in advance,” he said. “A number of positions will be prepared in peacetime: alternate sites will be established for launchers on several axes -- this will speed up deployment of the complexes. Ambushes usually are arranged in gorges, along railroads, or in river estuaries where enemy aircraft can make their way to a target at minimal altitude, i.e., remaining undetected for a long time.”

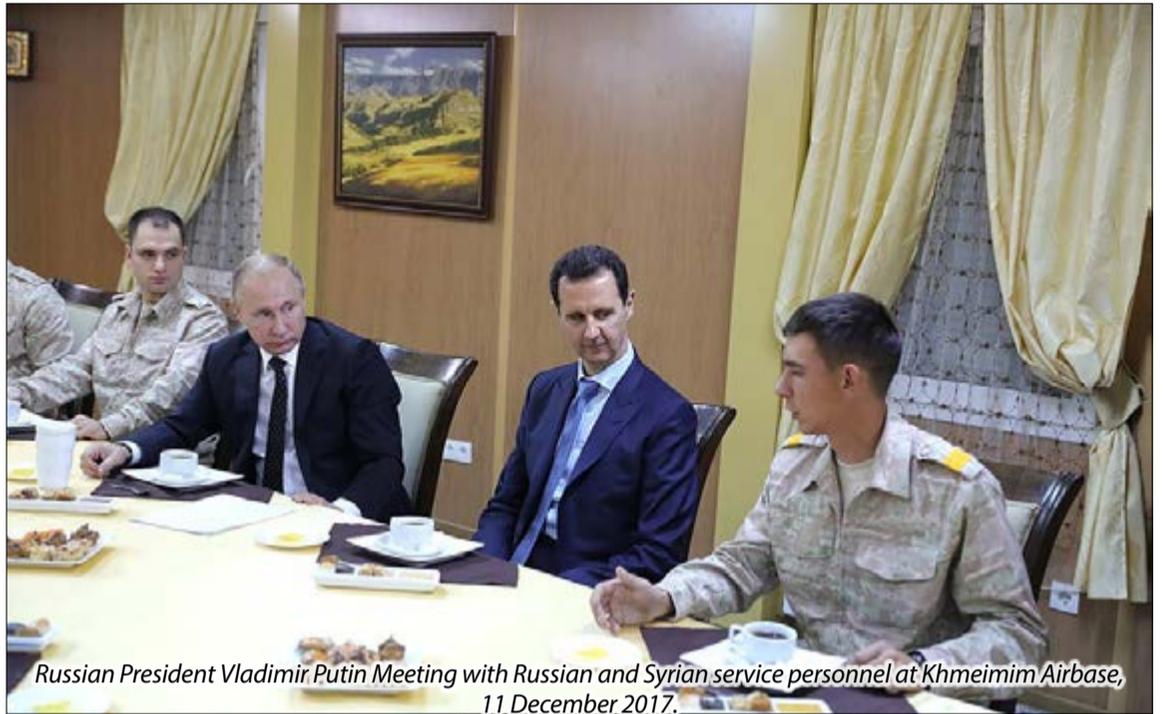
The role of mobile reserves grows by many times in modern warfare, when it is impossible for air defense systems to protect all important facilities, military expert Anton Lavrov believes. He stressed that it is possible to cite as an example the cruise missile strike against the Ash Shairat Airbase in April 2017. Based on intelligence that the base was unprotected, the Americans delivered a strike with impunity against Syrian Air Force aircraft in hangars...“At that time the Syrians did not have sufficient reserves to cover the base effectively with air defense weapons,” Lavrov noted.

If necessary, the new mobile air defense regiments can be redeployed in a few hours not only to any part of the country, but also beyond it. The Russian military received corresponding experience in the mid-2010s, when air defense groupings had been established in an ultrashort period of time in Crimea as well as in Syria. The redeployment of battalions of one of the S-300 modifications for the Syrian Army in the fall of last year can serve as an example of a swift, covert operation to redeploy the complexes. It became known only after photographs appeared on the Internet of fighting vehicles of the complex being unloaded from military transport aircraft...



Syrian Combat Experience in the Aerospace Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses the number of Aerospace Forces (VKS) personnel that have been deployed to Syria. According to Russian Defense Minister, General of the Army Sergey Shoygu, 98% of transport aviation crews, 90% of the operational-tactical and army aviation crews, 60% of long-range aviation crews, and 32% of VKS air defense personnel have deployed in support of the Syrian campaign. This high-level of participation in the Syrian campaign can be seen at similar levels in the Ground Forces, especially the general officer corps, as Syria appears to be important for advancement in the Russian Armed Forces. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



Russian President Vladimir Putin Meeting with Russian and Syrian service personnel at Khmeimim Airbase, 11 December 2017.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56357>, CC BY SA 4.0

“98 percent of the transport aviation crews, 90 percent of operational-tactical and army aviation crews, and 60 percent of the long-range aviation pilots have already participated in [Syria].”

Source: Dmitriy Semenov, “Под руководством главы военного ведомства генерала армии Сергея Шойгу прошло очередное заседание Коллегии Минобороны России (The Latest Russian Ministry of Defense Collegium Session Took Place Under the Direction of Military Department Head General of the Army Sergey Shoygu),” *Krasnaya Zvezda* Online, 21 June 2019, <http://redstar.ru/strogo-sootvetstvovat-zadannym-parametram/>

The RF Defense Minister pointed out that at that time, the Head of State ordered them to actively improve the combat capabilities of this branch of the Armed Forces and to increase the personnel’s training level. Sergey Shoygu stressed that the employment of the Russian VKS during the course of the conduct of the special operation on Syrian territory immeasurably contributes to the practical realization of this task.

The figures speak for themselves here: 98 percent of the transport aviation crews and 90 percent of operational-tactical and army aviation crews, and also 60 percent of the long-range aviation pilots have already participated in the previously mentioned operations. Furthermore, nearly one-third of the air defense specialists – 32 percent of the servicemen – have confirmed their mastery and professionalism during the course of the fulfillment of missions in Syria.

The results of the renewal of the VKS organization-staff structure and their technical improvement are also becoming visible. The Russian Defense Minister reported that 37 organizational events have been conducted and 20 military units and subunits have been formed in the Aerospace Forces during the last year and a half. During the last year and a half, the Russian VKS has received more than 250 pieces of new and modernized equipment, which has made possible the reequipping of nine aviation and air defense missile regiments. Large-scale renewal will continue in this branch of the Armed Forces for the foreseeable future...by way of illustration – are the completion of the construction of no fewer than 700 buildings and structures of Russian VKS military infrastructure facilities, and also the delivery to the formations and military units of 205 pieces of new equipment according to the plan for the realization of the State Armaments Program for the current year. “So, the percentage of state-of-the-art weapons will be brought up to 82 percent by the end of the year”, the Russian Defense Minister stressed, having added that this result “meets the given parameters”.

As before, equipping the troops with advanced air defense and missile defense systems also remains among the main directions of the VKS’s development. The Military Department Head also focused the attention of the participants of the Russian Ministry of Defense Collegium on this, having cited the specific results of the work, which is being conducted in this direction...



T-72B3 Tank Maintenance Personnel to be Trained by Uralvagonzavod

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying excerpted press release from the Russian Ministry of Defense discusses a recent initiative to train certain T-72B3 tank maintenance personnel at Uralvagonzavod, the manufacturer of the T-72, in Nizhny Tagil, Russia. In the past, all military personnel were trained by the military, so this marks the first time that a company will provide training to military personnel. This initiative is the result of more sophisticated equipment proliferating throughout the Russian Armed Forces. This equipment does provide better capabilities, but comes at a cost of requiring better trained technicians to maintain this equipment. If this initiative with Uralvagonzavod is deemed successful, other such training programs with other equipment manufactures may be expected.

End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)



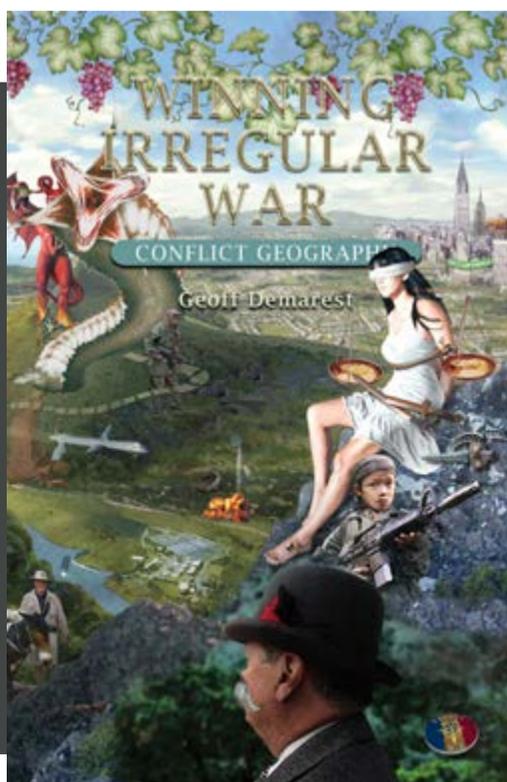
T-72B3 Tank.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:T-72B3.jpg>, CC BY-SA 3.0

Source: “Специалисты челябинского восстановительного полка впервые пройдут переподготовку на Уралвагонзаводе (Specialists from the Chelyabinsk Restoration Regiment Will Undergo Retraining at Uralvagonzavod for the First Time),” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation Online*, 26 June 2019, https://function.mil.ru/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12238596@egNews

Specialists from a repair and evacuation regiment deployed in Chelyabinsk Oblast will, for the first time, undergo retraining at Uralvagonzavod for servicing T-72B3 and T-72B3M tanks. Colonel Khanif Beglov, the Central Military District, Armored Vehicle Service Chief, reported... “Twenty-four specialists from among a CMD separate repair and evacuation regiment’s soldiers and sergeants will boost their qualifications at Uralvagonzavod for servicing T-72 tanks of the latest modification. According to agreements with the enterprise, retraining will be conducted in relation to the ‘specialized electrical equipment repair specialist’ and ‘mechanic for the repair of combat and specialized vehicles’ specialties,” Col. Khanif Beglov said, adding that retraining would be completed in mid-August.

It was reported earlier that a separate repair and evacuation regiment had been formed in Chelyabinskaya Oblast in December 2018. Its purpose is to carry out routine repair of armored-vehicle weapons, automotive, missile-artillery, and engineer equipment, radiation, chemical, and biological defense arms and equipment, communications equipment, repair and inspection of measuring equipment, and evacuation of arms and military equipment, and also to perform technical reconnaissance activities...



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

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



“Real Men” and Military Service

OE Watch Commentary: Given the focus that the Kremlin leadership has placed on military modernization and readiness over the past decade, it is not surprising that the prestige of serving in the Russian armed forces has risen accordingly. Citing recent poll data, the brief excerpt from the popular business daily *Kommersant* claims “the majority of Russians (60%) consider military service as mandatory for every ‘real man;’” the highest percentage in over 20 years. The excerpt also points out that “88% of those polled are confident that the Russian military” is capable of defending the country.

The second excerpt from the pro-Kremlin news site *Vzglyad* provides additional commentary on this positive poll data. The author insists that “military service has never been viewed by anyone in the USSR or in Russia as a manifestation of patriotism,” but that it is rather regarded as “an ideal social ladder and system that provided additional vocational education.” He credits the current and previous defense ministers for improving “the perception of military service, mainly by reducing the service life to one year.” He claims that the rigors of military service can transform “the spoiled and poorly educated modern boys into something resembling men.” According to the author, mandatory military service instills in young men not only the importance of obedience, but more importantly, how to overcome obstacles and “to accomplish the task before him.” The author concludes with the assertion that “a man with military experience has absolute competitive advantages in the eyes of any woman,” since for many Russian women, “if you haven’t served in the military, you are not a real man.”

Improved living conditions, a shorter term of service, and various legislative carrots and sticks (e.g. military service as a prerequisite for government service and restrictions on foreign travel for those who have not served are on the books albeit with numerous exceptions and workarounds) account for much of the improved prestige of military service. The Kremlin’s control over negative military reporting (e.g. classifying data regarding military casualties) and lack of civilian employment opportunities have also helped to burnish the military’s image. Nevertheless, this poll data suggests that within Russian society, the military has regained much of the status it lost after the collapse of the USSR. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“The army can transform spoiled and poorly educated modern boys into something resembling men...”

Source: “Большинство россиян считают службу в армии обязательной для ‘настоящего мужчины’ (Most Russians consider serving in the military mandatory to become a ‘real man’),” *Kommersant*, 18 June 2019. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4004489>

A survey by the Levada Center showed that the majority of Russians (60%) consider military service as mandatory for every “real man.” This is the maximum indicator of a positive attitude of citizens since 1997...

Regarding the assessment of the ability of the Russian army to protect citizens in the event of a real military threat, the majority of respondents (88%) are confident of the Russian military (53% answered ‘definitely agree,’ 35% chose the option ‘agree’)...

Source: Sergey Mardan, “Армия делает из раздолбаев – граждан (The military makes citizens out of bums),” *Vzglyad*, 23 June 2019. <https://vz.ru/opinions/2019/6/23/983427.html>

The “Levada Center” conducted a sociological survey, the results of which once again shocked people of “liberal” views. It turned out that 60% of Russians consider military service in the army mandatory for all men. The figure is really amazing, since never before has this figure exceeded 41%...

The usual explanations are given - militarism, state propaganda, like “Russia in the ring of enemies”, isolationism, brainwashing. But I can explain the Levada data easier. Military service arouses hot enthusiasm among two huge social groups. These are the parents of boys between the ages of 13 and 25 and women between the ages of 18 and 40...

Army service has never been viewed by anyone in the USSR or in Russia as a manifestation of patriotism. Army service was viewed as an inevitable duty, and only in a practical context.... The army was an ideal social ladder and a system that provided additional vocational education, especially for rural boys....

For residents of large cities from educated families, the army also performed an extremely useful educational function. The army can transform spoiled and poorly educated modern boys into something resembling men...

Ministers Serdyukov and Shoigu managed to greatly adjust the perception of military service, mainly by reducing the service life to one year....

...The army still teaches eighteen-year-olds ... the ability to give orders yourself... A man who has served in the army gains experience in the use of any resources to accomplish the task before him. ...You are a person who can do almost everything....

...A man with military experience has absolute competitive advantages in the eyes of any woman, whose choice of the optimal male for mating works at the level of physiological instincts. “If you haven’t served in the military, you are not a real man,” - sits firmly above all in women’s heads.



Closing Draft Loopholes in Belarus

OE Watch Commentary: More than five years after the annexation of Crimea and the conflict in SE Ukraine, tremors are still felt among Russia's immediate neighbors. Because Belarus remains highly dependent on Russian economic support, leaders in Minsk are growing increasingly concerned about the Kremlin's long-term military and political intentions. In light of these concerns, the brief excerpt from the mostly independent Russian source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* examines the rationale behind the recent changes regarding mandatory military service for young Belarusian men.

The article begins by questioning the wisdom of "holding military parades on [Belarus] Independence Day" (3 July) particularly when "...state-owned enterprises do not have funds to pay wages, and the budget does not have enough money to pay pensions." It goes on to claim that the armaments displayed during the military parade are "nothing for Belarus to brag about," since most of them are of Soviet heritage. The article rhetorically asks, "from whom they should be protected," suggesting that the leadership in Minsk had not yet decided whether "protection could be found under the wing of NATO or Russia."



President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko and Vladimir Putin answer media questions following a meeting, February 2019.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59844>, CCA 4.0

The article focuses on "recent changes in the Belarusian draft legislation," whereby male students will no longer be able to defer mandatory military service to pursue postgraduate studies. Moreover, potential draftees will no longer be able to claim that they "did not receive their draft summons," as an excuse for not reporting for military service. Those who try to evade the draft will be prohibited from "working in law enforcement and government agencies, as well as travel abroad." The article quotes a local expert who posits that these legislative changes will likely result in more young Belarusians "voting with their feet," and leaving the country. The article concludes with a comment from President Lukashenko, who stated that "tightening of draft legislation is necessary to protect the sovereignty and independence of the country," although he does not specify which country is threatening Belarus' independence.

Over the past several months, some Russian analysts have suggested that one possible solution to the Kremlin's 2024 presidential transition would be a formal merger of Belarus with Russia, which would allow President Putin to run again as the leader of this unified state. Should this election strategy gain traction within the Kremlin, tightening mandatory military service requirements in Belarus will likely prove insufficient in maintaining the country's independence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"He said that the tightening of draft legislation is necessary to protect the sovereignty and independence of the country."

Source: Anton Khodasevich, "Белоруссия ужесточает призывное законодательство (Belarus tightens draft legislation)," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 July 2019. http://www.ng.ru/cis/2019-07-04/5_7615_belorus.html

...Experts talk about the low authority of the Belarusian army, the low prestige of the service and the negative consequences of toughening draft legislation.... Social protest has been reinforced by the fact that over the past two weeks, anti-war rhetoric has been actively growing in Belarus.... The opposition and the active public are outraged by the fact that huge money is spent on "saber-rattling" at a time when state-owned enterprises do not have funds to pay wages, and the budget does not have enough money to pay pensions. This year, as in previous ones, experts emphasize that there is nothing for Belarus to brag about. On the eve of the parade, the official media broadcast that the parade opens with modern combat aircraft and helicopters. But viewers saw all the "same old Su-25 attack aircraft, MiG-29 fighter jets, Il-76 and An-26 military transport aircraft, Mi-8MTV5 and Mi-24 helicopters - that is, a collection of Soviet equipment," writes political commentator Alexander Klaskovsky.

Experts are wondering what kind of war the authorities are preparing for, trying to demonstrate their "military power." The relevance of this issue was confirmed by the recent changes in the Belarusian draft legislation. At the end of June, the Belarusian parliament adopted a draft law "On changing the laws of the effective functioning of the state's military organization." It has two major changes. First, a deferment from the army will be available only once. After graduating from high school, the recruit will be obliged to leave to serve, and no master's or postgraduate studies can prevent this. Secondly, the claim that he "did not receive their draft summons" will no longer be accepted. They will be considered "draft-dodgers" and will not have the right to work in law enforcement and government agencies, as well as travel abroad....

These innovations, which impact a large number of people, have caused widespread discontent.... Natalya Shcherbina, an expert at the Privatization and Management Institute's Research Center,... [opines] in the long term this can lead to an outflow of the most active and talented from the country. "There will be no open protests - just the ordinary "voting with their feet..."

Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, congratulating the population on Independence Day, even reacted to the outrage in social networks. He said that the tightening of draft legislation is necessary to protect the sovereignty and independence of the country. "I warned you that sovereignty and independence are the most expensive things, they are very expensive, and not only in monetary terms," said the President of Belarus. However, he did not give a clear answer to the question from whom they should be protected. However, from his words it followed that protection could be found under the wing of NATO or Russia....



Russia's Military Operation In Kosovo: A Defining Moment

OE Watch Commentary: Many Russian political and military leaders point to the seizure of the airfield in Kosovo by airborne (peacekeeping) forces in June 1999 as a watershed moment in their modern history. Prior to this surprise operation, Russian forces were subordinated to the US task force as part of NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR) in the Balkans. From their perspective, this reflected a trial period in the internal strategic debate for shaping a closer or more distant relationship with the western military model. Although not strategically decisive (as they were unable to resupply and reinforce this contingent), Russian leaders are interpreting this operation to gain control of the Slatina airfield as their initial step in reasserting an independent foreign policy and rebuilding the Russian military. In the accompanying excerpt from the military weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* (Military-Industrial Courier), retired airborne general Nikolai Staskov provides his perspective.

General Staskov begins by describing his extensive peacekeeping experience in the Balkans, where from "1993–1997, as the deputy commander of the Russian Airborne Forces for peacekeeping operations, I was closely engaged with the Balkans." He goes on to write "in June 1999, I coordinated from Moscow via satellite communications the actions of the Russian peacekeeping brigade in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the movement of the task force into Kosovo."

Staskov provides context for the Russian move during the Kosovo conflict, by first recalling that NATO had ignored Russia's objection to the use of force, "bypassing the UN Security Council," when in March 1999, the alliance began to attack Serbian targets. Once the fighting stopped, Staskov asserts that there was an "apparent reluctance of the NATO countries to allocate to our [Russian] peacekeepers a specific zone of responsibility," since according to NATO officials, Russian "peacekeepers in Kosovo would definitely take the side of the Serbs." To demonstrate that Russia could act independently, and perhaps force NATO to give Russia its own zone in Kosovo, "in early May 1999, the head of the Defense Ministry's General Staff... directed me [Staskov] to begin planning a possible deployment of Russian troops into Kosovo and to secretly begin training units."

Staskov describes how he "had to quietly divert the Airborne Force grouping from under the noses of the Americans," so that it could infiltrate into Kosovo. Staskov claims that once word got out of "the rapid march of the Russian assault force with the occupation of a strategic bridgehead," it "prompted a rabid reaction in the West, primarily in the US." After describing how the potential conflict between Russian and NATO forces around the airfield was averted, he concludes by asserting that this operation "raised the prestige of the Russian Armed Forces in society, and the sense of national identity." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"The assault march in Kosovo raised the prestige of the Russian Armed Forces in society, and the sense of national identity..."

Source: Nikolai Staskov, "Бросок на 'Слатину': Как российские десантники склонили натовских военачальников к благоразумию (Dash to 'Slatina': How Russian paratroopers pushed NATO military leaders toward common sense)," *Voyenno-Promyshlenny Kuryer* (VPK), 18 June 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/50891>

...In June 1999, I coordinated from Moscow via satellite communications the actions of the Russian peacekeeping brigade in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the movement of the task force into Kosovo. These notes are based on records of the log of combat orders received and given...

...From 1993–1997, as the deputy commander of the Russian Airborne Forces for peacekeeping operations, I was closely engaged with the Balkans...

In 1999, terror began in Kosovo and Metohija.... The West proposed introducing an international military contingent into the region, dividing it and the warring parties into sectors and forcing adversaries to peace under NATO control.

Moscow was categorically against the use of force - the NATO version of coercion concerned only the Serb military and the police forces of Yugoslavia.... The position of our country was ignored, and on March 24, 1999, the alliance, bypassing the UN Security Council attacked Yugoslavia....

...Officially, the absence of Russia in Kosovo was explained as follows: Moscow is clearly sympathetic towards the Orthodox Serbian people and therefore cannot be a judge in difficult relations with the Albanians... our peacekeepers in Kosovo would definitely take the side of the Serbs....

...In connection with the apparent reluctance of the NATO countries to allocate to our peacekeepers a specific zone of responsibility in Kosovo, the military leadership of Russia was inclined to the decision to deploy a contingent there similar to the operation near Sarajevo (Republic of BiH) conducted in 1994. In early May 1999, the head of the Defense Ministry's General Staff Colonel-General Yuri Baluyevsky... directed me to begin planning a possible deployment of Russian troops into Kosovo and to secretly begin training units....

...I was in Bosnia for a long time... I knew, as it were, every path, and if necessary, had to quietly divert the Airborne Force grouping from under the noses of the Americans.

The advance detachment reached the Slatina airfield on the morning of June 12, 1999, a few hours ahead of the NATO military. The world has learned about this event from the TV reports of news agencies.... The rapid march of the Russian assault force with the occupation of a strategic bridgehead prompted a rabid reaction in the West, primarily in the US.

...Russia showed its character, became part of the Multinational Stabilization Force in Kosovo (KFOR), got its sector of responsibility.... The assault march in Kosovo raised the prestige of the Russian Armed Forces in society, and the sense of national identity....



Medal awarded to Russian airborne soldiers for seizing the Slatina Airfield in Kosovo in June 1999.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Participant_of_the_March-Shot_Bosnia-Kosovo_12_June_1999.jpg CCA-4.0

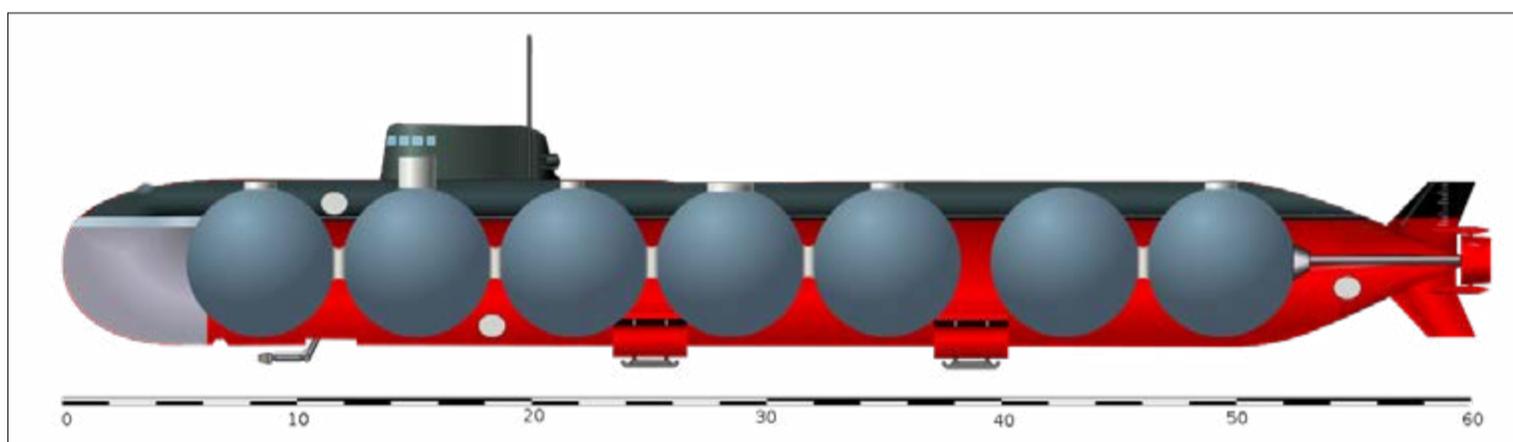


For Those in Peril Under the Sea

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from the *Barents Sea Independent Observer* discuss the recent fire onboard a Russian nuclear-powered submarine (the *Losharik*) in the Arctic, during underwater research activities for the Russian Navy. As the first passage notes, this was the biggest accident in the Russian Navy since 2008.

A fire in a submarine is a frightening-and in this case, tragic event. Fourteen submariners including seven senior captains and five captains died. The other two victims were officers as well. A vessel normally might have one senior captain assigned, so an assemblage of this many senior submarine officers was evidently for a special event or mission. There are indications that this was an all-officer crew. The *Losharik* is a small, submersible, deep-sea craft transported by (slung under) a larger submarine, in this case the *Podmoskvye*. Evidently, the *Podmoskvye* was involved in the recovery and transport of the *Losharik* to home port. The stretch submarine Belgorod is under construction and will also be a carrier for such small submersible craft. (Also see “Cruising in a Stretch-Submarine” in the June 2019 issue of *OE Watch*.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“On the 1st of July, a fire started onboard an underwater research vehicle that was engaged in biometric research activities of the Arctic seabed for the Russian Navy” according to a statement from the Russian Armed Forces. Fourteen submariners died from smoke inhalation. The fire was extinguished by the crew and the submarine is now located in Severomorsk, the headquarters city of the Russian Northern Fleet.”



Possible internal configuration of the Russian submarine *Losharik*.
Source: Heribeto Arribas Abato via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Losharik_interno.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Fire onboard nuclear-powered submarine, 14 sailors killed: the *Losharik* started burning during underwater research activities in Russian territorial waters,” *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 2 July 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/07/fire-nuclear-powered-submarine-14-sailors-killed>

It is the biggest accident in the Russian Navy since 2008 when an accident in the Nerpa nuclear powered sub killed 20 sailors off the Russian Pacific coast...The Losharik is nuclear-powered and normally based in Oleniya Bay...about 100 kilometers east of the Norwegian border. The vessel is operated by the Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research, nicknamed GUGI, a branch directly under General Staff of the Armed Forces. From the Oleniya base, the Directorate operates a fleet of nine nuclear-powered submarines and a few surface vessels that frequently sail out on special missions. Little is known about the nature of those voyages, except reports of significantly increased activity along subsea cables which carry global electronic communication.

The Losharik has one reactor...It is believed that the vessel can be carried by the Podmoskvye, a rebuilt Delta-IV class submarine. The Losharik can reportedly submerge to 6,000 meter depths and does not carry weapons. It is believed to be able to deliver - or remove - small devices ...on the sea floor....Such devices can be noise-makers to distract foreign submarines when Russian submarines sail out from the Kola Peninsula to the North Atlantic. Other listening devices can detect sounds made by the propellers of enemy ships. The submarine can launch and recover unmanned subsea vehicles.

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Report to the President: super-secret submarine *Losharik* will be repaired and taken back in service,” *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 4 July 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/07/report-president-super-secret-submarine-losharik-will-be-repaired-and-taken-back>

According to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, the special purpose submarine can be fully restored and taken back in service. Shoigu met with President Putin following his trip to Severomorsk, the Northern Fleet headquarters. “The constructors of the vessel and industrial representatives have been engaged in order to estimate the work volume and time period needed for the restoration of the ship” Shoigu told the President. “Our first assessment shows that repair is possible, [and] in our case it is not only possible, it is absolutely required”....He also made it clear that the reactor compartment is unaffected by the accident. “The crew did all required measures to protect the installation, it is in a fully workable condition, and this gives us hope that the vessel can be restored in a short time.”

The fire onboard the Losharik (AS-31) broke out in the evening of 1 July. A total of 14 sailors died. Among them were two highly decorated Heroes of Russia, seven Captains First Rank and three Captains Second Rank. The crew included some of the most experienced men in the Russian Navy.... The Ministry of Defense released the list of the dead. The Losharik was commanded by ship captain Denis Dolonsky, Captain First Rank and Hero of Russia....



Murmansk May Finally Overhaul Russia's Aircraft Carrier

OE Watch Commentary: The day before Halloween last year tricked, but did not treat the Russian Navy. Their largest dry dock sank and a falling crane put a hole in the deck and hull of their only aircraft carrier. Since then, the *Admiral Kuznetsov* has been berthed outside of Murmansk, awaiting repair. Russia does not have another mammoth dry dock to effect overhaul of its largest ships. As the accompanying passage from the *Barents Sea Independent Observer* discusses, the plan now seems to be to weld together two existing dry docks and get back to repairing and overhauling major ships. Russia is a green water navy that has been slow to get into the carrier race. The *Admiral Kuznetsov* has had some problems and the overhaul is overdue. According to the passage, the process is estimated to last about a year and a half. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Zvezdochka shipyard confirmed that a replacement for the PD-50 [dry dock] that vanished into the sea last October will soon start construction. The new dock will be based on two existing dry docks located in yard No 35 in Roslyakovo, a town situated only few kilometers from Murmansk City.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Murmansk gets Russia’s biggest dry dock: It will replace the floating dry dock that last year sunk into the Arctic waters of the Kola Bay,” 28 May 2019. *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/05/murmansk-gets-russias-biggest-dry-dock>

When completed, the dry dock will be the biggest of its kind in Russia according to the shipyard press secretary Yevgeny Gladyshev. “At the moment, the dock is divided in two parts, it is actually two different docks...” The reconstruction will merge the two parts into one joint dock. In addition, the whole installation will be made longer.... The whole process is estimated to last for about 1.5 years.

The Russian Navy was put in a difficult situation when the floating dry dock PD-50 sunk last October. The 330 meter-long installation was the only place that could handle upgrades and repairs of the biggest naval vessels. That includes the aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov and battle cruiser Pyotr Veliky. The floating dock had been built in Sweden in 1980 and few years later bought by the Soviet Union and taken to the Kola Bay. There were about 60 people on the dock when it sunk into the sea early in the morning of 30 October 2018....One man died and four were injured.

Aircraft carrier «Admiral Kuznetsov» was in the dock as the accident happened. The vessel was damaged as a large crane fell over the ship deck. The ship has since been lying along the port side of Roslyakovo. A major upgrade of the aircraft carrier is due to be completed by year 2021...



Russian aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov.

Source: English: U.S. Navy photograph via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Russian_aircraft_carrier_Admiral_Kuznetsov_with_ski-jump_takeoff_ramp_for_STOVAR.jpg, Public Domain



Pushing the LNG East

OE Watch Commentary: Russia has a lot of political and economic fortunes riding on the successful operation of the Northern Sea Route. The addition of ice-breaker LNG carriers is helping that success. LNG does no good stored in the north waiting for open Arctic waters so the LNG carriers are now moving that energy to Chinese customers through thick ice. As the accompanying passage discusses, two Russian LNG carriers are moving 70,000 tons of LNG from the Yamal Peninsula to the Chinese port of Jiangdu through difficult ice conditions. The Russian gamble in the north seems to be gaining credibility and justifying long-term planning. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



Vladimir Rusanov tanker.

Source: Kees torn via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VLADIMIR_RUSANOV_\(41717311641\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:VLADIMIR_RUSANOV_(41717311641).jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0

“Two powerful tankers are on their way from Sabetta in this year’s first eastbound voyages through the Northern Sea Route. On 28 June, the Vladimir Rusanov was breaking through thick ice in the Laptev Sea. The vessel, which is the newest of the five carriers currently serving the Yamal LNG project, will be this year’s first ship sailing through the eastern part of the Northern Sea Route. On board is about 70,000 tons of LNG from the Yamal Peninsula. Destination is the Chinese port of Jiangdu.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Arctic LNG carriers sail into deep ice with course for China: Two powerful tankers are on their way from Sabetta in this year’s first eastbound voyages through the Northern Sea Route,” *Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 29 June 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2018/06/arctic-lng-carriers-sail-deep-ice-course-china>

Two powerful tankers are on their way from Sabetta in this year’s first eastbound voyages through the Northern Sea Route. On 28 June, the Vladimir Rusanov was breaking through thick ice in the Laptev Sea. The vessel, which is the newest of the five carriers currently serving the Yamal LNG project, will be this year’s first ship sailing through the eastern part of the Northern Sea Route. On board is about 70,000 tons of LNG from the Yamal Peninsula. Destination is the Chinese port of Jiangdu....

Ice conditions are complicated.... the whole western part of the Laptev Sea is covered by up to two-meter thick very-close drift ice. Parts of the eastern Laptev Sea are opening up, while the East Siberian Sea remains covered by fast ice and very close drift ice. The Vladimir Rusanov is owned jointly by Japanese company Mitsui and the China COSCO Shipping Corporation Limited. It came into service in March of this year.

Not far behind is the Eduard Toll, another LNG carrier loaded with LNG from the Yamal. On 29 June, the tanker approached the Vilkitsky Strait, the waters separating the Kara Sea and the Laptev Sea. Ice conditions here are also complicated. Satellite data shows that the strait is covered by fast ice, a solid layer of ice. The Eduard Toll is owned by Canadian shipping company Teekay and came into service in January this year. Like the rest of the new Yamal tankers, it is built by the Daewoo Shipbuilding Marine Engineering (DSME) in Korea. The Eduard Toll has also set course for China....

The new Yamalmax class of carriers is able to break through 2.1 meters of thick ice....The ice situation in the Russian Arctic has been extraordinary difficult this spring and early summer. Rosatomflot, the company operating the Russian nuclear-powered icebreakers, has had to prolong its period of ice-escorts in the Gulf of Ob and Gazprom Neft has ordered assistance from an additional powerful icebreaker to cope with the situation around its Prirazlomnaya oil platform in the Pechora Sea.



Snorkeling Tanks and Scuba-Diving Tankers

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passage discusses scuba-diving training for 600 servicemen from the tank units of the Eastern Military District, at two ranges in the Republic of Buryatiya. The training entails practicing how to move correctly under water and how to act in the event of an oxygen shortage.

One of the unique features of Soviet-era and Russian tanks is their ability to snorkel tanks across river bottoms. Naturally there are qualifiers. The river depth at the crossing site cannot exceed five meters. The river bottom has to be hard so as not to stick the tanks, the river cannot be over a kilometer in width and the current has to be two meters/second or less. The entry and exit banks cannot exceed 25° and the river bottom slope cannot exceed 15°. Some tanks have a snorkel for the crew compartment and another for the engine, while others run both through a single snorkel. There is even a training snorkel, which allows the crew to exit the tank without having to open a hatch underwater.



Map of Russia- Buryatiya.

Source: Stasyan117 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Russia_-_Buryatia.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Snorkels are quickly erected and tanks are sealed and tested for water tightness before crossing. Drivers maintain 50 meters between tanks to avoid underwater collisions. They don't change gears and maintain a steady azimuth so that they don't get lost on the river bottom. In case the tank gets stuck or the engine quits, each crewmember has a small scuba system and a life vest. After opening the hatch underwater, the crewmembers swim to the surface. Still, the first time under water in a tank has got to get the heart rate up. (D. V. Shunyakov, O. N. Bondarev, D. N. Bagin and K. S Fokin, *Переправы* [Crossing], Ekaterinburg: Ural University Press, 2017, 79-81.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“In the Republic of Buryatiya more than 600 servicemen from Eastern Military District tank subunits will undergo scuba-diving training, entailing the use of self-contained oxygen masks and practice escaping flooded vehicles.”

Source: Eastern Military District Press Service, “In Buryatiya More Than 600 Eastern Military District Tank Crew Members Begin Scuba-Diving Training,” *Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation*, 24 June 2019. <http://www.mil.ru>

Training has begun at two ranges -- the Tsugol range in Transbaikalia, and the Sosnovyy Bor range in Buryatiya. During the training, the tank crews will learn how to move correctly under water and how to act in the event of a shortage of oxygen. Tank crewmembers will conduct up to 10 dives in submersible simulators.

The scuba-diving training of the crews will end with the crossing of a water obstacle and underwater driving of T-72B tanks at the water range of an Eastern Military District combined-arms combined formation, and the servicemen from the Eastern Military District tank formation located in Buryatiya will carry out a forced crossing of the Onon River in Transbaikalia in the course of upcoming exercises.

In the Republic of Buryatiya more than 600 servicemen from Eastern Military District tank subunits will undergo scuba-diving training, entailing the use of self-contained oxygen masks and practice escaping flooded vehicles.



Russia's Balancing Act in the Caucasus

OE Watch Commentary: One of the Russian government's roles in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the years has been to provide weapons and equipment to both sides, essentially to ensure that one side does not have significant capabilities over the other. The accompanying excerpted article reports on another example of the Russian government looking to provide weapons in the region, this time to Azerbaijan.

The article discusses that the Russian government offered to sell the Azerbaijani government the Su-34 fighter-bomber and the Su-35 fighter during "a presentation of the fighters for representatives of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan at the fifth international military-technical forum Army-2019," which took place at the end of June in Russia. The article

also notes how the Russian United Aircraft Corporation had previously shown off the Su-30SM and MiG-35 fighters, but that the Azerbaijani government "did not make a decision on those models." The report also comes just a few months after the Armenian Ministry of Defense announced it is acquiring several Su-30SM fighters. While the Azerbaijani government has yet to reach any agreement on the acquisition of Russian fighters, it has made purchases of Russian weapons and equipment over the past several years, which totaled hundreds of millions of dollars. Russia's offer to sell weapons to Azerbaijan is worth watching as it provides insight into how the Russian government continues to carry out security cooperation in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Military Parade in Baku on Army Day 11.

Source: Sevda Babayeva via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Military_parade_in_Baku_on_an_Army_Day11.jpg, CC 3.0

“...the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) of Russia organized a presentation of the fighters for representatives of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan at the fifth international military-technical forum Army-2019.”

Source: G“Россия заявила о готовности продать Азербайджану истребители Су-34 и Су-35 (Russia announced its readiness to sell Azerbaijan Su-34 and Su-35 fighters),” *Minval.az*, 1 July 2019. <https://minval.az/news/123900635>

Russia is ready to sell Azerbaijan the multifunctional supersonic fighter-bomber Su-34 and the multirole fighter of the 4++ generation Su-35, AzeriDefense reports.

...the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) of Russia organized a presentation of the fighters for representatives of the Ministry of Defense of Azerbaijan at the fifth international military-technical forum Army-2019...the UAC previously offered Azerbaijan the Su-30SM and MiG-35, “However, Azerbaijan did not make a decision on those models.”...



Kazakhstan's Defense Industry at "Army 2019"

OE Watch Commentary: Reports from Kazakhstan on the country's defense industry have noted how its growth has taken place in small steps and as the accompanying excerpted article demonstrates, it appears to have taken another step forward. The article, from the Russian-language news website *Inform Buro*, reports on the participation of 10 enterprises from Kazakhstan's defense industry at the recent "Army-2019" military-technical forum in Russia and includes a few things worth noting.

The article features interviews with representatives at the forum, including an engineer from Kazakhstan ASELSAN Engineering who mentions his company's remote weapon system the "DUAL SARP for armored vehicles" and how it "will soon be taken up by the Ministry of Defense" in Kazakhstan. He also notes how Russian companies were interested in diffractive lenses and how they are not able to acquire them "due to the sanctions." The representative from another company from Kazakhstan, Tynys JSC, mentions that his firm is the main supplier of body armor "for the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard" and that they "are actively working with companies in Russia." Government officials in Kazakhstan have previously stated that one of the main goals of the country's defense industry is to provide the Kazakh Armed Forces with weapons and equipment and eventually become an exporter. While the article does not mention the level of activity taking place between companies in Kazakhstan and Russia, it does show how a few of the companies from Kazakhstan's defense industry are working on developing a market for exports. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



T-72BA of the Kazakh Armed Forces during a military parade in Nur-Sultan on May 7, 2015.

Source: Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A2-72%D0%91_%D0%92%D0%BE%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D0%B6%D1%91%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%88%D1%85_%D0%A1%D0%B8%D0%BB_%D0%9A%D0%B0%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%85%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B0.JPG, Creative Commons CC0 1.0

“We are actively working with companies in Russia.”

Source: Grigoriy Bedenko, “Как проходил военно-технический форум “Армия-2019” Фоторепортаж (How the military-technical forum “Army-2019” took place. Photo report),” *Inform Buro*, 8 July 2019. <https://informburo.kz/stati/kak-prohodil-voenno-tehnicheskij-forum-armiya-2019-fotoreportazh.html>

...10 enterprises from Kazakhstan's defense industry presented their products...Practically all the enterprises have established close relations with Rosoboronexport, Rostec and the (Russian) Federal Service of Military-Technical Cooperation...“Kazakhstan ASELSAN Engineering” presented optical-electronic devices, a mobile software/hardware program for artillery, a fire control system for the T-72 tank among other equipment.

“This year we presented thermal imaging lenses that we make, as well as special communications equipment and a new module DUAL SARP for armored vehicles,” said Osman Atabek, senior engineer of Kazakhstan ASELSAN Engineering...“This module will soon be taken up by the (Kazakh) Ministry of Defense. It is equipped with thermal cameras, two machine guns – a 12.7mm and 7.62mm, and is installed on armored vehicles, which are manufactured by “Kazakhstan Paramount Engineering” – our joint project with them.

“Of the Russian companies interested in our products, this includes Laser Components and Composite Materials. They are interested in our diffractive lenses. These are the type of lenses that Russia cannot currently get due to the sanctions imposed on it.

...“We have repeatedly taken part in this exhibition,” said Alexander Shavrin, Chief Technologist of Tynys JSC...We recently shipped body armor for security agencies of Kazakhstan. We are the main suppliers of these products for the Ministry of Defense and the National Guard... We are actively working with companies in Russia.”...



Georgia's Lingering Border Security Issues

OE Watch Commentary: A few months ago an editorial in the military section of Georgian media outlet *Kvirispalitra* highlighted a lingering problem associated with Georgia and its two breakaway regions, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The article focused on a reoccurring security issue that has outlasted both formal conflicts (South Ossetia 1989-1990 and 2008; Abkhazia 1992-1993) and serves as a painful reminder of the loss of Georgian life and territory. Almost immediately after the end of hostilities in South Ossetia (1990) and Abkhazia (1993), killings and assassinations continued to occur along the newly established borders between Georgia proper and the breakaway republics.

Georgia has not been able to do much about the continued violence on what are considered artificial borders, but as the article notes, violence has not only occurred against Georgians but also against Georgia's enemies, suggesting that Georgian secret or "special services" are also active, sending a message to those who would conspire against and occupy Georgian lands, including Russia.



Damaged Bridge across the Inguri River separating the separatist region of Abkhazia from Georgia proper.
Source: Photo by Dodge Billingsley

Last year, the Georgian parliament seemed to take a cue from *Myrotvorets*, a Ukrainian based website that published a list of over 100,000 individuals accused of crimes against Ukrainians and the Ukrainian state. The Georgian list of 33 individuals pales in number, and as the author admits, nothing has been done to apprehend and bring to justice these purported perpetrators. The Georgian list, known as the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List, is named for two Georgians, Gigi Otkhozoria who was killed on Georgia-Abkhazia frontier and Archil Tatunashvili, who was killed on the Georgia-South Ossetia de facto border.

The overall tone of the article suggests that Georgian counter-terrorism operations (many Georgians see separatist and Russian action against Georgia as terrorism) are not only justified but the only response to continued occupation, claiming, "the only action that can put a stop to these crimes is the principle of vengeance." This tit-for-tat response is a risky proposition. In the past, these sorts of operations have destabilized inherently unstable regions and escalated the tension along the border areas, leading to spikes in violent action against civilians and subsequently more internally displaced people.

Finally, the article suggests that establishing a Georgian database similar to *Myrotvorets* in Ukraine could be a useful tool in bringing justice upon those who conduct acts against the Georgian state. The question is whether it will help recover separatist controlled territory or lead to a new round of violence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

“It is likely that the only action that can put a stop to these crimes is the principle of vengeance – blood for blood, so that others don’t dare to commit such terrible crimes! Who knows, if Giorgi Antsukhelidze’s torturers were held accountable, Archil Tatunashvili and Gigi Otkhozoria might still be alive.”

Source: “სისხლი სისხლის წილ - შურისძიება საიდუმლო ოპერაციებით?! (Blood for Blood: Revenge of Secret Operations?!),” *Kvirispalitra*, 22 April 2019. <https://www.kvirispalitra.ge/samkhedro-thema/52815-siskhli-siskhlis-tsil-shurisdzieba-saidumlo-operaciebith.html>

“In the special services of Georgia there is the potential, i.e., trained personnel, special equipment and weapons, that those on the Otkhozorai-Tatunashvili list are dealt with. So the public can see that the perpetrators of torture of Georgian citizens will not go unpunished. This, first of all, will increase the favorable rating of the government in the eyes of its citizens.”

“It is likely that the only action that can put a stop to these crimes is the principle of vengeance – blood for blood, so that others don’t dare to commit such terrible crimes! Who knows, if Giorgi Antsukhelidze’s torturers were held accountable, Archil Tatunashvili and Gigi Otkhozoria might still be alive.”



The Persistence and Implications of Entrenched Ties between Russia and Slovakia

OE Watch Commentary: A recent show of Bratislava’s support for Russian interests within the Council of Europe, while generally in keeping with most of the European voting (128 of 190 delegates present voted in favor of Russia), represents a radical departure from many former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact members (only 1 of the 20 present delegates from the Baltic states and Poland voted in favor of Russia). Moreover, this vote underscores the deep-seated societal, political, and economic support that Slovakia continues to retain for Russia.

Slovakia’s pre-WWII history was distinct from that of the Czech Republic (Czechia). The Slovak lands (pre-WWI and as part of interwar Czechoslovakia) did not benefit from a strong tradition of industrial development, as was seen within Czech territory. After WWII – and once within the Soviet orbit – Slovakia necessarily benefited from external assistance in industrializing portions of its historically agrarian region and society. Slovakia’s political development after the Cold War, and after peacefully separating from the Czech Republic on 1 January 1993 was also different from that witnessed in the fledgling Czech Republic. This was due in part to its (relatively new) industrial infrastructure – as well as the lesser attention to, and application of, extant lustration laws at the time of separation. Former Party authorities (and industrial bosses) often continued to find themselves in positions of power in Slovakia, especially in factory towns. Hence, in its political and societal development post-communism, Slovakia fell behind its Czech neighbor.

The results of the fairly expansive 2019 polling within central and eastern Europe by a Bratislava-based think tank (GLOBSEC) highlight some of the differences in societal outlooks that continue to differentiate Slovaks from their neighbors. With regard to the so-called Visegrád Group states (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary), the polling results were striking. Forty-one percent of Slovak respondents noted that they thought the US represented a danger to their country; the other three Visegrád states polled at 12-20% in this response. Similarly, Slovaks had the lowest percentage of “yes” responses to the question of whether Russia represents a threat. With regard to their Alliance membership, only 56% of Slovak respondents noted that they would vote in a hypothetical referendum to remain within NATO while the other three Visegrád states polled at 80-92%. Overall, Slovaks display rather strong societal ties to their eastern Slavic cousins.

Politically, the single strongest point of Russian support seems to emerge from the leader of the Slovak National Party (SNS), Andrej Danko, who currently serves as the Speaker of Slovakia’s parliament. Danko has been vocal in his belief that Slovakia is best served as a bridge between western and eastern influences. (While the SNS is a junior member within the governing coalition, it occasionally wields disproportionate influence, especially through Danko.) Manifestations of diplomatic support for Russia continue to emerge. The Slovak government recently dispatched a relatively junior official (a deputy PM for Investments and Information) to the D-Day 75th anniversary commemorations (Slovakia’s PM instead visited Russia). Earlier this year Danko pointedly (or coincidentally) conducted an official trip to Russia the day following a US Secretary of State visit to Slovakia. On a more serious front, Slovakia was noticeable among the minority of EU members, which decided to not immediately expel Russian diplomats in a show of solidarity with the UK following the chemical poisoning attack on UK territory.

Economically, the first point of connectivity with Russia is the energy sector. Slovakia is very much dependent upon Russia for its oil and natural gas. Per EU published statistics of 2018 energy imports, Slovakia was one of only four member states, for which Russia represented a 75-100% share of “national extra-EU imports” of both petroleum oils and natural gas. Separately, Danko has noted the need for Slovak businesses to continue, if not expand, their engagement in Russia; Danko has also alluded to Russia as a facilitator for Slovak business within Asia. Related to the latter point is Moscow’s continuing support to its Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). While it is as yet unclear if Slovakia might eventually follow the example of Serbia, which recently announced that it would sign a free trade agreement with the EAEU, both Slovak political and societal spheres have indicated a degree of receptivity for such a step.

As Moscow continues to work toward the return of its full freedom of maneuver within a European framework (e.g., cessation of EU sanctions, recently extended until 31 January 2020), its favorable bilateral relations with select countries within European institutions likely will continue to bear fruit. **End OE Watch Commentary (Sarafian)**

“We are very pleased that thanks to us, Russia ... received what belongs to it [voting rights] said the [Slovak] politicians...”

Source: “В Словакии опровергли уход делегации с сессии ПАСЕ из-за России (Slovakia denied the departure of the delegation from the PACE session because of Russia),” *Izvestia*, 27 June 2019. <https://iz.ru/893271/2019-06-27/v-slovakii-oprovergli-ukhod-delegacii-s-sessii-pase-iz-za-rossii>

“The majority of members of the Slovak delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) voted for the return of full authority [i.e., voting rights] to Russia...”

“Blaga and Danko [L’uboš Blaha, Head of Slovakia’s delegation to PACE; Andrej Danko, Speaker of the Slovak Parliament and Chairman of the Slovak National Party] underscored the fact that the ruling parties of Slovakia fully support Russia, which was unfairly deprived of [voting] rights earlier.”



Latvia and the Baltic States Seek Closer Coordination on Relations with China

by Otto Tabuns

Republished and edited for OE Watch in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, Vol. 19, Issue 12, dated 26 June 2019.

For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/latvia-and-the-baltic-states-seek-closer-coordination-on-relations-with-china/>

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 April 2019, a meeting was held between the foreign ministers of the Baltic States and Nordic Countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland), or NB8; and of the Visegrád Group countries (Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary), or V4. This combined group has met annually since 2013, with this year’s meeting taking place in Palanga, Lithuania. The NB8 and V4 foreign ministers met to coordinate common positions on a variety of issues, to include “sharing of views on current European Union issues and security policy, including the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework, relations with Ukraine and Eastern Partnership countries, the transatlantic link, and preparations for the upcoming NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting.”

One of the most striking aspects of the meeting was that, amidst this range of European concerns, the character of relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) emerged as a prominent priority in the agenda. Following the meeting, Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs commented on “the rapid growth of China’s political, economic and military weight [which] triggers geopolitical change not only in Asia... but also globally,” and accordingly called for the PRC “to demonstrate responsibility that corresponds to its influence and benefits [and] to invest accordingly in... the international system and to engage constructively in resolving global challenges.” Rinkēvičs further stated that European countries should avoid a “black-and-white perspective” of China as “a threat or an opportunity, a competitor or an ally,” but instead should “find the real balance in the relationship with China so that we could protect our interests vis-a-vis China, whilst remaining true to European values.”

There are many reasons why Latvia and other Baltic states would seek closer (and coordinated) ties with China, but the most important of these reasons lie in the realm of trade. Recent years have seen a drop in economic activity with Russia, traditionally the largest market for several categories of goods from the Baltic states. Disputes between the Baltic states and Russia over issues such as the status of historical monuments, and broader Euro-Atlantic opposition to Russian aggression against Ukraine, have revived political obstacles to trade with Russia.

Since 2013, Latvian exports to Russia have decreased in absolute numbers, and as a part of total national exports. Having learned from past experiences about the consequences of over-reliance on the Russian market, Baltic businesses have tried to redirect their products towards other markets. China’s domestic market is 10 times larger than Russia. Latvian exports to the PRC have grown by over 40% since 2013. Latvia also maintains several economic representatives in the PRC. (However, the new Latvian Minister of Economics, Ralfs Nemiro, has raised questions about the nature of economic cooperation with China. Although Latvian exports to China have increased, Chinese exports to Latvia in the same period have been five times larger.)

Meanwhile, in 2013, four percent of third country citizens obtaining a EU residency permit through investment in Latvia were Chinese. Latvia is the leading Baltic state in students learning Chinese, while Beijing International Studies University teaches Latvian among other “16+1” country languages to students as young as 17 for up to seven years. In addition to a Confucius Institute created at the University of Latvia in 2011, in 2015 the China-Latvia Academic Cooperation Center was established at the Political Science Department of the Faculty of Social Sciences as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Although the dominant model of PRC-European relationships has thus far been mostly one of bilateral relations, a common European voice beyond general statements and common tariffs has started to take shape. This is occurring not only in Brussels, but also among the regional groups within the European Union. The Nordic and Baltic foreign ministers, as well as their Visegrád colleagues, appear to be seeking a common regional policy regarding their relations with China. This is being done not only to have a stronger position in bilateral interactions with Beijing, but also for the purpose of having a larger voice in forming common EU positions in Brussels. **End OE Watch Commentary (Tabuns)**



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

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



Russian Analysis of China's Military



Vladimir Putin and President of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping at Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Sep 2018.

Source: en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58524 CCA 4.0

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past several years, much of the major Russian media has celebrated the closer political, economic, and military ties between Russia and China. Moscow's warmer relationship with Beijing became more pronounced after the conflict with Ukraine began in early 2014, and subsequent Western attempts to isolate and punish Russia with economic sanctions. Since leaders in both Beijing and Moscow share plans to establish a multi-polar global security order, some Russian analysts have referred to their closer relationship with China as a "strategic partnership."

Recently, one of Russia's most popular news sources, *Kommersant*, published an in-depth article dealing with how Russia views China's growing military prowess. Besides providing historical and cultural background on Chinese military thinking, the article describes five major topics in detail: China's Military Doctrine, Major Armaments, Command and Control, Nuclear Weapons and Future Weapons. The brief accompanying excerpt captures a few of the cogent points from this valuable resource.

The article begins with a brief overview of Russian-Chinese military relations, pointing out that since 1652, the two countries "have repeatedly fought - sometimes against each other, or when shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy." The article reminds readers that not too long ago, they were fighting over the Damansky Island, and that while today the two countries enjoy good relations, things "can change again at any moment, and it is better to understand what capabilities the state has on the other side of the border, which stretches for 4209 kilometers." It stresses that alongside China's impressive economic growth over the past 20 years, there has also been "an active modernization of the largest army on the planet," where today the "People's Liberation Army of China (PLA)," has become "more mobile, modern and technically equipped."

While the article itself is noteworthy, some of the reader comments also illustrate how Russians perceive China's growing military strength. One reader suggested that this detailed article was designed "to divide our good allied relations with China and into the arms of 'loyal, Western friends,'" emphasizing that "Russians will always be regarded as inferior in the West, while in China, Russians are treated with respect, as highly civilized people." Another concluded, "it is always necessary to keep the powder dry," and expressed admiration "that Russia is developing and producing the latest weapons that can destroy any aggressor into atoms." If nothing else, this article indicates that Russians are closely watching military developments in China. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"What does the Chinese army look like in 2019, how is it going to fight, and could it be dangerous for Russia?"

Source: Mikhail Korostikov, Lyubov Krasheninnikova, Vasily Lemutov, "ВСЯ КИТАЙСКАЯ ПАТЬ (THE ENTIRE CHINESE ARMY)," *Kommersant*, 8 July 2019. https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4012699?from=other_spec

Since the battle of Achansky fortress in March 1652, Russia and China have repeatedly fought - sometimes against each other, or when shoulder to shoulder against a common enemy.... Today, China has at its disposal not only an army in the millions, but also weapons that are unmatched. What does the Chinese army look like in 2019, how is it going to fight, and could it be dangerous for Russia? These are the subjects of this special Kommersant project.

...Over the past decade, China has achieved success not only in economics, politics, construction and sports. There has also been an active modernization of the largest army on the planet. The official military budget of the country grew from less than \$10 billion in the early 1990s to \$177 billion in 2019, coming in second in the world. Reforms of the current PRC Chairman Xi Jinping have dramatically increased the combat capability of the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA), making it more mobile, modern and technically equipped....

...Despite the fact that now Russia and China have grown closer politically, forty years ago they were fighting a real "cold war", and in 1969 on the island of Damansky - a real "hot" war. Everything can change again at any moment, and it is better to understand what capabilities the state has on the other side of the border, which stretches for 4209 kilometers.

Reader comments:

Tsunami

Well, it appears this article wants to divide our good allied relations with China and into the arms of loyal, Western friends.... And do not forget the most important thing: Russians will always be regarded as inferior in the West, while in China, Russians are treated with respect, as highly civilized people...

Ivan Spiridonov

Therefore, it is always necessary to keep the powder dry. I am glad that Russia is developing and producing the latest weapons that can destroy any aggressor into atoms.



Chinese Regions to Begin Working Directly with Russian Ones

by Paul Goble

Republished and edited for OE Watch in collaboration with the Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor, Vol. 16, Issue 95, dated 27 June 2019.

For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/chinese-regions-to-begin-working-directly-with-russian-ones/>

OE Watch Commentary: Russians have become increasingly concerned about Chinese economic and demographic penetration of Siberia and the Russian Far East; but in most cases, Chinese actions have been blessed by Moscow, which sees them as a source of immediate profit regardless of any longer-term consequences. However, many Russians in that region do not share this view, and feel they are being sold out by the center. But now, China has taken a step that may create more serious problems for Moscow and has done so, at least so far, with Russia's agreement: Beijing is promoting direct cooperation between Chinese and Russian regions, thus repeating what Moscow tried along its border with Soviet bloc countries in the 1970s and 1980s.

In early June, the sixth Chinese-Russian EXPO in Harbin signaled this new policy by calling for direct cooperation between Chinese regions and Russia's regions and republics east of the Urals. The first pairing is to be China's Guangdong Province with the Sakha Republic of Russia.

The two sides agreed to establish structures to promote expanded contacts on the sub-national level. Maksim Akimov, the Russian deputy prime minister in attendance, said in Harbin that these contacts will involve "not only trade and economic issues but humanitarian concerns as well. Contacts between people and friendship will be strengthened, and all will be well in the trade and economic sphere as a result." Wan Qishan, his Chinese counterpart, responded in kind, specifying that Beijing wants to import more agricultural products, natural resources, and water from Russia and looks forward to having this growth reflect the needs of both regions.

On the surface, such steps appear anodyne, a logical extension of what has already been taking place; and they are still certainly under the control of the two national capitals. But there are two precedents, one from the late Soviet period and a second from the post-Soviet era, that suggest any downward moves from capital-to-capital and business relationships to inter-regional ones are fraught with peril for the weaker partner and offer the regions new political possibilities.

Despite the widespread image of the Soviet border as everywhere resembling the impenetrable Berlin Wall, Moscow in fact promoted cross-border regional-level relationships with Eastern Bloc states that it felt it fully controlled by other means. Specifically, it did so all along its western border in order to undermine the independence of these countries and to give Moscow additional leverage over them from within. As long as Moscow was the dominant power, this strategy worked. But once Moscow began to lose its position, these cross-border structures allowed for influence to pass in the opposite direction, encouraging governments in the Soviet Union republics to adopt a more independent line, thus helping to power the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) (Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, Montreal, McGill University Press, 1993).

That experience made some in Moscow leery after 1991 of accepting European projects for cross-border Euro-Regions, which the Europeans wanted as part of a common neighborhood policy and that they had used to lessen the significance of national borders within the European Union. At first, Moscow had little choice but to accept this offer from Brussels and allowed the establishment of such institutional arrangements. The Europeans brought money, and Russians saw no option but to cooperate with them. But with time and with the rise of Vladimir Putin, Moscow became increasingly suspicious that such institutions could threaten the central government's control or even lead to independence movements along Russia's western periphery. The Kremlin ultimately restricted these activities or even wound them up entirely.

In the Russian Far East, China is clearly the rising power, just as the EU was relative to the Russian Federation during the 1990s. Consequently, it is almost certain that China's influence in Russian regions will far exceed Russia's in any of the Chinese ones. In the short term, that will give new status to the leadership of the Sakha Republic and other regions China may extend this policy to. They will travel to China, and Chinese regional and central officials will visit them more frequently, thus giving this Russian Far East republic a quasi-state status that its inhabitants want but that Moscow fears. And over time, these structures of inter-regional exchange—just like those across the western Soviet borders in the 1980s—may give additional impulse to already growing fissiparousness in the Far East and Siberia.

That does not mean that China necessarily plans to actively promote the independence of these Russian regions. Rather, it means that Beijing views the regions within the Russian Federation as elements that could potentially give it more relative advantages over Moscow than it currently enjoys. As this process develops, however, at least some in the Russian capital are certain to be alarmed. The history of such cross-border region-to-region arrangements strongly suggests that they are going to have more far-reaching consequences than anything the Russian and Chinese officials meeting in Harbin were thinking about. **End OE Watch Commentary (Goble)**



Growing Sino-Russia Ties: How Real Are They?

OE Watch Commentary: According to some media reports, China and Russia have been experiencing a warming trend in their relations. Observers describe them as being at their closest since they established diplomatic ties 70 years ago. The accompanying three passages offer different perspectives on these tightening relations.

On 5 June, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the Joint Statement on Developing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination in the New Era. As the accompanying passage from the transcript of the Ministry of National Defense’s monthly press conference notes, Senior Colonel Ren GuoQiang, a spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, explained that the sides planned to “bring the military relationship in the new era to a new historic height across the board.”



Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, BRICS summit, 2015.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Xi_Jinping,_BRICS_summit_2015_01.jpg, CC BY 4.0

Likely pushing both sides into strengthening cooperation

is what the second excerpt, taken from a *CCCT-4* news segment, describes as “increasing global uncertainty.” According to commentator Teng Jianqun, this uncertainty and “some countries... undermining the foundation for global strategic stability for their own interests” drive China and Russia’s “need to maintain balanced and steady relations...”

The third article extract, published by the *South China Morning Post*, paints a different picture, claiming that Russia is watching “wearily” as China’s military power grows. While both sides have indeed been striving to tighten relations, the article notes that China’s military power has exceeded that of Russia’s, especially in its maritime capabilities. According to the article, ties are “uneven” on the defense front, as China continues pouring a lot of money into its military and new technological innovations. The article quotes an analyst as saying that Russia has accepted the reality that it has become China’s “little brother... and defers to Beijing on a growing number of issues.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Under the strategic guidance of the heads of states, the two militaries [of China and Russia] will make efforts to bring the military relationship in the new era to a new historic height across the board.”

Source: “月国防部例行记者会文字实录 (Monthly Report of the Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense),” *Chinese Ministry of Defense Website*, 27 June 2019. http://www.mod.gov.cn/shouye/2019-06/27/content_4844577.htm

As the China-Russia relationship is in the new era, so is the military-to-military relationship. The two heads of states have signed the Joint Statement on Developing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination in the New Era and announced that the two sides will strengthen strategic communication, deepen military mutual trust and conduct all-round practical cooperation at different levels. It has provided a fundamental guidance to elevate the military relationship to higher levels and enriched the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in the new era.

Under the strategic guidance of the heads of states, the two militaries will make efforts to bring the military relationship in the new era to a new historic height across the board. The two militaries will better support each other on issues concerning our respective core interests, improve all-round exchanges and cooperation mechanisms at different levels and deepen cooperation in areas such as high-level exchanges, strategic level cooperation, realistic training, equipment and technological development and counter-terrorism. The two militaries will continue to contribute positive energy to world peace and global strategic stability.

Source: “Focus Today,” *Live Streaming News on CCTV-4*, 6 June 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCDDYb_M2B4

“... in face of the increasing global uncertainties, China and Russia need to maintain balanced and steady relations and strengthen cooperation in various fields.

... that some countries have been undermining the foundation for global strategic stability for their own interests, such as withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, and that major powers need to take on the responsibility to implement existing arms control treaties. [According to commentator Teng Jianqun] the joint statement [between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin] is an important judgment from China and Russia on the current international situation, and that the two countries are willing to contribute to upholding global strategic stability.”



Continued: Growing Sino-Russia Ties: How Real Are They?

Source: “Kristin Huang, “China Has Overtaken Russia as a Maritime Power, Boosted by Joint Naval Drills,” *South China Morning Post*, 16 June 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3014659/china-has-overtaken-russia-maritime-power-boosted-joint-naval>

China has surpassed Russia as a maritime power, boosted by years of joint drills between the two navies, according to military analysts. Such exercises had helped China to become a relatively advanced naval power, and Russia was watching on warily as Beijing continued a push to modernise its military, they said.

Communist rivals during the cold war, Beijing and Moscow are now hailing a new era in bilateral ties – counterbalancing worsening relations with Washington – and their militaries are also stepping up cooperation. Last month, the Chinese and Russian navies held their first joint live-fire air defense exercise at sea, involving two surface combatants.

...But on the defense front, ties are becoming more uneven, with China making advances after pouring big money into its military and innovation sectors.

...increased funding has already seen China produce some of the world’s most advanced weaponry, which has, in some cases, surpassed that of the United States, a report on China’s military power released in January by the Defense Intelligence Agency said.

Timothy Heath, a senior defense researcher at the Rand Corporation, said while Russia might lament its decline in power, it had accepted the reality that the country had become China’s “little brother”.

“Moscow defers to Beijing on a growing number of issues, such as increasing Chinese influence in Central Asia and Chinese leadership in international organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” Heath said, referring to the regional economic and security bloc.

...China’s northern neighbor could face a dilemma as the country’s military power grows, according to [Collin] Koh [a military expert from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore]. “Moscow would view China’s maritime ambitions with some wariness, but Russia would still want to keep China close by as a partner to resist the West, especially following the Ukraine crisis in 2013,” he said.

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

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



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



The Chinese Communist Party as it Approaches its Centennial

OE Watch Commentary: One of China's top strategic initiatives is to perpetuate the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Over nearly the past century, the CCP has evolved into one of the world's most powerful ruling parties. The accompanying excerpted article provides an overview of the party's history as it approaches its centennial, and looks at how far it has come since its inception.

The CCP, based on Marxist ideology, was founded in 1921 as both a revolutionary movement and a political party. In its infancy, the party endured a number of challenges and struggles, such as being ousted from Shanghai in 1927 and being driven underground. It also suffered mass casualties and near defeat during the 6,000-mile, historic "Long March" from southeastern to northwestern China in 1934-1935. However, since 1949, after defeating Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces and establishing the People's Republic of China, the CCP has been the sole governing body of the country.



18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China.
Source: Dong Fang via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:18th_National_Congress_of_the_Communist_Party_of_China.jpg, Public Domain.

The CCP has come a long way since its inception. According to the article, the party has grown from about 50 members in its infancy to over 90 million members today. The article credits the CCP for developing China - a once impoverished country - into the world's second-largest economy and for leading it closer to "the world's center stage." Claiming that the CCP has no special interests of its own because its interests are with the state and its people, Xi Jinping continues to push for the removal of anything that would taint the Party (such as corrupt officials). Today, the CCP has absolute rule in all areas, from the People's Congress, the judicial system and social organizations to the Central Military Commission. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“The (Chinese Communist Party) is striving to achieve its first centenary goal – to complete building a moderately prosperous society in all respects....”

Source: “Decoding Success of Communist Party of China,” *Xinhua*, 1 July 2019. <http://en.people.cn/n3/2019/0701/c90000-9593449.html>

It was the summer of 1921. A dozen Communist Party of China (CPC) members were forced to leave a small building in the French concession area of Shanghai, and boarded a boat on Nanhu Lake in Jiaying, Zhejiang Province, concluding the first National Congress of the CPC. The meeting marked a new chapter in history. Since then, the Party has managed to lead a vulnerable country to move closer toward the world's center stage. After 98 years, the CPC has grown from a small party of about 50 members into the world's largest ruling party, with more than 90 million members. China has developed from an impoverished country to the second-largest economy with a GDP worth 90 trillion yuan (13.1 trillion U.S. dollars). The Chinese nation has stood up, grown rich and is becoming strong.

The CPC is striving to achieve its first centenary goal -- to complete building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Once achieved, it will be a great cause with global impacts made by a vast country of nearly 1.4 billion people, as well as strong proof of “striving for the cause of human progress,” a promise made by the CPC.



China's Focus on Upgrading its Civil Air Defense

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Chinese sources discuss some of China's recent efforts to upgrade its civil air defense capabilities to become more integrated and "smarter." As the first passage notes, China's civil air defense department is a government organization and depends on civil-military integration to achieve its technological objectives. The country's civil air defense operations fall under the theater command and the relevant military organs.

According to the first passage from the website of the Chinese Ministry of Defense, the Shanghai municipal civil air defense department joined forces with multiple scientific research institutions and enterprises to upgrade its civil defense equipment. During a recent civil air defense exercise in Shanghai, 100 "sets of new (protective) equipment, including the 'Low-altitude Magic Shield' UAV defense and control system and firefighting robots" were unveiled, demonstrating some of the technological advancements.

The second article, published in *China Military*, explains that Shanghai has been stepping up the construction of new-type professional civil air defense teams in the areas of information network, electronic protection, psychological protection, drone reinforcement, and air rescue. It has used science and technology in its upgrades and has integrated the Internet, big data, and artificial intelligence with civil air defense to create a "smart civil air defense" that goes "above and beyond." The purpose of all the added security and upgrades, according to the article, is to protect "important economic targets." **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



China's Ministry of Defense.

Source: Netson via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ChinaDOD.jpg>, CC BY-SA 4.0

“Civil air defense has undergone significant changes in various aspects, including investigation and reconnaissance, evacuation mode, protection subject, and application of means under the new situation.”

Source: Zou Dongmei, “聚力提高人防科技含量 (Focus Efforts on Raising Technological Elements in Civil Air Defense),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 28 June 2019. http://www.mod.gov.cn/jmsd/2019-06/28/content_4844717.htm

According to media reports, in a recent civil air defense action exercise conducted in Shanghai, more than 100 sets of new equipment, including the “Low-altitude Magic Shield” UAV defense and control system and firefighting robots, made a shining public appearance in the spotlight, greatly boosting the comprehensive defense capability. In recent years, the Shanghai municipal civil air defense department gave full play to the local advantages of possessing enormous technological resources, joined hands with multiple scientific research institutions and new high-tech enterprises in driving the upgrading of civil defense equipment, laying a solid foundation for forging an impregnable shield in the cause of civil air defense.

Source: “Creating the Municipal ‘Smart Civil Air Defense System,’” *China Military*, 31 May 2019. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-05/31/content_9520011.htm

In recent years, Shanghai has stepped up the construction of new-type professional civil air defense teams in terms of information network, electronic protection, psychological protection, drone reinforcement, and air rescue; advanced the construction of a stronger civil air defense based on science and technology; and promoted the in-depth integration of Internet, big data, artificial intelligence (AI) with civil air defense, in an effort to enhance the construction of “smart civil air defense” to go above and beyond.

Against the backdrop of the large city's air defense operations in the context of informationization, based on the complex conditions faced by Shanghai civil air defense, and centered on the procedure of civil air defense organization at wartime, the drill was an in-depth study of various topics, including peacetime preparation and wartime readiness, civil air defense command and overall coordination, as well as the issues such as from what and how to prevent the important economic objectives. It highlighted the use of new equipment, new measures, and new methods of operation, putting the pilot ‘smart civil air defense’ project to the test in all aspects.

Civil air defense has undergone significant changes in various aspects, including investigation and reconnaissance, evacuation mode, protection subject, and application of means under the new situation. “Defense” has no longer been the only subject of the civil air defense training. The Municipal Civil Air Defense Office not only trained with new equipment, but also displayed 110 sets of protective equipment in five series of command, defense, resistance, elimination and rescue in the drill. The drill has not only put more equipment into practice, but also focused on the building of core capacity of fighting against air defense attacks, set up the subjects in accordance with the actual procedures in handling air defense attacks, and effectively fulfilled the mission of “wartime air defense, peacetime service, and emergency support.”



Civil Air Defense Exercises Held in Western China

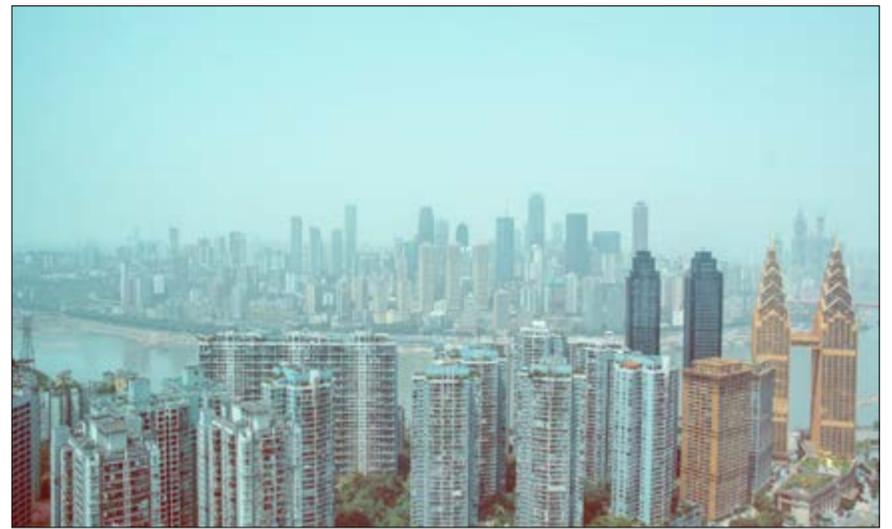
OE Watch Commentary: In late May, Chongqing held large-scale integrated civil air defense exercises. Located at the confluence of the Jialing and Yangtze rivers, Chongqing is an important inland port. The city of Chongqing has some 18 million citizens, though the larger municipality surrounding it (also named Chongqing) brings the total to over 30 million. Civil air defense holds special significance for Chongqing, as it was the target of heavy Japanese bombing during World War II.

As the accompanying passage from China's *PLA Daily* discusses, the exercise included a simulated air raid against the Huangyiping Power plant [黄桷坪电厂] in south-central Chongqing to test new modes of evacuation, including use of private cars and buses to rapidly remove people from possible target areas.

While civil air defense is typically something most countries actively prepare for in wartime, passive defensive measures permeate Chinese military and civilian infrastructure. Many universities (including the one attended by the author) have air raid shelters, even in structures built in the past 30 years.

Mirroring a national focus on Military-Civil Fusion, the exercise indicated that the Chinese military is attempting to build better lines of communication with civilian government agencies and the population more generally. Linking the Western Theater Command (which has responsibility for Chongqing) directly into the civil defense plans will likely improve the ability of civil authorities to respond promptly and utilize all available assets in a crisis. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Under the guidance of the Ministry, the People’s Air Defense Operation was integrated into the theater’s joint air defense system, with the forces stationed in Chongqing acting as a support force for civil air defense operations to coordinate air interceptions, ground strikes, and rear protection actions to gain the initiative and preparation time for civil air defense.”



Chongqing.

Source: Photo by Mojor Zhu on Unsplash, <https://images.unsplash.com/photo-1523884551123-1ba6db38e1ee?ixlib=rb-1.2.1&ixid=eyJhcHBfaWQiOjEyMDd9&auto=format&fit=crop&w=1489&q=80>, Public Domain.

Source: “渝动·人防-2019’ 城市人民防空行动演练 - 将人民防空融入战区联合防空体系 (“Chongqing* Mobilization - Civil Air Defense-2019” Urban Civil Air Defense Action Exercise- Integrating People’s Air Defense into the Theater Joint Air Defense System),” *PLA Daily*, 1 June 2019. http://www.mod.gov.cn/mobilization/2019-06/01/content_4842794.htmhtml?agt=15422

*: The character yu [渝] is an abbreviation for Chongqing.

On May 28, Chongqing held five urban civil air defense operations drills. Ren Yuan [任远], a member of the Jiulongpo District [九龙坡区] Civil Defense Medical Rescue Detachment, found that the exercise “Chongqing Mobilization - Civil Defense-2019” was very different from the past.

From May 28th to 29th, more than 50 military units and more than 4,000 soldiers and civilians participated in the “Chongqing Mobilization - Civil Defense-2019” drill.

“Civil air defense is closely linked with field air defense and high-value asset air defense. It is impossible to purely study civil air defense [without this greater context] and fall into the old routine of independent design.” According to the commanders of the Chongqing Garrison District, “Based on this understanding, the garrison district is mobilized under the authority of the Western Theater Command and the National Defense Mobilization Department of the Central Military Commission. Under the guidance of the Ministry, the People’s Air Defense Operation was integrated into the theater’s joint air defense system, with the forces stationed in Chongqing acting as a support force for civil air defense operations to coordinate air interceptions, ground strikes, and rear protection actions to gain the initiative and preparation time for civil air defense.”

Due to the clarification of the thinking of the people’s air defense operations and the division of responsibilities between the military and the various departments, and previous essential training, actual military drills, and overall training were effective. This exercise introduced a number of innovative measures: Yuzhong District [渝中区] changed its previous population evacuation plan and focused on evacuating people in target areas to adjacent districts and integrating use of busses and private cars to increase speed and efficiency. After the simulated air raid on the Huangyiping Power plant [黄桷坪电厂], military units continued to supply electricity and the city. ...

At the drill site, Li Guokun [李国坤], a staff member of the Chongqing Garrison War Readiness Development Bureau, told the reporter: “For the next step, we will focus on integration of civil and military, air defense and ground defense to improve coordination. We will further integrate all forces together to create an indestructible shield of the people.”



PLA Tests Armed Helicopter/UAV Integration

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying article describes helicopter-UAV “fusion training” operations by a brigade under the Northern Theater Command [北部战区] 79th Group Army, which is based in Liaoning Province [辽宁省] in northeastern China. The reporter embedded with the unit observed the crew of a helicopter operating a UAV 100 meters away and apparently beginning an attack run. While various countries have tested drone swarms or full-size aircraft working with UAVs in a so-called Cooperative Engagement Capability, this appears to be a new development for the PLA.



Harbin Z-19 reconnaissance/attack helicopter making a low-level pass at Zhuhai Airshow 2012.
Source: Alert5 via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harbin_Z-19_helicopter_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harbin_Z-19_helicopter_(cropped).jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

An article in 25 February 2018 translated for this publication (See: “PLA Army Aviation Brigades’ Training Now Includes Urban

Operations,” in the October 2018 issue of *OE Watch*) noted that the 79th Group Army’s Army

Aviation Brigade had issued a new Outline of Military Training and Evaluation [军事训练大纲], and had begun training in complex urban operations. Chinese officers quoted in that article outlined difficulties of operating in urban environments (tight spaces, inability to access certain areas) that may be possible to overcome through the use of UAVs.

However, adding new systems can come at the cost of added complexity, and the article suggests that the proliferation of new platforms and sensors can actually increase stress on the commanding officer, requiring them to acclimate to the flood of data and fast-paced decision-making. The article also includes a short essay by the Army Aviation Brigade’s commander Li Xincheng [李新成]. According to Li, the three-dimensionality of future conflicts will require a different mindset for ground forces, and there must be a focus on extracting the maximum “battlefield contribution” [战场贡献率] from any given system.

While these experiments are in their early stages, they are part of a clear pattern of ongoing innovation and adaptation to new developments in warfighting by the PLA. As the author notes, “They are focused on how future wars will be fought, and [are] adopting new training curriculum” to incorporate coordination of new type operational forces (including increased cooperative training between UAVs and helicopters). **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Future battlefields on land are no longer “ground battlefields” in the traditional sense, and combat operations will be carried out simultaneously in multiple dimensions. The new type of war requires a highly efficient and capable new type of army. It must focus on the requirements of joint operations and actively improve the “battlefield contribution rate” of a given system in the future war.” -- Brigade Commander Li Xincheng [李新成]



Continued: PLA Tests Armed Helicopter/UAV Integration

Source: “第79集团军某旅探索‘武装直升机+无人机’融合训练 (A Certain Brigade of the 79th Group Army Tests Armed-Helicopter/UAV ‘Fusion Training’),” *PLA Daily*, 27 May 2019. http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2019-05/27/content_4842320.htmhtml?agt=15422

“Army Eagle Group” Adds New Members

PLA Daily Reporter Hao Hailong reports: “..Setting strike path..searching for a target.” In the helicopters’ cabin, one after another the crew issues commands to a drone 100 meters away. The drone is constantly changing its flight attitude and transmitting real-time information about the battlefield to a control panel aboard the helicopter. In the early summer a brigade of the 79th Group Army has adopted an innovative training model and is using a UAV in tandem with an armed helicopter.

According to the brigade’s commander “The more you test your limits, the faster a unit can improve their combat capability.” They are focused on how future wars will be fought, and adopting new training curriculum incorporating coordination of new type operational forces, including increased cooperative training between UAVs and helicopters. ...

The reporter has learned that integrating new combat forces has added challenges to the task of command, requiring the brigade commander to accurately calculate various parameters such as the number of troops, the time of combat actions, and the performance of the equipment, and to rely on the integrated command platform to achieve fast and accurate command decisions and assess damage.

Training Ground Takeaways

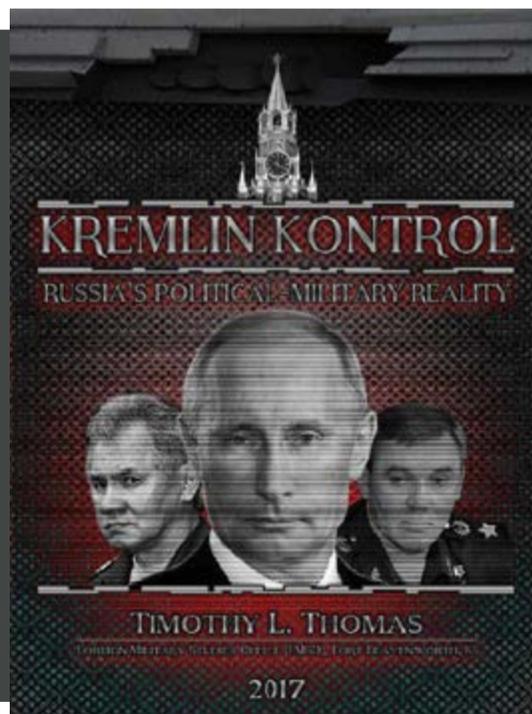
Brigade Commander Li Xincheng [李新成]

Breakthrough Conventional Applications and Develop New levels of combat effectiveness

“New type” operational forces have special combat mechanisms, unique combat effectiveness and novel operation mode, and will be the key instrument of victory on the battlefield. In the age of cold weapons (i.e. prior to the advent of firearms), cavalry were dominant, and were succeeded by tanks during the age of mechanized warfare. In the information age, those that can develop “new type” combat forces will gain a key advantage in war. Chairman Xi Jinping stressed that it is necessary to adhere to realistic training and joint training. Future battlefields on land are no longer “ground battlefields” in the traditional sense, and combat operations will be carried out simultaneously in multiple dimensions. The new type of war requires a highly efficient and capable new type of army. It must focus on the requirements of joint operations and actively improve “battlefield contribution rate” of a given system in the future war.*

As the commander of the new combat force, it is necessary to raise the new combat force to the height of the main battle and the victory of the enemy, explore more innovative training methods, methods of warfare, study the operational mechanism and corresponding operational modes... In the future, the battlefield will seize the opportunity and win the initiative.

**Chinese media typically does not use “President” for Xi, particularly in military contexts as his role as Chairman of the Central Military Committee, China’s highest military body, or as General Secretary of Chinese Communist Party have greater authority.*



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

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



PLA Ground Forces Train Campaign Staff Officers for Realistic Combat

OE Watch Commentary: The Chinese military frequently puts out news coverage of unit training, highlighting the increasingly realistic nature of exercises. Less common are discussions of exercises, such as the one excerpted here, meant to test and evaluate the campaign staff [战役参谋] officers that will be in charge of military campaigns.

The PLA's Operational Hierarchy of Combat	
Operational Level	Operational Guidance
War [战争]	Strategy [战略]
Campaigns [战役]	Campaign Methods [战役战法 (战法)]
Battles [战斗]	Tactics [战术]

Graphic by Peter Wood.

As the accompanying passage from China's Ministry of Defense discusses, in May, some 400 officers at the Corps Level and above participated in a newly remodeled skills competition [比武]. The 36-hour competition—constantly monitored by judges and cameras using facial recognition to prevent cheating—tested participants in an expanded set of physical and campaign management exercises. In a break with previous competitions, the participants were frequently given false information, and had to exercise their best judgement.

The PLA has previously criticized officers' abilities in official military media, frequently using formulations such as the "Five incapables" [五个不会] (PLA officers cannot correctly judge situations, understand higher leaders' intentions, make operational decisions, deploy troops, nor deal with unexpected situations). Other criticisms have included dismay at officers' reliance on rote memorization or even cheating and nepotism to perform well and advance careers. The recent competition's focus on the ability to react to new situations, introduction of new technologies, and move away from scripted exercises all appear to address these long-standing problems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“This year there was an increase in core test subjects, and is meant to test participants’ planning, execution and communication abilities in simulated modern warfare environments.”

Source: “陆军组织战役参谋比武: 答案准确不算合格, 悟透‘胜道’方能过关” (PLA Ground Forces Organize Campaign Staff Skills Competition), [学习军团], China Ministry of Defense, 28 May 2019. http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2019-05/28/content_4842430.htm

On the morning of May 24th, in the mountainous areas of the southern Jiangsu province, amid steep slopes and dense vegetation, more than 400 PLA Army personnel from units at the Corps level and above [军以上] are completing a 15km convert insertion march in full equipment. Their exercise includes responding to biological attacks, calculating enemy reconnaissance satellite positions and reconnaissance of enemy dispositions, calling in encrypted instructions for artillery and air strikes, and submitting reports about terrain, geomorphology and electromagnetic environment.

“This year there was an increase in core test subjects, and is meant to test participants’ planning, execution and communication abilities in simulated modern warfare environments.” Leaders of the exercise told reporters that they focus on what is needed for victory and enhancing campaign staff command literacy, instead of traditional assessments that focused on the ability to remember answers by rote. New practical tests of ability under realistic combat conditions force participants to develop the ability to continually improve.

Reporters that read the rules of the contest found that the competition strictly simulates battlefield command conditions. Participants have 36 hours to complete the tests--all the while being judged by experts. Additionally, participants are frequently given false information mixed with real information, forcing participants to exercise good judgement about facts.

...

Participants are also tested on interpreting and video, and infrared and thermal camera static images. Participants reported that this year's competition significantly increased the level of difficulty, meaning they cannot rely on rote memorization of information anymore.

The reporters learned that the entire competition is being monitored by a committee of judges that follow participants, use facial recognition and video tracking to ensure that the competition is transparent and fair.



High Satellite Launch Tempo Keeps China's Space-Tracking Fleet Busy

OE Watch Commentary: China has embarked on an ambitious launch schedule of navigation, communication, imagery, and relay satellites. Officials at the China National Space Administration recently announced plans to launch 100 new satellites before 2025 to join the 200 already in orbit. According to China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, the main provider of domestic and international launch services in China, there have been 10 launches carrying 17 payloads as of the end of June. China is also expanding its satellite launch capabilities, and building an extensive facility in the southern island province of Hainan (the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site [文昌航天发射场]). In June, China launched a solid-fuel Long March 11 rocket from a barge in the Yellow Sea. These launches appear to be aimed at rapidly improving the country's satellite infrastructure for civilian and military purposes; and are consistent with China's 2015 Defense White Paper which describes space as "a commanding height in international strategic competition."

The accompanying article provides background on the activity of China's fleet of maritime Tracking, Telemetry, and Command (TT&C) ships. The Yuanwang [远望] class was initially conceived in the mid-1960s to support China's ballistic missile programs, and the early ships were used during tests of ICBMs and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) in the 1980s. Later tracking ships have continued to support China's space program. According to the article, the fleet of six ships has been put to sea for eight missions in the first half of this year.

The ships are homeported at China Satellite Maritime Monitoring and Control Department [中国卫星海上测控部] facility near the inland Port of Jiangyin [江阴港], in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province.

Publically available automatic identification system (AIS) information (signals transmitted by ships about their position and bearing) indicate that the Yuanwang 5 and her sister ships have traveled on recent missions to the Indian Ocean and the central Pacific.

These tracking ships augment the land-based TT&C infrastructure China has built domestically and increasingly abroad, with facilities in Neuquén Argentina, Dongara, Australia, and Kiruna, Sweden, among others. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“Since its launch, the Yuanwang No. 5 has accumulated more than 1,900 days at sea and completed more than 50 maritime monitoring and control tasks with 100% measurement and control success rate.”



Yuan Wang 2, Chinese satellite and missile tracking ship in Papeete Harbor, Tahiti.

Source: David Broad via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Yuan_Wang_2_Chinese_satellite_and_missile_tracking_ship_in_Papeete_harbor_Tahiti_-_panoramio.jpg, CC BY 3.0

Source: “远望号船队上半年累计出海240多天 - 我国航天年度发射任务密集 (The Yuanwang space-tracking ship fleet has accumulated more than 240 days at sea in the first half of the year - China's intensive annual space launch activity,” *PLA Daily*, 9 July 2019. <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2019/0709/c1011-31222236.html>

On the morning of the July 8th, announced with a long whistle, Yuanwang No. 5 slowly sailed away from the dock of China Satellite Maritime Monitoring and Control Department [中国卫星海上测控部] and headed for a certain region to perform satellite maritime monitoring and control tasks. Not far away, the Yuanwang No. 3 was completing docking after finishing its own 8,000 nautical mile voyage for 46th Beidou navigation satellite maritime monitoring and control mission.*

“This is the second time that the two ships have met at the home port this year,” said Ni Liuguo [倪留国], captain of Yuanwang No. 3 ship. With the increasing intensity of China's space launch missions, most missions use a single ship for monitoring, and many survey ships head to different sea areas. On May 5 this year, the two ships “passed the baton,” with one heading out and another coming into port.

Yuanwang No. 3 a second-generation comprehensive ocean-going space tracking vessel, which is mainly responsible for launch- and flight-time monitoring missions and control of rockets, satellites, and spacecraft. Starting from the first implementation of the AsiaSat No. 2 maritime monitoring and control mission in 1995, the vessel has traveled gone to sea 52 times and completed 83 major space monitoring and control tasks, setting a record for the longest voyage and most missions in China.

Yuanwang No. 5 is China's third-generation comprehensive aerospace ocean-going survey ship. Since its launch, the ship has accumulated more than 1,900 days at sea, and completed more than 50 maritime monitoring and control tasks with 100% measurement and control success rate.

In the first half of this year, the Yuanwang fleet has dispatched six ships, including the Yuanwang 3, 5, and 7, and three other ocean-going space-tracking vessels, accumulating more than 240 days of sea, and successfully completing seven maritime satellite monitoring and control missions and one sea launch mission. This year, the number of missions of the Yuanwang fleet is expected to set another new record.

* Commentator's note: “a certain” [某] is Chinese euphemistic language for “unidentified” and is typically used to obscure details about unit names or geographic locations.

India's Defense Budget

OE Watch Commentary: As Indian defense officials look to bolster the country's armed forces in the event of a conflict with both China and Pakistan through modernization efforts, the accompanying excerpted article discusses a potential roadblock. The article reports on the recent announcement that India's defense budget is not slated to increase as some officials had believed, particularly after the skirmishes with Pakistan earlier this year. The article notes how "Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept India's defense budget unchanged from the interim budget at Rs 3.18 lakh crore (around \$46.5 billion)" and that the "lack of change in the budget figures means that the actual hike in the defense budget is just 6.87 per cent more than the revised estimate of Rs 2.98 lakh crore (around \$45.8 billion) for the financial year 2018-19."



Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi, 2017.

Source: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jette Carr via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nirmala_Sitharaman_in_New_Delhi_-_2017_\(36624276764\)_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nirmala_Sitharaman_in_New_Delhi_-_2017_(36624276764)_(cropped).jpg), CC BY 2.0

The article mentions that Sitharaman did remove the "customs duty on defense products," which had been in place since 2016, but that the armed forces "were hoping for an increased allocation because they are in the midst of a modernization process, with projects related to new submarines, helicopters and fighter aircraft waiting to be kicked off." It is worth remembering that Sitharaman was the defense minister during Narendra Modi's first term as prime minister (Modi was reelected in late May for a second term)

and only recently became the finance minister. The article does not mention specific projects which will have to wait, but it appears that despite the recent clashes with Pakistan and the well-publicized modernization efforts, the Indian Armed Forces will not be receiving a budget that matches expectations. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The allocation... is barely enough to cover inflation costs.”

Source: Snehes Alex Philip, "Even after Balakot air strikes, defence budget remains unchanged at Rs 3.18 lakh crore," *The Print*, 5 July 2019. <https://theprint.in/defence/even-after-balakot-air-strikes-defence-budget-remains-unchanged-at-rs-3-18-lakh-crore/259138/>

After the Balakot air strikes and the subsequent air battle between India and Pakistan on 26-27 February, India's three services were expecting an increase in the budgetary allocation for defence. But they were left disappointed as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman kept India's defence budget unchanged from the interim budget at Rs 3.18 lakh crore.

The lack of change in the budget figures means that the actual hike in the defence budget is just 6.87 per cent more than the revised estimate of Rs 2.98 lakh crore for the financial year 2018-19. The allocation, however, is barely enough to cover inflation costs.

...The only relief for the armed forces is that Sitharaman, who served as defence minister in the first Narendra Modi government, has removed the customs duty on defence products, which means that the services will not have to pay anything as import duty as done since 2016...

However, the services were hoping for an increased allocation because they are in the midst of a modernisation process, with projects related to new submarines, helicopters and fighter aircraft waiting to be kicked off...

The Changing Role of the JF-17 in Pakistan

OE Watch Commentary: Pakistan's Armed Forces (PAF) are set to receive deliveries of the latest variant of the JF-17 fighter later this year (see: "The Development of Pakistan's JF-17 Fighter," in the April 2019 issue of *OE Watch*). The accompanying excerpted article reports on the changing role for the current inventory of JF-17s and how the newest variants might be utilized. The article from *Quwa*, a website focusing on defense issues in Pakistan, reports on how the government-owned defense contractor "Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) successfully integrated the ASELPOD [a new generation targeting pod for fighter aircrafts] to the JF-17 Thunder." The author states that the addition of the Turkish-made ASELPOD will put the current JF-17s into the role of "a prominent ground attack asset."



PAK Karma JF-17 Thunder at Paris Air Show, June 2019.
Source: lbex73 via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PAK_Karma_JF-17_Thunder_at_Paris_Air_Show,_June_2019_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PAK_Karma_JF-17_Thunder_at_Paris_Air_Show,_June_2019_(2).jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

The author points out how the existing JF-17s will be utilized for close air support, but also notes how the Block 3 (the latest variant) will be used "in contested air space" and that its "main purpose will likely be to shore-up the PAF's ability to fend-off high-tech threats, such as the Dassault Rafale [fighter aircraft]." Deliveries of the Rafale for the Indian Air Force have yet to take place, but are reported to be finalized later this year or in 2020. In any case, Pakistani officials are already looking at ways to utilize the Block 3 JF-17s before they arrive. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“This recent news would confirm that the PAF is not only committed to inducting the ASELPOD, but that it will position the JF-17, its mainstay fighter, as a prominent ground attack asset.”

Source: Bilal Khan, "Pakistan Positioning JF-17 for Ground Attack Role," *Quwa*, 1 July 2019. <https://quwa.org/2019/07/01/pakistan-positioning-jf-17-for-ground-attack-role-2/>

...The PAF ordered its first batch of eight ASELPODs in 2016, with reports of follow-on orders of unknown quantities. In 2018, Aselsan confirmed that it and Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) successfully integrated the ASELPOD to the JF-17 Thunder.

This recent news would confirm that the PAF is not only committed to inducting the ASELPOD, but that it will position the JF-17, its mainstay fighter, as a prominent ground attack asset.

Currently, the PAF has equipped the JF-17 to deploy the 60-100 km Range Extension Kit (REK) or Takbir – i.e., a precision-guided bomb (PGB) kit for MK-80-series general purpose bombs (GPB) – and C-802 anti-ship cruising missile (ASCM). A laser-guided bomb (LGB) should follow the integration of the ASELPOD...

With the ASELPOD, the JF-17 can hit fixed and moving ground targets. In terms of the latter, it can use the ASELPOD to designate – or "lase" – a target for its LGBs, even if the target is moving. Similarly, the JF-17 could also, potentially, use laser-guided air-to-ground missiles (AGM)...

On first thought, it would make sense for the PAF to equip the upcoming JF-17 Block 3s with the ASELPOD. The JF-17 Block 3 will reportedly have a greater payload and, potentially, a dedicated hardpoint for special mission equipment, such as targeting pods, reconnaissance pods, and others.

However, the Block 3 will also be a high-tech asset with more qualities suitable for operating in contested air space, such as an integrated electronic warfare (EW) suite, active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, and helmet mounted display and sight (HMD/S) with high off-boresight air-to-air missile.

The Block 3's main purpose will likely be to shore-up the PAF's ability to fend-off high-tech threats, such as the Dassault Rafale...Having retired the A-5, the PAF lacks a close air support (CAS) asset analogous to the Jaguar. Thus, there may be an opportunity to repurpose older JF-17s for this role, and not only for COIN, but for conventional CAS operations as well.



Malaysia Breaks Up Another Terrorist Cell

OE Watch Commentary: In the past year, Malaysia has reported several instances of breaking up terrorist cells loyal to or affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The accompanying passage reports on Malaysian authorities breaking up a terrorist cell with links to other militant outfits in Southeast Asia.

Similar to previous cells in Malaysia, this one also had a multi-national character. According to the article, the cell consisted of two Rohingyas from Myanmar, one militant from the Philippines and another from India. Each of these members was also part of their own national-based Islamist militant movements. The Rohingyas, for example, were members of Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), and one of them had reportedly threatened to assassinate Bangladeshi president, Sheikh Hasina. The militant from the Philippines reportedly belonged to Abu Sayyaf and was involved in kidnappings in Sabah, Malaysia. Meanwhile the militant from India was a member of an India-based Sikh separatist group, Babbar Khalsa International. He was in Malaysia to raise money for this group.



Myanmar police in Bahan Township (Aung Naing Soe-VOA).

Source: Aung Naing Soe (VOA) via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myanmar_police_in_Bahan_Township_\(Aung_Naing_Soe-VOA\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Myanmar_police_in_Bahan_Township_(Aung_Naing_Soe-VOA).jpg), Public Domain

The article notes that Malaysia's increased vigilance regarding terrorism began in January 2016 when an ISIS-affiliated cell launched an attack on a Starbucks and mall in neighboring Indonesia's capital Jakarta. It was heightened again when a grenade exploded outside of a bar in Kuala Lumpur several months later, injuring several people.

This article's account of the arrested militants and information about previous terrorist cells broken up in Malaysia indicate the country's security services have been successful in counter-terrorism. However, it also suggests that Malaysia continues to be a focal point for militants in the region to fundraise, plan attacks, and find hideouts from their more volatile domestic theaters. In addition, militants tend to assume ordinary lives while in Malaysia, such as one of the Rohingyas captured, who was a construction worker, or the Indian who was an elevator maintenance worker. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“Due to the terrorist threat, Malaysia has been very vigilant since gunmen allied with ISIS carried out a series of attacks in Jakarta in January 2016.”

Source: “Malaysia Tangkap 4 Warga Asing Diduga Anggota Militan (Malaysia Arrests 4 Foreign Citizens Suspected of Being Militants),” <http://republika.co.id>, 9 July 2019. <https://internasional.republika.co.id/berita/pudrsy377/malaysia-tangkap-4-warga-asing-diduga-anggota-militan>

Malaysia detained four foreigners, allegedly involved in radical militant groups. Two foreigners include Rohingyas from Myanmar, and one is from the Philippines, and one suspect is from India. Police Inspector Abdul Hamid Bador said in a statement that the two Rohingya suspects were detained for providing support to ARSA. “One of the Rohingya suspects, a 41-year-old construction worker, also issued a death threat against Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a video uploaded on social media,” Abdul Hamid told Channels News Asia. Other suspects detained include a 54-year-old Filipino citizen, who is suspected of having links with organizations allied with ISIS, Abu Sayyaf. The man is also suspected of being involved in kidnapping activities in the waters of the southern state of Sabah. The fourth suspect is a 24-year-old Indian national who is “suspected of acting as a facilitator for senior members of the Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), a Sikh separatist group,”

Due to the terrorist threat, Malaysia has been very vigilant since gunmen allied with ISIS carried out a series of attacks in Jakarta in January 2016. A grenade attack on a bar on the outskirts of Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, also injured eight people in June 2016. ISIS claimed responsibility for the first attack on Malaysian soil.



Indonesia Breaks Up Al-Qaeda-Loyal Jemaah Islamiyah Cell

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 July, the excerpted Indonesian-language article discussed the threat of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in the country. The article began by noting that the Indonesian police arrested a key JI member who had been involved in major attacks in the 2000s. Unlike ISIS-loyal groups in the country, JI has its roots in relationships to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and retains its loyalty to al-Qaeda. Therefore, the break-up of this cell, which was one of the last remaining JI cells in the country, spells a virtual end to al-Qaeda influence in Indonesia and marks the end of an era.

The article mentions how this cell was also unique because it was a remnant from an earlier time in the 2000s when JI was the main terrorist group in Indonesia. JI has since been dismantled, but other groups, such as Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) and Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT), have been formed since the mid-2000s. The latter two can be considered splinter cells of JI to various degrees and have become loyal to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The elimination of the JI cell is certainly a positive development. However, the fact that JI has now spawned into two dangerous new organizations, despite its own demise, demonstrates how jihadist groups have been remarkably resilient. In addition, the JI cell members' university degrees and, according to the article, high intellectual competence and international training experience demonstrates how terrorist leaders can come from elite social classes.

End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)



Greater Jakarta Metropolitan Regional Police.

Source: Nur Cholis via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gedung_Densus_88_Polda_Metrojaya_-_panoramio.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0

“JI is older and affiliated to al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden while JAD is affiliated to ISIS whose leader is Abubakar al-Baghdadi.”

Source: “Amir JI Terindikasi Terafiliasi dengan Al-Qaeda (Amir JI is Indicated to be Affiliated with Al-Qaeda)” <http://beritasatu.com>, 1 July 2019. <https://www.beritasatu.com/nasional/562163/amir-ji-terindikasi-terafiliasi-dengan-alqaeda>

The National Police Headquarters finally announced the arrest of the legend of the Para Wijayanto who is believed to be the Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) terror cell leader from 2007 to today. He was arrested along with four other people. Although they still have not engaged in terrorist preparation activities, the police did not want to avoid the group that in the past was marked by the actions of two bombers, namely Noordin M.Top and Dr. Azhari.

The ones who were arrested yesterday were indeed active in the 2000s in JI and given trust in the JI organizational structure. But after JI was declared disbanded, Para Wijayanto was made JI amir in Indonesia. JI is different from JAD and JAT. JI is much older and affiliated to al-Qaeda led by Osama bin Laden while JAD is affiliated to ISIS whose leader is Abubakar al-Baghdadi. In 2000, Para was an alumni of the third batch of military training in Moro, Philippines. The graduates of his cell were Civil Engineering students at one of the top universities in Central Java, which means they have intellectual competence.



Papuans Reignite Pro-Independence Protests in Indonesia

OE Watch Commentary: In eastern Indonesia, there have been separatist movements led by Papuans seeking to establish their own independent state in West Papua province, formerly known as Irian Jaya. The excerpted Indonesian-language article discusses the latest Papuan pro-independence protests, led by Papuan students in Ambon, Maluku islands (near West Papua).

According to the article, the students attempted to protest peacefully in Ambon, but the Indonesian security forces broke up their protests claiming that students did not have a protest license. The students claimed their protest was lawful because they had notified the authorities beforehand. The attempt to break up the protests led to verbal exchanges between police officers and protesters.



Ambon City.

Source: Talgraf777 via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AmbonCity2001.jpg>, CC BY SA 3.0

During the exchanges, the protesters read off their grievances to the police. They claimed Papuans had declared independence in 1961 but then-President Sukarno disallowed it and later President Suharto continued the same policy. The protesters claimed that living under Indonesian rule was no different for them than living under colonial rule before Indonesian independence. The students picked 6 July as a reference to the 6 July 1988 protests in Biak, West Papua when eight Papuans were killed.

The most recent protest was rekindling a longstanding struggle for Papuans. Nevertheless, the security forces appear to have grown wiser. While they may have not respected the Papuan students' right to protest in Ambon, the article indicates they refrained from using violence on students in the recent protest. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The students held an event in commemoration of the 21st Anniversary of human rights violations known as ‘Bloody Biak’.”

Source: “Polisi Bubarkan Aksi Demo Damai Aliansi Mahasiswa Papua di Ambon (The Police Dismiss Peaceful Demonstration of the Papuan Student Alliance in Ambon),” <http://beritabeta.com>, 6 July 2019. <https://beritabeta.com/news/amboina/polisi-bubarkan-aksi-demo-damai-aliansi-mahasiswa-papua-di-ambon/>

A peaceful demonstration held by dozens of young people who are members of the Papuan Student Alliance (AMP) and the Indonesian People’s Front for West Papua (FRI-WP) was forcibly dissolved by the police. [The students] held the event in commemoration of the 21st Anniversary of human rights violations known as “Bloody Biak.”

The police officer then tried to forcefully disband the students. Police said the demonstrators did not have permission from the police. On the contrary, students insisted that they had provided notification before the event was held.

The change of leadership from Soekarno to Suharto did not change the fate of the Papuan people at all. Precisely two months after Suharto’s fall, on July 6, 1998, the Papuan people in Biak city gathered and raised the Morning Star flag, a symbol of the struggle of the people and people of West Papua. The authorities then opened fire indiscriminately at the people who were gathering to express their political attitudes.



Australia's Concerns about China's Expansion in Antarctica

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Australian sources discuss how Australia views China's intentions within territory that Australia considers its "sovereign territory in Antarctica." While sovereignty claims in Antarctica are not universally accepted (Note: The US recognizes no foreign territorial claims), the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) regulates international relations in Antarctica. Entering into force in 1961 (and based on the Antarctic Treaty of 1959), the ATS declared Antarctica as a scientific preserve, established freedom of scientific investigation, and banned military activity on the continent. However, seven countries (Argentina, Australia, Chile, France, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom) had made territorial claims to land in Antarctica before the ATS. These seven countries are the only countries that recognize these claims. Accordingly, these countries have placed their Antarctic scientific observation and study facilities within their respective claimed territories. However, countries without claims such as China, have constructed research facilities within areas claimed by other countries.

As the first passage notes, China joined the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) in 1983 and became a Consultative Party in 1985, which meant it had no claim or sovereignty over Antarctic territory. However, according to the passage, China quickly emerged as an important country in the ATS because of its involvement in many scientific research efforts in Antarctica. Chinese activity on the continent has drawn the attention of Australian academics and media as they wonder what China's future plans are given their growing presence in Australia's "sovereign territory" in the continent.

Australia has a 42% claim of sovereignty over Antarctica, but only three research bases. China has built four bases within "sovereign Australian territory" and has a fifth under construction. The second accompanying passage from an Australian news source features the opinions of an international law expert who discusses that Australia should stand its ground in their "sovereign territory." Otherwise, he warns, "others will perceive some level of weakness in terms of Australia's position...[and] seek to exploit that weakness into the future." In this same passage, a professor from New Zealand points out that although the ATS is in place now, China may be planning for the future when the ATS expires in 2048.

The professors also point out other concerns. One is that China may be testing the treaty and not following the rules of the ATS. Another concern is that China is already highly active in much of Australia's "sovereign territory." They warn that if Australia is not careful in protecting its "sovereign territory," China may try to take actions that are unfavorable to Australia in the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“Expanding international activity in Antarctica and the need to protect claims to sovereignty mean Australia must do more down south, according to prominent polar researchers. Don Rothwell, an Australian international law expert, also warns “If we don’t effectively seek to manage that claim and exercise our sovereignty over that claim, well, then others will perceive some level of weakness in terms of Australia’s position. They might seek to exploit that weakness into the future.””

Source: Dr. Jeffrey McGee, Marcus Hayward. “Australia-China Relations in the Frozen South,” *Australian Institute of International Affairs*, 28 February 2019. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/australia-china-antarctica/>

China joined the ATS in 1983, became a Consultative Party in 1985 and in 1998 joined the Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection. In 2007, China became a party to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and is a key participant at the annual Commission meetings held in Hobart, Australia. Chinese investment in Antarctic science has also grown significantly, with currently four permanent research stations and a fifth under construction.

*Increasing Chinese activity in Antarctica has recently attracted some significant academic and media commentary in Australia. Professor Anne-Marie Brady’s 2017 book *China as a Great Polar Power*, Clive Hamilton’s 2018 book *Silent Invasion* and media comments by the Tasmanian Green Party, have raised concerns about China’s current and expected future activities in Antarctica. Particularly, what they might mean for the Antarctic environment, marine resource use and the current prohibition on mineral resource activities under the Madrid Protocol.*

Source: “China Unchecked in Antarctica,” *abc.net.au*, 3 March 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-30/china-in-antarctica-inspection-regime/10858486>

Expanding international activity in Antarctica and the need to protect claims to sovereignty mean Australia must do more down south, according to prominent polar researchers. Don Rothwell, an international law expert (from Australia), also warns “If we don’t effectively seek to manage that claim and exercise our sovereignty over that claim, well, then others will perceive some level of weakness in terms of Australia’s position. They might seek to exploit that weakness into the future.” New Zealand Professor Anne-Marie Brady also points out that, “Countries participate in Antarctic Treaty governance but you can see in many instances backup plans and contingency plans that countries are engaging in.”

The Professors are also concerned about other aspects in Antarctica. “China is active all across this sector within East Antarctica, quite a sizeable chunk of what Australia calls the Australian Antarctic Territory,” New Zealand Professor Anne-Marie Brady said. Professor Donald Rothwell (of the Australian International University) is wary of China’s commitment to the treaty given its record in the South China Sea. “I think there’s always that concern that given China’s position on some areas of international law, is China perhaps preparing itself to make some radically alternative arguments into the future which would not certainly be in Australia’s interests,” he said.



Regional Concerns about Chinese Military Capabilities in Antarctica

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Australian and Japanese sources discuss concerns about Chinese military capabilities in Antarctica. According to Australian based news source *abc.net.au*, China is expanding its military capabilities in the Arctic and Antarctic. The passage claims that China is now using a GNS (global navigation satellite) known as BeiDou at its bases in Antarctica. It also indicates that China has vastly increased the size of its Taishan base (located in Australian sovereign territory) in recent years without asking Australia for permission. According to the source, Australian satellite imagery revealed an “unconventional” setup of antennae at China’s fifth base in the area.

As the second accompanying passage from *Japan Times* notes, China is looking to build a permanent airfield in Antarctica. Currently, China uses Russia’s airstrip, but this makes for a longer trip from China to Antarctica and forces China to use smaller planes given the size of Russia’s airstrip. Therefore, constructing its own airstrip will allow China to use larger planes. The passage also suggests that Japan is concerned about China’s intentions to build another research center on the continent. China already has four research stations in Antarctica and commenced building its fifth one in 2018. The new station will be built on the eastern tip of the continent and face the Ross Sea. Meanwhile, other stations such as the Great Wall and Zhongshan will cover the Atlantic and Indian Ocean.

As the third accompanying passage from Japanese *The Diplomat* reports, when questioned about the need for a fifth research center, Dr. Yang Huigen, Director of the Polar Research Institute of China said that this would “fill in the gap of conducting scientific research in the Ross Sea and definitely enhance China’s capacity in understanding Antarctica.” This passage also claims that China also has strategic motives in building a base in the Ross Sea area. (See also “Australia’s Concerns about China’s Expansion in Antarctica” in this issue of *OE Watch*.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

“China is expanding and modernizing its military and the Arctic and Antarctica have an important role to play in that... I’m talking in particular about the rollout of China’s GNS (global navigation satellite) system, which is called BeiDou. BeiDou is a rival to the US-led GPS system.”

Source: “China Unchecked in Antarctica,” *abc.net.au*, 3 March 2019. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-03-30/china-in-antarctica-inspection-regime/10858486>

According to Professor Anne-Marie Brady of New Zealand, “China is expanding and modernizing its military and the Arctic and Antarctica have an important part to play in that. I’m talking in particular about the rollout of China’s GNS (global navigation satellite) system, which is called BeiDou. BeiDou is a rival to the US-led GPS system. Why this is all important is because of the GPS systems of China, Russia and the US: in a time of war they become really crucial, they’re used for missile timing and positioning.”

Regarding expansion of military capabilities, Australia claims that China has greatly increased the size of its Taishan base with no prior permission. Furthermore, a researcher with experience in Antarctic satellite imagery helped identify some of the new infrastructure at this base to include a landing strip, an eating/living area, and what this person described as an “unconventional” setup with several antennae around the base.

Source: “China expands its presence in Antarctica,” *Japan Times*, 1 November 2018. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2018/11/01/editorials/china-expands-presence-antarctica/#.XNxPU8hKg2w>

China’s expanding presence — construction on its fifth research station began in January — requires growth in infrastructure. Until now, China has used other countries’ airstrips (Russia in particular) to supply the bases. That has required a multi-stop trip with a small aircraft, the Xue Ying (Snow Hawk) 601, which can carry only 18 passengers and has a range of 3,440 km. So, China has revealed that it will build a 1,500-meter airstrip about 28 km from Zhongshan Station, located in the Larsemann Hills by Prydz Bay in the east of the continent.

Building a permanent airstrip allows China to use larger planes and several of them to stock its facilities. It would allow China to be less reliant on other countries’ facilities and less subject to their priorities. As the official journal of China’s Ministry of Science and Technology explained, “China must ensure the logistical support capability of its own Antarctic activities. For this reason, the construction of the new airport is of great significance.” It will also insert China into the management of an air traffic network on Antarctica.

Source: Liu, Nengye. “What Does China’s Fifth Research Station Mean for Antarctic Governance?” *The Diplomat*, 28 June 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/what-does-chinas-fifth-research-station-mean-for-antarctic-governance/>

Dr. Yang Huigen explains that the establishment of a 5th Antarctic research station will “fill in the gap of conducting scientific research in the Ross Sea and definitely enhance China’s capacity in understanding Antarctica.”

Apart from scientific reasons, there are strategic interests for China to build a research station in the Ross Sea area. The Ross Ice Shelf is the largest ice shelf of Antarctica. The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition highlighted that “the Ross Sea has the richest diversity of fishes in the high latitude Southern Ocean.” The Sea provides a habitat for significant populations of faunal species. This includes 38 percent of the world’s Adélie penguins, 26 percent of emperor penguins, more than 30 percent of Antarctic petrels and 6 percent of Antarctic minke whales. One question raised by Japan is what the implications for Antarctic governance are once China’s 5th station is completed in 2022. They came up with the following conclusion.

China wants to maximize its national interests – the protection and peaceful use of Antarctica, through shaping Antarctic governance regimes.



5G Launches in the Arabian Peninsula

OE Watch Commentary: Earlier this year, the Gulf states of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar all announced that commercial 5G mobile services would become available in their country by the end of 2019. 5G development in this region is likely to be on a fast-track for a few reasons: The governments have deep pockets and are eager to invest in new technologies; the population is affluent, social-media friendly and concentrated in urban areas; and, uniquely to the region, an arms race-like dynamic prevails due to inter-monarchical competition to outdo one another on the international stage. The ongoing media feud between Qatar and the UAE, for instance, has pushed each to recently lay claim to being the first to reach various 5G milestones in the region - the first call, the first video call, the first holographic call. The Gulf monarchies' economic development plans, mostly with a 2030 or 2035 horizon, inevitably focus on diversification away from fossil fuels and investment in new technologies, as both an end in itself and a means toward a more sustainable economic order.

The first accompanying passage comes from an interview conducted by the UAE daily *al-Bayan* with the chairman of that country's delegation to the Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit, which was held in July 2019 in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg. In the chairman's perhaps fanciful view, the UAE "has succeeded in establishing its position as the capital of the Fourth Industrial Revolution at the global level." Similar rhetoric can be found in the domestic media of the region's other countries.

Even a less wealthy country like Jordan aspires to become "a regional hub in the ICT [information and communications technology] industry." The Jordanian government's plan includes the establishment of several new educational centers, with the first of them entailing a partnership between Huawei and al-Balqa' Applied University, Jordan's main technical and scientific higher learning institution. Speaking at the June 2019 announcement of the agreement, the university's director explained how "Jordan, despite its poverty in natural resources, is rich in human resources that receive high-level education and technical training with the help of international companies such as Huawei."

Huawei seems poised to play a key role in the coming inter-Arab race to become the regional hub for new technology. In a view that is broadly shared by the region's other governments, Saudi Arabia's technology minister recently explained to a Japanese media outlet that his country's digital economic strategy is guided by two principles: "always pro-partnership, whether it comes from the East, Europe, or from the West" and "as long as those companies and those solution providers comply with our technical, regulatory and cybersecurity requirements, we're more than happy to work with them." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...We're an open economy, so we are always pro-partnership, whether it comes from the East, Europe, or from the West..."



Map of the Middle East.

Source: Wikimedia, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/77/Map_of_Middle_East.png, CC BY 4.0

Source:

"The UAE strengthens its position as capital of the Fourth Industrial Revolution," *al-Bayan*, 7 July 2019. <https://www.albayan.ae/economy/local-market/2019-07-07-1.3599553>

الإمارات عززت موقعها عاصمةً للثورة الصناعية الرابعة

Bader Salim Sultan Al Ulama, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit, affirmed that the UAE has succeeded in establishing its position as the capital of the Fourth Industrial Revolution at the global level. According to him, the UAE leads the global trend in shaping the future strategy of the industrial sector and encouraging global efforts to adopt a transformative approach in the sector. This approach will meet the needs of the world economy and of future generations over the coming decades, making it the preferred choice of global manufacturers.

Source:

"Huawei establishes its first academy in the al-Balqa Applied University," *al-Balqa University Website*, 26 June 2019. https://www.bau.edu.jo/BauLivePortal/NewsDetail.aspx?news_id=7683&newsSourceType=1%27

هواوي تنشئ أول أكاديمية لها في جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية

Al-Balqa Applied University and Huawei Jordan have signed an agreement to establish the first ICT Academy, one of a series of academies to be established in the Kingdom's official universities to train students in these disciplines on the latest technology applied by Huawei around the world... Dr. Al Zu'bi said that the signing of the agreement... comes in implementation of His Majesty King Abdullah II's vision of making Jordan a regional hub in the ICT industry.... He pointed out that Jordan, despite its poverty in natural resources, is rich in human resources that receive high-level education and technical training with the help of international companies such as Huawei to cover the needs of both the local and the regional market...

Source: "Saudi technology minister open to using Huawei products," *Mainichi Japan*, 10 June 2019. <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20190610/p2g/00m/0bu/006000c>

"When it comes to building our digital economy, we have two guiding principles. The first one, we're an open economy, so we are always pro-partnership, whether it comes from the East, Europe, or from the West," he said on the sidelines of a Group of 20 ministerial meeting on trade and digital economy in Tsukuba, eastern Japan.

"The second guiding principle, as long as those companies and those solution providers comply with our technical, regulatory and cybersecurity requirements, we're more than happy to work with them," he said.

Egypt Seeks “Intelligent” Solution to its Clogged Roads

OE Watch Commentary: The Egyptian government appears committed to solving its country’s transportation woes by employing new technology in the public transport sector, in what is known as an “Intelligent Transportation System” (ITS). ITS is a broad term, summarized in the first accompanying passage, which paraphrases statements by Egypt’s prime minister, as “the application of information and communication technologies in the field of infrastructure, vehicles and users, and in traffic management and mobility management.”

Egypt has recently signed several agreements with Chinese companies to produce “smart” electric vehicles. The latest was a May 2019 MoU signed with a leading Chinese bus manufacturer (Wanxiang) to jointly produce electric smart buses in Egypt. As the second accompanying excerpt notes, Egyptian companies are also involved in this rapidly developing segment. Smart buses have already been plying pilot routes in Alexandria and Cairo. They have interior security cameras, built-in USB chargers in every seat, Wi-Fi connectivity, and a standardized ticketing system. These vehicles’ “intelligence” seems as much about traffic management as about the data trail they leave behind, especially when combined with data from other ITS technologies planned for Egypt, such as “traffic monitoring gantry with wireless communication.” Nonetheless, the data from smart buses is limited so far as higher ticket prices and restricted routes limit their popular accessibility.



Street in Cairo.

Source: The Erica Chang via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Street_in_Cairo_-_panoramio_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Street_in_Cairo_-_panoramio_(1).jpg), CC 3.0

In the crowded chaos of Cairo’s streets, minivans, taxicabs, and motorized rickshaws reign supreme. As with Egypt’s bus industry, new technology has disrupted this large and lucrative market. Ride-sharing has taken off in Cairo, with Uber and a UAE-based competitor called Careem dominating the ride-sharing industry. According to a December 2018 *Financial Times* article, Uber has 70,000 drivers in Egypt. Several niche companies are also players in Cairo’s massive ride-sharing market, and both Uber and Careem recently introduced their own minivan service in Cairo.

The latest entrant to Egypt’s ride-sharing industry is a domestic company called “Dubci,” which is scheduled to launch in August 2019. Some of the companies’ public faces have close ties to the Egyptian president, hence the suspicion, voiced in the accompanying article from *al-Modon*, that “user data might become available to the Egyptian intelligence services.” Per the same article, Dubci will launch its operations in the cities of Cairo, Hurgada and Sharm El Sheikh, and aspires to “carry out one million rides during its first day of operation in the Egyptian market.”

End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)

“The system will see the application of information and communication technologies in the field of infrastructure, vehicles and users, and in traffic management and mobility management...”

Source: “PM in talks over intelligence transportation system,” *Egypt State Information Service*, 5 October 2018. <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/135450/PM-in-talks-over-intelligence-transportation-system?lang=en-us>

Prime Minter Moustafa Madbouli presided over a meeting on Thursday [4 October 2018] to review a feasibility study on the application of an intelligent transportation system in Egypt...

The system will see the application of information and communication technologies in the field of infrastructure, vehicles and users, and in traffic management and mobility management.

Traffic monitoring gantry with wireless communication, traffic signal control systems, electronic road pricing and electronic parking system will be among the intelligent road technologies to be applied in Egypt.

Source: *تحالف مصري صيني لصناعة نظم النقل الذكي في مصر*
“Egyptian-Chinese alliance to establish Intelligent Transport System in Egypt,” *al-Ain*, 21 May 2019. <https://al-ain.com/article/egyptian-chinese-alliance-transport-egypt>

Wu Wei, the director of China’s Wanxiang Company, one of the major electric bus manufacturers, confirmed that the cooperation between Cairo and Beijing will see a strategic transformation to support the transfer and localization of technology and deepen the local production of electric buses... Dr. Hisham Taha, Chairman of Transport Egypt, which is specialized in the provision of intelligent public transport services, pointed out that the [Egyptian-Chinese] alliance includes the introduction of an intelligent electronic operation and management system to serve mass transport, one which operates in accordance with international standards for sustainable urban transport within cities. Dr. Mazen Majid Al-Menshawi, Vice-President of the United Investment Company, pointed to the company’s commitment to provide all consultancy services for business development through the alliance, emphasizing the economic and environmental benefits of introducing and operating the electric bus system.

Source: *دوبسي “بدلاً من “أوبر”.. وبيانات المصريين متاحة لأجهزة الأمن؟*
“Dubci rather than Uber... Will the data of Egyptians be given to security services?” *al-Modon*, 10 July 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y37c2req>

Following the dispute between the Egyptian intelligence services and the company “Uber,” after the latter refused to hand over the data of its customers and which led to the passage of a new law for ride-sharing transport that imposes several restrictions on the work of “Uber,” a new company called “Dubci,” which follows the Egyptian military, is set to enter the market and compete with Uber and Careem in the field of ride-sharing...

The new company will start operating in three Egyptian cities, Cairo, Hurgada and Sharm El Sheikh, and says it hopes to carry out one million rides during its first day of operation in the Egyptian market. Tweepers expressed their fear of the new company’s ownership, as user data might become available to the Egyptian intelligence services. Others pointed to what they referred to as the company’s “fake popularity,” after it was revealed that it had purchased a Facebook page containing a fake number of followers (6 million total), compared to just a few followers in “Twitter” and “Instagram.”



Crop-Torching in Syria and Iraq

OE Watch Commentary: The 2019 barley and wheat harvests of northern Syria and Iraq were projected to exceed expectations, thanks to a lull in conflict and timely, plentiful rainfall earlier in the year. In May, with the harvest underway, local media outlets reported an uptick in undesired crop fires. There were several good explanations for this, including hot, dry and windy weather; limited firefighting capacity; and festering local-level conflicts over land ownership and political power.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was quick to take credit for at least some of the fires. The first excerpted passage, originally published in ISIS's weekly *al-Naba'*, detailed the "blessed deeds" of arson carried out by the group's followers and encouraged them to continue targeting the "apostates'" fields and other facilities. Imagine, the author muses, "what will the situation be like if the soldiers of the Caliphate are active and intensify their good efforts during the coming days?!"

As the number of fires grew, misleading videos and anonymous testimonies purportedly identifying the culprits spread like wildfire. In Syria, each group pinned the blame on its main adversary, as the remaining accompanying passages show. The de-facto Kurdish-led government of northeast Syria, which controls most of the fields affected in that country, mentioned Turkey's role while also blaming Syrian loyalists. The Syrian opposition in turn singled out Assad and his followers, especially the Iranian-backed militias. For their part, Syrian loyalists wove the agricultural fires into a broader geopolitical tale, wherein "the terrorist groups supported by the United States are the ones making the fires" and they are doing so to "tighten the siege on the Syrian state and prevent it from achieving self-sufficiency, or even partial self-sufficiency, through the production of grain."

If nothing else, the fires highlight the importance of the battle to control the narrative. They also serve as a reminder of the stark difference between ISIS and the conflict's other belligerents. For while all other groups involved in the Syrian conflict sought to pin the blame on their adversary, ISIS worked to amplify its role in the events. This fundamental difference - ISIS's open embrace of tactics that other groups seek to disassociate from - continues to set the group apart from other entities involved in the Syrian conflict. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...The fire that is still at the beginning of its outbreak has consumed hundreds of agricultural hectares that are abundant with their crops during the past few days, so what will the situation be like if the soldiers of the Caliphate are active and intensify their good efforts during the coming days?!..."

Source: "Burning of Farms in Iraq and Syria by the Islamic State," Translation of original from *al-Naba'* via Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi's Blog, 25 May 2019. <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2019/05/burning-of-farms-in-iraq-and-syria>

That does not mean diminishing the value of harvesting heads and cracking heads as the soldiers of the Caliphate continue to do day after day, which has made a number of villages virtually falling into the hands of the mujahideen. Rather it is a harvest of another type.

The fire that is still at the beginning of its outbreak has consumed hundreds of agricultural hectares that are abundant with their crops during the past few days, so what will the situation be like if the soldiers of the Caliphate are active and intensify their good efforts during the coming days?!

These blessed deeds have led the apostate Rafidite[i] government and its security apparatuses to announce a state of mobilization, and strive to establish an operations room to resolve the situation before it is too late...

And the harvest season remains long, and we say to the soldiers of the Caliphate: before you are millions of dunams[v] of lands planted with wheat and barley, owned by the apostates. And before you are their gardens, fields, homes and economic facilities. So role up your sleeves and begin the harvest. God bless your harvest.

Source: Facebook Post by the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, Facebook, 30 May 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/smensyria/posts/1029472897242647>

Some of the fires were caused by shots fired the Turkish groups toward agricultural lands along the border...

Source: من يقف وراء حرق المحاصيل الزراعية في ديرالزور؟ "Who is behind the burning of crops in Deir Ezzor?" *Orient News*, 21 May 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y6nvxdvh>

Most of the agricultural land under the control of Assad's sectarian militia and the Iranian militia in Deir Ezzor is burning... The network quoted unnamed local sources as saying that most of the fires were started deliberately and pointed the finger at the Iranian-backed militias after watching one of the perpetrators burning a field in Albu Kamal.

Source: حرق المحاصيل الزراعية في سوريا والعراق... حرب جديدة من أشعلها وما هي أهدافها؟ Nizar Bush. "Burning of agricultural harvest in Syria and Iraq... A new war, who is behind it and what are its goals?" *Sputnik*, 12 June 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/y3amh2q9>

The burning of agricultural land in Syria, particularly in the Hassakeh area, is part of the economic war and the siege imposed on Syria and its people. This is because the Syrian state was able to break the economic siege by securing strategic agricultural products such as wheat, barley and others. The area where fires have broken out are controlled by terrorist groups such as the SDF and others, and because these are considered the main areas for producing wheat and grain in the Syrian Arab Republic, a large number of these fires have been deliberate... "The United States did not move to extinguish the fires in the agricultural lands [under SDF control]. First, because the terrorist groups supported by the United States are the ones making the fires. Second, since these fires are in the interest of the United States of America, insofar as they tighten the siege on the Syrian state and prevent it from achieving self-sufficiency, or even partial self-sufficiency, through the production of grain."



Views from the Frontline: ISIS Still Poses a Danger

OE Watch Commentary: Despite losing its territorial control, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) still poses a threat. The accompanying articles from Kurdish sources based in Iraq and Syria shed light on ISIS’s resurgence and capabilities in the region. Many of the group’s fighters and sympathizers had dispersed across Iraq and Syria or gone underground before it received the final blow by opposing forces. Now, it appears that those fighters are resorting to insurgency, rather than striving to control territory, as evidenced by recent attacks in Iraq and Syria.

The first article provides the views of Peshmerga commander Wasta Rasul on the situation of ISIS in Iraq. Peshmerga are the military forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq and have been instrumental in fighting ISIS in Iraq. As the commander states, “ISIS has not really been uprooted. The group has only lost the territory it ruled. It has completely regrouped and is stronger than before.” The article points out that ISIS sleeper cells “continue to launch insurgent attacks” on Kurdish and Iraqi forces, noting “the towns of Rashad and Hawija west of Kirkuk in particular have seen an uptick in insurgent activity.” The commander notes that on 27 June, twin explosions hit Kirkuk city center, and “ISIS has also claimed responsibility for crop fires on the outskirts of Kirkuk city.” These indicate that ISIS sleeper cells are still present and active in Iraq, especially in Sunni neighborhoods.



SDF firing on an ISIS camp, 4 March 2019.

Source: VOA via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SDF_MG_in_Baghuz_4_March_2019.png, Public Domain.

The second article from Kurdish news agency *Hawar* features an interview with Enwer Muslim, the Co-Chair of the Executive Council of the Euphrates Region, a governing body within the self-proclaimed autonomous Kurdish region in northern Syria. Muslim claims that even though ISIS lost on the battlefield, its ideology stands strong across the region. The article points out that the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a mostly Kurdish force supported by the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, are currently detaining over 70,000 family members of ISIS fighters, some of whom still insist on ISIS ideology and firmly hold onto hope of living under ISIS rule. Remnants of ISIS fighters are also present in the Syrian cities of Idlib, Azaz, and Afrin, with some forming sleeper cells and some joining other groups sharing similar extremist ideology. Muslim calls on the international community to remain vigilant and support the SDF’s efforts in combating ISIS and ISIS-like groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“ISIS has not really been uprooted. The group has only lost the territory it ruled. It has completely regrouped and is stronger than before.”

Source: “ISIS has ‘completely regrouped, stronger than before’: Peshmerga chief,” *Rudaw.net*, 29 June 2019. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/290620191>

Islamic State (ISIS) militants still pose a threat to Iraq’s disputed territories, including the oil-rich province of Kirkuk, a Peshmerga commander warned Friday, a day after twin blasts struck Kirkuk city center...

ISIS was declared territorially defeated in Iraq in December 2017, but its sleeper cells and armed remnants continue to launch insurgent attacks, exploiting security gaps between Iraqi and Peshmerga lines...

“ISIS has not really been uprooted. The group has only lost the territory it ruled. It has completely regrouped and is stronger than before,” Rasul warned...

Militants have launched several recent attacks across the disputed territories between Erbil and Baghdad. The towns of Rashad and Hawija west of Kirkuk in particular have seen an uptick in insurgent activity.

On Thursday, two improvised explosive devices were detonated on two public buses in Kirkuk city center, killing one and injuring 17. The provincial council blamed the attack on ISIS remnants.

ISIS has also claimed responsibility for a rash of crop fires on the outskirts of Kirkuk city.

Source: Semêr Osman and Zana Seydî, “Enwer Muslim: DAİŞ halen tüm dünya için büyük bir tehdit (Enwer Muslim: ISIS is still a big threat for the whole world),” *hawarnews.com*, 24 June 2019. <https://www.hawarnews.com/tr/haber/enwer-muslim-dais-halen-tum-dunya-icin-buyuk-bir-tehdit-h15074.html>

ISIS does not seem to end so easily. It lost its military power, but its ideology still continues. Approximately 70,000 ISIS family members are being detained by the SDF forces and [they] insist on their ideology. Again, thousands of people carrying the ideology of ISIS thugs are in Syria’s cities of Idlib, Ezaz and Efrîn...

The whole world must be aware of [ISIS resurgence]. Again, international public opinion should be supportive of the Autonomous Administration regarding ISIS detainees who are detained by the SDF and remain in the camps. These thugs who played a role in civilian massacres against our people should be tried in international courts. ISIS gangs should be tried because they commit crimes against humanity. An international court should be established in Syria.



Russian Electronic Warfare in the Middle East

OE Watch Commentary: In the early hours of 1 July, a missile landed on northern Cyprus soil, after reportedly exploding in the air and starting a fire approximately 12 miles northeast of the capital, Nicosia. As the accompanying passages from local sources discuss, the missile is thought to be a Russian S-200 surface-to-air missile fired by Syrian forces in response to an Israeli attack, which landed in Cyprus as a result of Russian jamming and spoofing signals from Syria.

The first source from a Cypriot newspaper discusses the incident, noting that the missile is “believed to be a Russian-made S-200 surface-to-air missile” quoting a defense expert who claims that “Syrian air defense systems might have been tricked by means of electronic warfare” against a potential Israeli target. It also points out that the incident came on the same night that Israeli fighter jets launched an attack against Syrian assets near Damascus and Homs. It highlights that Syrian reports claim that their air defense forces thwarted missile attacks targeting the outskirts of the two towns.

The second passage, written by a Turkish expert, also discusses the incident, noting that “initial investigations point to a S-200 surface-to-air missile in Syria’s inventory” and that the missile likely “did not target the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, but entered its airspace because it lost control...” The author points out that Syria has been using S-200 batteries since late 2016 against Israeli planes that violate or attempt to violate its airspace.

While authorities on both sides of the island conduct investigations to get to the bottom of the missile, reports from Israeli sources may offer a clue: As the final passage from *The Times of Israel* discusses, planes flying through Israel have witnessed a disruption to their satellite navigation recently. The passage quotes an expert on the topic who attributes the problem to a change to Russia’s deployment of its transmitters (or jammers); “either the deployment of additional transmitters, an increase in the power of them or a repositioning of one of the jammers closer to the border with Israel.” The passage discusses that “pilots flying through the Middle East, specifically around Syria, have noted that their GPS systems have displayed the wrong location or stopped working entirely.” It points out that in the last few weeks, pilots have been reporting navigation problems during takeoff and landing at the Ben Gurion International Airport and Cyprus’s Larnaca International Airport. The article explains that this GPS denial of service does not affect Russian pilots in the area, as Russia does not rely on GPS satellites for its navigation. Instead, Russia uses its indigenous Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS). **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Signal that has been interfering with airplanes in Israeli airspace... appears to come from new deployment of Moscow’s electronic warfare systems...”

Source: “New missile scenarios tossed in the mix,” *Kathimerini Cyprus*, 3 July 2019. <https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/new-missile-scenarios-tossed-in-the-mix>

... Experts offered their own assessments to Turkish Cypriot media regarding the missile explosion over Cyprus, Sunday night after midnight. The rocket, widely believed to be a Russian-made S200 surface-to-air missile, broke apart in the air before debris was scattered in different locations and started a fire near Vouno/Tasket on the foothills of Kyrenia mountains.

... Arda Mevlutoglu, a defense policy expert... said the missile could have been fired by Syrian air defense against Israeli fighter jets. But Mevlutoglu added it was not clear whether a plane was an actual target. He wondered whether Syrian air defense systems might have been tricked by means of electronic warfare to think there had been an Israeli target in the area...

On Sunday night, Israeli fighter jets launched an attack against Syrian assets near Damascus and Homs. Syrian state media had reported that the country’s air defense forces thwarted missile attacks targeting the outskirts of the capital city and the western town.

Source: Mensur Akgün, “Bir S-200 kazasi daha... (Another S-200 accident),” *Karar.com*, 3 July 2019. <https://www.karar.com/yazarlar/mensur-akgun/bir-s-200-kazasi-daha-10630>

On Sunday night, Cyprus was shaken by a big explosion, [it was] probably a missile from Syria directed towards Israeli planes that fell near the Tashkent village between Nicosia-Girne. At least there were no casualties. Initial investigations point to a S-200 surface-to-air missile in Syria’s inventory. It is thought that the missile exploded (or was made to explode) before it hit the ground. It is said that the missile did not target the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, but that it entered the airspace because it lost control...

It is known that Syria has been using S-200 batteries since 12 September 2016, against Israeli planes that violate or attempt to violate its airspace. The Syrian regime has previously said that it has hit Israeli airplanes before, but these claims have generally been denied by Israel. Some missiles from Syria have landed on Israeli territory. And Israel has occasionally targeted S-200 radar systems...

On 1 July, another S-200 missile directed at Israeli planes fell on Northern Cyprus. Investigations will reveal how the missile got off course so much, and why it waited so long to destruct itself. We will probably find out whether it was electronic jamming, an accident or bad intentions...

Source: “GPS jamming affecting Israel comes from Russian base in Syria: US researcher,” *The Times of Israel*, 28 June 2019. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/gps-jamming-affecting-israel-comes-from-russian-base-in-syria-us-researcher/>

Signal that has been interfering with airplanes in Israeli airspace is detectable from space, appears to come from new deployment of Moscow’s electronic warfare systems...

Since last spring, pilots flying through the Middle East, specifically around Syria, have noted that their GPS systems have displayed the wrong location or stopped working entirely. This came shortly after a large suicide drone attack on Russian forces in Syria....

The issue did not affect Israeli airspace until a few weeks ago, when pilots started reporting navigation problems during takeoff and landing in Ben Gurion International Airport, as well as around Cyprus’s Larnaca International Airport.

... The sudden appearance of the problem in Israel could be the result of any number of changes to Russia’s deployment of its transmitters, also known as jammers — either the deployment of additional transmitters, an increase in the power of them or a repositioning of one of the jammers closer to the border with Israel.

... This GPS denial of service does not affect Russian pilots taking part in the civil war in Syria, as Russia does not rely on GPS satellites for its navigation. Instead, Russia uses its indigenous Global Navigation Satellite System, or GLONASS.

As a result, the Russian military has little to lose in disrupting GPS reception. Humphreys [a professor at the University of Texas] said the jamming appeared to be an effort by Russia to prevent attacks by drones that rely on GPS navigation to attack their bases and personnel, but also is a way for Moscow to demonstrate to the entire world its “dominance in the radio spectrum.”



Turkish Observers See Connection between Failed Coup and S-400 Purchase

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey recently commemorated the third anniversary of the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, with numerous news shows featuring panel discussions on how this incident impacted Turkey. Meanwhile, Turkey took first deliveries of components of the Russian-made S-400 missiles. As the accompanying passages demonstrate, many observers see a link between these two events.

The first passage is from such a panel discussion. One of the panelists, a former Turkish diplomat, points out that the S-400s entered Turkey's agenda "right after the 15 July coup attempt three years ago." He continues on to explain that, shortly after the coup attempt, President Erdoğan "ended a 9-month period of frozen relations with Russia, jumped on a plane and went to St. Petersburg, met Putin on 9 August, and put Turkey-Russia relations back on track." He attributes this to the fact that Putin "showed the right reaction that night by calling and asking if he could do anything, in contrast to our US interlocutors who were nowhere to be found..."

This expert also points out that the failed coup raised questions in people's minds about the Air Force (which was a key force in the attempted coup); specifically, whether a pilot, "like a lone wolf" in the Air Force could "attempt something like this again..." He claims that there is an effort to replace the Air Force as the main backbone of Turkey's air defense; distributing the responsibility within Turkey's defense architecture, and shifting it more to UAVs and S-400s.

In the second passage, a well-known journalist argues that "the most important side effect of 15 July was Turkey beginning to trust Russia more than the US and its other Western allies." Therefore, he claims, Erdoğan "views the S-400 purchase from Russia as a precaution against the possibility of another such attempt."

The final passage features parts of comments that Erdoğan made to a group of journalists, which may provide a clue about this issue of [mis] trust. Claiming that the S-400 purchase is "the most important agreement in our history," Erdoğan discusses in historic context, the various threats that the Ottoman Empire, and later Turkey faced from all directions. He continues on to say, "Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them... Even though we were the frontline against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it was not sufficient to protect us from these threats." Many analysts, including the first one excerpted here, saw this as a significant political message. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 2019.

Source: Адміністрація Президента України via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Recep_Tayyip_Erdo%C4%9Fan_2019_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Recep_Tayyip_Erdo%C4%9Fan_2019_(cropped).jpg), CC BY 4.0

“Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them.” -Turkish President Erdoğan



Continued: Turkish Observers See Connection between Failed Coup and S-400 Purchase

Source: Aydın Selcen, Kadri Gürsel, Kemal Can and Yüksel Taşkın, “Türkiye’nin Durumu (The State of Turkey),” *Medyascope*.tv.com, 18 July 2019. <https://medyascope.tv/2019/07/18/acik-oturum-200-turkiyenin-durumu-aydin-selcen-kadri-gursel-kemal-can-ve-yuksel-taskin/>

[Aydın Selcen] “When did we start talking about the S-400? Right after the 15 July coup attempt three years ago, President Erdoğan ended a 9-month period of frozen relations with Russia, jumped on a plane and went to St. Petersburg, met Putin on 9 August, and put Turkey-Russia relations back on track... This has to do with the fact that Putin showed the right reaction that night by calling and asking if he could do anything, in contrast to our US interlocutors who were nowhere to be found... And President Erdoğan mentioned buying the S-400 for the first time on his flight back from St. Petersburg.” ...

What happened after 15 July? First of all, a question emerged against the Air Force about whether it could happen again.... The question of whether a pilot, like a lone wolf, can come out of the Air Force [and do something like this again]... So there seems to be an effort to take the Air Force out from being the main backbone of our air defense, and place more responsibility on UAVs and S-400s within our defense architecture.. But there’s also a political meaning... As Erdoğan said in a recent speech, “Even though we have been part of the Western alliance, we’ve also seen the greatest threats from them...”

Source: Murat Yetkin, “15 Temmuz, 15 Soru (15 July, 15 Questions),” *Yetkinreport.com*, 15 July 2019. <https://yetkinreport.com/2019/07/15/15-temmuz-15-soru/>

President Erdoğan... views the S-400 purchase from Russia as a precaution against the possibility of another such attempt.... The most important side effect of 15 July was Turkey beginning to trust Russia more than the US and its other Western allies.

Source: “Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan’dan S-400 Açıklaması: Tarihimizin En Önemli Anlaşması (Statement about the S-400 from President Erdoğan: The Most Important Agreement in our History),” *Haberturk.com.tr*, 14 July 2019. <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-erdogan-dan-s-400-aciklamasi-tarihimizin-en-onemli-anlasmasi-2504288>

“The Ottoman [Empire] always had to deal with threats, sometimes from the east, sometimes from the west, sometimes from the north or south. And its ultimate collapse came as a result of the bold struggle it put up against these threats from four different directions. The Republic of Turkey was founded, not based on its victory against a small country like Greece, but rather against the greater powers that were behind [Greece]... at the time. Even during the period of the Republic, we were constantly tested. Despite the political and military pacts that we made with the western alliance, it is a reality that we have seen the greatest threats from them. This is political, this is economic, this is cultural, in every way.... Even though we were the frontline against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, it was not sufficient to protect us from these threats. Greece, and later on the Greek Cypriot [Administration] of Southern Cyprus, was always waved over our head like the Sword of Damocles.”

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Turkish Commentary on China's Vision for a Counterbalancing Alliance to NATO

OE Watch Commentary: Speaking at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) in the Tajik capital Dushanbe, China's President Xi Jinping called on CICA member states to "explore a regional security structure with Asian features to realize collective security for Asia." Despite the absence of evidence, some analysts suggested that Jinping was calling for a NATO-like structure encompassing some Asian countries to include Turkey. The accompanying articles discuss this proposition.

The author of the first article, a former Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, notes that the Chinese president has made similar statements in previous CICA summits, but points out that this time, other leaders also expressed support for the idea. One of these leaders who made reference to this idea was Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, although with less emphasis on the security structure to be created. Erdoğan said

"[W]e believe that our cooperation should be deepened. For this purpose, structuring various organs and expanding our efforts could be the next step. Altogether we must take more ownership of CICA." The author argues that establishing a NATO-like defense structure seems unlikely in the near future. Nevertheless, he claims that even the discussion of such a structure "composed of China, Russia, and India together with other Asian countries and Turkey, alienated from NATO, drifting towards this new structure... must be a nightmare for any military strategist."

According to the second article, the Chinese leader suggested an alliance to counterbalance NATO. The article notes that Russian observers read the President Jinping's statement as a challenge to the United States' hegemony. Speaking at the summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin supported the idea of forming a security structure and criticized the United States. He further stated that security has become a focal point in Asia as the fight against terrorism remains a serious agenda item. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"...[It] must be a nightmare for any military strategist to think of a defense structure composed of China, Russia, and India together with other Asian countries and Turkey, alienated from NATO, drifting towards this new structure."



Leaders at the CICA summit.

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60756>, CC BY SA 4.0

Source: Yaşar Yakış, "Asyalı bir NATO ve Türkiye'nin denklemdeki yeri (An Asian NATO and Turkey's position in the equation)," [ahvalnews.com](https://ahvalnews.com/tr/guncel/asyali-bir-nato-ve-turkiyenin-denklemdede-yeri), 20 June 2019. <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/guncel/asyali-bir-nato-ve-turkiyenin-denklemdede-yeri>

Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Tajik capital Dushanbe made a statement last week at the fifth summit meeting of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA).

He called on CICA members to uphold "the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security, and explore a regional security structure with Asian features to realize collective security for Asia."

...Turkish media commented that the Chinese leader was proposing a NATO-like structure, but there are no signs indicating that his proposal meant to go that far...

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a similar statement at the fifth CICA summit... "We believe that our cooperation should be deepened. For this purpose, structuring various organs and expanding the efforts could be the next step. Altogether we must take more ownership of CICA"...

A defense structure like the one outlined by Xi Jinping seems to be a distant target, but debating such a sensitive issue... must be a nightmare for any military strategist to think of a defense structure composed of China, Russia, and India together with other Asian countries and Turkey, alienated from NATO, drifting towards this new structure.

Source: "Çin lideri Şi Cinping'ten sürpriz öneri: ABD'ye karşı, Asya NATO'sunu kuralım (A surprising from China's leader Xi Jinping: Let's build Asian NATO against the USA)," [timeturk.com](https://www.timeturk.com/cin-lideri-si-cinping-ten-surpriz-oneri-abd-ye-karsi-asya-nato-sunu-kuralim/haber-1100523), 16 June 2019. <https://www.timeturk.com/cin-lideri-si-cinping-ten-surpriz-oneri-abd-ye-karsi-asya-nato-sunu-kuralim/haber-1100523>

A surprise suggestion from Chinese leader Xi Jinping: against USA, we should establish Asian NATO.

At the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) China' leader Xi Jinping has suggested that Asian countries should establish the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) like security structure...

Russian observers, who perceived these words of Chinese leader Xi [Jinping] as a direct challenge to the U.S., "China at the conference in Dushanbe suggested an 'Asian Alliance' against NATO..."

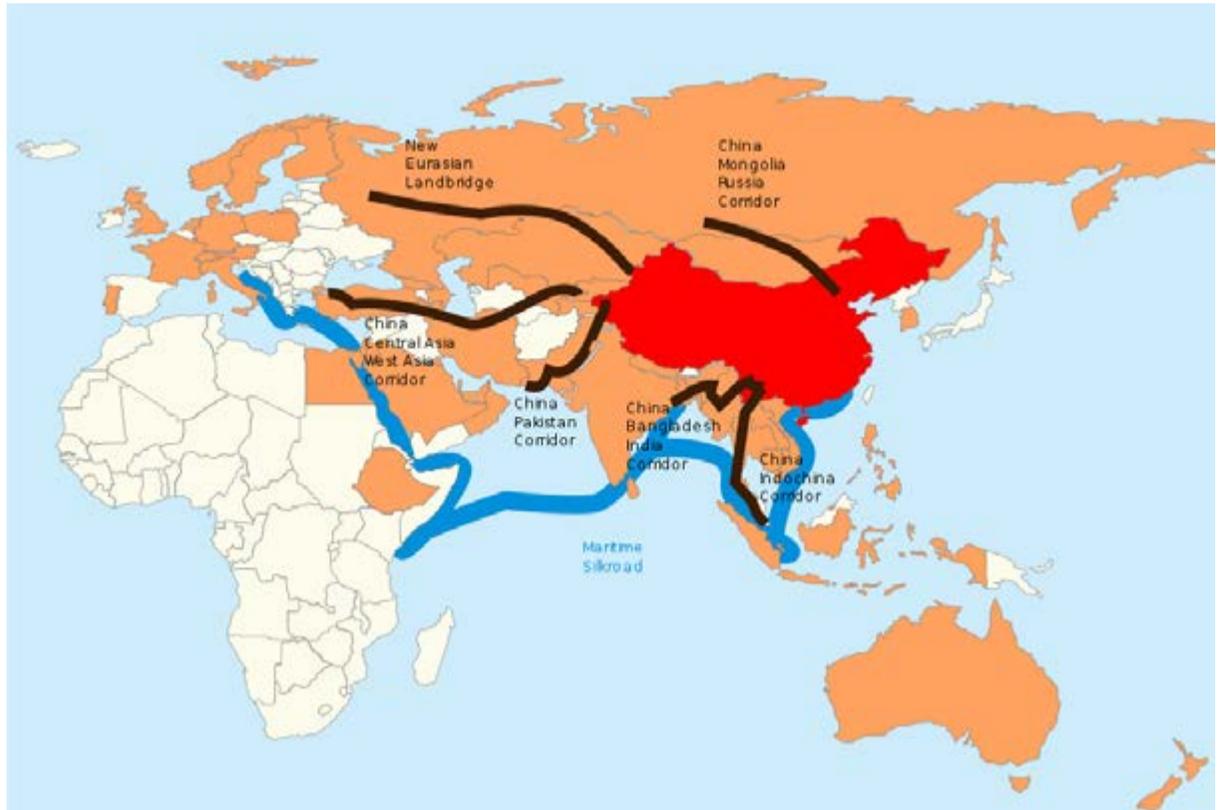
Russian leader made a speech in support of Chinese leader... [and] criticized the recent attitude of the U.S.



Turkey and China Envision a New World Order

OE Watch Commentary: On 1 July, China's *Global Times* published an op-ed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The op-ed, excerpted here, provides insight into how Turkey sees its relationship with China. The piece came one day before Erdoğan met Chinese President Xi Jinping during a visit to Beijing, during which the two leaders discussed their shared vision for a multipolar world order, as well as how to improve the strategic cooperative relationship. The accompanying passages discuss these developments.

As the passages from the op-ed demonstrate, Erdoğan places a lot of emphasis on the joint responsibilities of Turkey and China in an “emerging new world order.” He references the centuries-old cultural and economic relationship between the two countries based on the Silk Road, noting that this relationship is now growing stronger thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He highlights the BRI's



One Belt One Road (Belt and Road Initiative).

Source: Lommes via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:One-belt-one-road.svg>, CC BY-SA 4.0

“Middle Corridor, an initiative led by Turkey,” as being an important component of the project because it will link Turkey to China via Central Asian countries. He points out that Turkey and China aim to improve their “strategic cooperative relationship.” The Turkish President also points out certain commonalities between the two countries, saying that both dream of seeing their nations secure the places that they deserve on the world stage; and both have transformative goals for the next decades. While referencing projects to promote tourism, education and defense, he notes that Turkey's goal is to “double our bilateral trade volume with China to \$50 billion and, subsequently, \$100 billion on a more balanced and sustainable footing...” calling on the Chinese business community to invest in Turkey. He concludes by noting some of the threats to the global free trade system, “which reflect the misconception that we still live in a unipolar world.” He notes that Turkey “shares China's vision... to... promot[e] multilateralism and uphold the principle of free trade.”

The second accompanying article, from *thenewturkey.org*, a website launched by a pro-government think tank, discusses Erdoğan's visit to China. It argues that both China and Turkey were affected by the new sanctions on Iran, so they are in the same boat as they search for alternative ways to compensate for their losses. While economic cooperation was at the epicenter of the visit, both presidents also stressed the importance of challenging the existing power dynamics of the international order. As the passage points out, Chinese President Xi Jinping echoed Erdoğan's messages by stating that both countries should cooperate towards bolstering a new multilateral world system with the United Nations at its core.

Despite being situated at the opposite ends of the Asian continent and the physical distance between them, relations between Turkey and China do in fact go back to B.C. 2000 due to the ancient Silk Road, which kept trade and cultural links alive for centuries. In the mid-20th century, Cold War conditions made it difficult for the two countries to establish diplomatic relations. Modern diplomatic relations between Turkey and China began in 1971, but there was little close cooperation between the two countries until the bilateral relationship started picking up momentum in 2009. Several high-level visits in 2009, 2010 and 2012, along with numerous agreements on a wide range of topics from energy cooperation to increasing trade, infrastructure and military cooperation led to the “strategic cooperative relationship” that Erdoğan notes in his op-ed. However, there are two critical problematic issues in the Turkey-China relationship. First, there is a huge imbalance in the trade relationship, which favors China and worries Turkey. This explains Erdoğan's calls for increased Chinese investment in the Turkish economy for a “more balanced and sustainable footing.” Second, as the final passage notes, there is the issue of the roughly 20 million Uyghurs in Xinjiang Province, with whom Turkey has linguistic and religious links. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz / Kaya)**

“*Turkey and China: two countries that share a common vision for the future...*”



Continued: Turkey and China Envision a New World Order

Source: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan “Turkey, China share a vision for the future,” *Global Times (China)*, 1 July 2019. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1156357.shtml>

Turkey and China have major responsibilities as a new world order emerges.

...

The centuries-old cooperation between our nations continues to grow stronger today thanks to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China’s president and my dear friend. The Republic of Turkey is a strong supporter of the BRI. As a matter of fact, we were one of the first countries to endorse this initiative back in 2013.

...

The Middle Corridor, an initiative led by Turkey, lies at the heart of the BRI. It is an important component of the project, which links Turkey to Georgia and Azerbaijan via rail, crosses the Caspian Sea and reaches China through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.

As part of this effort, we... launched the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) Railroad Project. Other investment projects, which we undertake as part of the Middle Corridor, include the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge over the Bosphorus, the Eurasia Tunnel and Marmaray, the 1915 Bridge over the Dardanelles, highways, high-speed railways, logistics hubs and communication infrastructure. These... will directly contribute to the BRI’s goal of connecting Beijing to London.

...

Having continuously developed thanks to mutual respect and common interests, Turkey’s relations with China reached the level of strategic cooperative relationship in 2010. We aim to further improve win-win relations by sharing a vision for the future - as embodied by the BRI.

As late modernizers, Turkey and China are among countries seeking to bridge their development gap with Western nations in the 21st century. In other words, the “Chinese dream” is to see China where it deserves to be on the world stage, just as the “Turkish dream” is to witness our nation secure the place it deserves in the international arena. Just as China has identified goals for the Communist Party of China’s centennial in 2021 and the centennial of the People’s Republic of China in 2049, Turkey has a set of objectives for 2023, the Republic’s centennial, and 2053. Those targets, which aim to transform our countries into welfare societies, are among the many things that Turkey and China have in common.

...

Among our goals is to double our bilateral trade volume with China to \$50 billion and, subsequently, \$100 billion on a more balanced and sustainable footing to serve the interests of both sides. I call on the Chinese business community to invest in Turkey - the crossroads of Asia and Europe, and the heart of the BRI...

The world is faced with serious global challenges today. As economic globalization deepens, threats against the global free trade system place all economies at risk. Such threats, which reflect the misconception that we still live in a unipolar world, undermine global peace and stability.

Turkey shares China’s vision when it comes to serving world peace, preserving global security and stability, promoting multilateralism, and upholding the principle of free trade. The world seeks a new, multipolar balance today. The need for a new international order, which will serve the interests of all humanity, is crystal clear. Turkey and China, the world’s most ancient civilizations, have a responsibility to contribute to building this new system.

Source: “‘A New International Order to Serve the Interests of Humanity’: Erdoğan - Xi Jinping Meeting,” *thenewturkey.org*, 3 July 2019. <https://thenewturkey.org/a-new-international-order-to-serve-the-interests-of-humanity-erdogan-xi-jinping-meeting>

...Turkey and China are trying to deepen their economic cooperation in order to at least compensate for what they lose when they cannot trade with Iran.

During President Erdoğan’s official state visit to China... the two presidents made it clear that they support the existence of a new world order that is more advanced, fairly constructed and willing to absorb and fully represent all states. With his interview with Chinese Xinhua News Agency, President Erdoğan said that the two states were in favor of a “new international order... Turkey and China... both have a duty to “contribute to building this new system.”

President Erdoğan praised the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative by describing it as the “greatest development project of the 21st century, encompassing over 100 nations and international organizations.”... The Turkish president stressed that Turkey was one of the first countries to back this initiative in early 2013. He also mentioned that the Turkish “Middle Corridor” Project is lying at the heart of the Chinese initiative.

Underlining the role of China in international politics, President Erdoğan said that for the sake of world peace, security and stability, in addition to enhancing multilateralism – the values that both countries share – it is fundamental to “achieve cooperation with our Chinese friends...”

President Xi Jinping said that the two states should work together for the sake of propping a multilateral new world system with the UN as its essence.

Source: Ayla Jean Yackley, “Erdoğan finds warm welcome, ‘shared vision’ in Beijing,” *Al-Monitor*, 2 July 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/erdogan-visit-china-economic-political-ties.html>

“Turkish-Chinese relations have been overshadowed by Ankara’s objections to Beijing’s treatment of its ethnic Uighur minority, which shares religious and linguistic links with Turks.”

Turkey's Ballistic Missile Capabilities

OE Watch Commentary: Becoming self-sufficient in developing and manufacturing defense industry products by 2023 has been an ambitious goal of the Turkish government under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The Turkish media continues to report on the successes of the Turkish defense industry and while progress has been made, the country is still far from achieving this goal. Turkey's involvement in ongoing conflicts in the Middle East has provided the opportunity to test some of its domestic defense industry products in real-war situations. The accompanying article highlights one of the Turkish defense industry's products: Bora ballistic missiles.



Artillery Rockets at IDEF 2015.

Source: CeeGee via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RoketsanIDEF2015_\(2\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RoketsanIDEF2015_(2).JPG), CC BY-SA 4.0

Bora ballistic missiles were officially introduced by Turkish defense manufacturer ROKETSAN in 2017. These missiles are the product of Turkish-Chinese defense cooperation and were inspired by the Chinese solid-fueled short-range ballistic missile, B-611. The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) were able to use these missiles against the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) last May. The article states that it is a significant achievement that the missiles could be used only two years after the announcement of their manufacture.

As the article states, from a tactical point of view, Bora ballistic missiles provide three advantages to the TAF. First, having a mobile launcher provides a competitive advantage compared to fixed missile silos as they have a better chance of survivability. "Second, Bora are solid fuel missiles. Therefore, they have a shorter launch cycle and require fewer personnel than liquid fuel missiles." Third, its low circular error probable (CEP) and slightly over 1,000-pound warhead "can eliminate a wide range of targets in the battlefield." These features combined with their successful battlefield tests will prove to be an advantage in Turkey's efforts to export the missiles. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“The fact that the Bora ballistic missile has reached a level that can be used in a real conflict environment achieves the vision of the Turkish defense industry to produce advanced technology systems..”

Source: “Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, “Türkiye'nin balistik füze teknolojisinde yeni aşama (A new stage in Turkey's ballistic missile technology,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, 26 June 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/turkiyenin-balistik-fuze-teknolojisinde-yeni-asama/1516196#!>

The fact that the Bora ballistic missile has reached a level that can be used in a real conflict environment achieves the vision of the Turkish defense industry to produce advanced technology systems.

Late last May, media sources announced that the Turkish Armed Forces tested the Bora ballistic missile in Operation Pençe, a counter-terrorism operation targeting PKK elements in northern Iraq, in a real conflict environment. This event shows Turkey's developing defense capabilities have come to a serious stage.

Militarily, the Bora tactical ballistic missiles can provide critical combat capabilities for the Turkish Armed Forces. The missile carried by a mobile launcher can be deployed quickly to different points. Naturally, mobile systems have a greater chance of survival in the battlefield than fixed missile silos.

Second, Bora is a solid fuel missile. Therefore, it has a shorter launch cycle and requires fewer personnel than liquid fuel missiles (e.g. the Scud missile family). Third, thanks to its low CEP and 470 kg warhead, it can eliminate a wide range of targets in the battlefield, from bases to large military units and even enemy-critical national infrastructure points within range.



Turkish Involvement in Libya

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey’s involvement in Libya is “part of an ongoing strategic power struggle in the region,” according to the accompanying article. Libya is currently divided between two power poles domestically and internationally. Domestically, the UN-recognized Government of National Accord in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by General Khalifa Haftar compete to control Libya. In this power struggle, the Turkish government has sided with the UN-recognized government and acknowledged weapons shipment to groups fighting against General Haftar.

According to the accompanying article from *Al-Monitor*, a popular Middle Eastern news source, the Government of National Accord relies on the Turkish government for help in fighting the LNA led by General Haftar. While Turkey strongly condemned the LNA’s takeover of several cities and oil fields in southern Libya, the LNA has accused Turkey of “meddling in Libya’s conflict” and “sending Jabhat al-Nusra extremists from Syria to Tripoli to combat” its forces. As the article points out, Turkey’s involvement in this conflict is not purely ideological, but rather “related to strategic balances in the power struggle going on in the eastern Mediterranean.” The author notes that Turkish actors engaged in the conflict are not limited to “the Islamist government in Ankara. They have connections with the Turkish military, especially its navy, which is certainly more secular than Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party.”



Map of Turkey and Libya.

Source: Turkish Flame via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libya_Turkey_Locator.png, Public Domain.

The article claims that Turkey’s involvement in this conflict is related to its concern over sovereignty rights in the Eastern Mediterranean. It points out that Turkey is concerned because “Greece has claimed rights over a naval zone of some 15,000 square miles north of Libya following Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi’s 2011 death.” Ankara perceives this as a threat to “Turkey’s and Turkish Cypriots’ rights and interests in naval sovereignty zones in the region.” Therefore, a Libyan government close to Turkey will tip the balance in favor of Turkey to curtail the ambitions of Greece, which formed an alliance with the Republic of Cyprus, Egypt and Israel.

Turkey has been trying to reach a coastal sharing agreement with Libya. As part these efforts, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar visited Libya in November 2018 to assure the Government of National Accord and offer Turkey’s support for “capacity building and security efforts.” He also “called on Libyans to cooperate with Ankara in the eastern Mediterranean.” The author argues that Turkey will likely increase its military support for the government in Tripoli to counter balance threats it perceives in the eastern Mediterranean. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“Turkey’s interest in Libya is more related to strategic balances in the power struggle going on in the eastern Mediterranean.”

Source: “Metin Gürçan, “Libya has outsized importance for Turkey’s Mediterranean plans,” *al-monitor.com*, 05 July 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/07/turkey-libya-means-beyond-a-country-for-ankara.html>

Turkey says Hifter is a “warlord” seeking to destabilize the country. The Libyan National Army, in response, has been accusing Turkey of meddling in Libya’s conflict. Turkey is accused of sending Jabhat al-Nusra extremists from Syria to Tripoli to combat the Libyan National Army.

Turkey’s interest in Libya is more related to strategic balances in the power struggle going on in the eastern Mediterranean. While it is true that Turkey is supporting pro-Islamist groups in Libya, the Turkish actors involved in the conflict are not limited to the Islamist government in Ankara. They have connections with the Turkish military, especially its navy, which is certainly more secular than Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party.

For Ankara, the worst-case scenario in the eastern Mediterranean is a possible agreement between Greek Cypriots and Greece on sharing of naval sovereignty areas. This could threaten Turkey’s and Turkish Cypriots’ rights and interests in naval sovereignty zones in the region, which is believed to be rich in terms of hydrocarbon resources.

According to a naval strategist, Greece has claimed rights over a naval zone of some 39,000 square kilometers (15,000 square miles) north of Libya following Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi’s 2011 death...

Turkey is trying to reach a deal with Libya about coastal sharing to curtail Greece’s naval sovereignty claims over the region. This could allow Ankara to increase its influence in the region to counter the pressure stemming from the Greek Cypriot-Greece-Egypt-Israel bloc and confine Egypt to the south...

In November 2018, Akar went to Libya to explain these options to the Government of National Accord. Sources said that during his visit, the Turkish defense minister tried to assure the Libyans that there would be substantial Turkish assistance for Libya’s capacity building and security efforts and called on Libyans to cooperate with Ankara in the eastern Mediterranean.

However, these efforts spearheaded by the Turkish military were undermined when Hifter attacked the Tripoli government.

In response to Hifter’s attacks, Ankara began providing the Government of National Accord with needed assistance; some say this included arms and soldiers. Some Greek and Egyptian media outlets even claimed that Turkish officers are actively involved in combat and are not just providing training and equipment support. Government of National Accord forces also are being equipped with sophisticated weapons systems, including Turkish-made armed drones.

All this shows that Ankara’s interest in the Libyan conflict is not based simply on politics or ideology but also on geostrategic concerns.

According to Ankara’s strategic mindset, if Turkey loses in Libya, it will be tightly confined to a limited area in the eastern Mediterranean. Thus, Turkey will likely increase its support to the Tripoli government and its forces in the coming days.



Radiation Defense Exercises Scheduled for Tehran

OE Watch Commentary: Suspicions regarding Iran’s nuclear program remain strong. Regardless of the status of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran’s participation in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty mandates continued International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitoring and inspection. While the JCPOA focuses specifically on the military dimension of Iran’s nuclear program as well as enrichment, which it allows Iran to continue under specific constraints, Iran’s nuclear work is broader. Much of Iran’s nuclear program is housed in universities or military facilities in or near Iran’s largest cities—Tehran and Isfahan. In addition, the Iranian government has openly considered expanding the numbers of nuclear power plants, some of which may also be built near the Iranian capital.



Tehran, looking north toward the Alburz Mountains.

Source: Tehran, by Ninara is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0

The sheer scale of Iran’s nuclear work combined with the fact that multiple faults transect Iran and nearly the entire country is susceptible to devastating earthquakes, makes crisis management imperative. So too do past incidents: In 2011, a fire and explosion in Isfahan reportedly damaged a nuclear facility and led to the release of some radiation.

The accompanying passage from *Fars News* reports that the country will be holding radiation exercises starting around 23 October - 21 November, with the goals of “practicing and testing the level of readiness of radiation-incident devices...” and “eliminating radiation leakage pollution, testing and evaluating systems and equipment, [practicing] the transfer of populations to a safe area, and specialized training for the people.” That the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), of which the Passive Defense Organization is part, would take the lead on such drills makes sense given the paramount role the IRGC plays in all aspects of Iran’s security. It also likely suggests the reluctance of the IRGC to share information outside the organization with regard to certain aspects of Iran’s nuclear program. That the Iranian press would begin announcing such drills four months in advance is likely meant to allay popular panic given both the size of cities like Tehran (whose population exceeds eight million, and whose broader urban area has a population nearly twice that) and the widespread distrust ordinary Iranians feel for their government given past disaster mismanagement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The purpose of the Tehran radiation exercise [is] crisis and asset management after any incident.”

Source: “Razmayesh Pedafand Pertavi Tehran Aban Mah Sal Jari Bargozar Mishavad (Radiation Defense Exercises Will Be Held in Tehran in October-November),” *Fars News Agency*, 21 June 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980321001164>

Radiation Exercises Will be Held in Tehran

A spokesperson for the Passive Defense Organization said that radiation tests will start in Iran in [the Persian month] Aban [October 23–November 21] of this year, with the coordination of Ali Asghar Zarei, the acting head of the Passive Defense Organization; Foroughzadeh, the deputy commander of the Radiation Defense Headquarters; Commander Saberi, head of Tehran’s division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Radvan, the director general of Tehran’s branch of the Passive Defense Organization.

Zarei, the acting head of the Passive Defense Organization, said that the purpose of the Tehran radiation exercise was crisis and asset management after any incident. He continued: “In these tests, we are practicing and testing the level of readiness of radiation-incident devices in every unit. We are working on the elimination of radiation leakage pollution, testing and evaluating systems and equipment, the transfer of populations to a safe area, and specialized training for the people.”

The test is planned for Aban of this year under the guidance of the acting head of the Passive Defense Organization and the Radiation Defense Organization in Tehran.

In a statement, Foroughzadeh, the head of the Radiation Defense Organization, stated the importance of confronting the threat head-on: Conducting and practicing radiation exercises is very important. We must prepare for these eventualities by practicing and conducting annual exercises. Every year, a comprehensive radiation campaign must be hosted. Its strengths and weaknesses should be assessed, and necessary measures should be taken to address the deficiencies. General Saberi, the deputy commander of the Tehran Revolutionary Guards Corps, also announced that he was preparing to conduct an exercise in Aban this year.

Iran: Optoelectronic Military Developments

OE Watch Commentary: Optoelectronics enable engineers to decrease the size and weight of military systems, to increase data processing, and to broaden resistance to electronic interference. The excerpted article from *Tasnim News*, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), reports on the introduction of “ten very advanced systems for air and sea surveillance, tracking and intelligence... built and designed by the scientists of the optoelectric industry of Iran,” but curiously does not list the ten projects supposedly unveiled. This is also the case for articles on the same event from other Iranian outlets.

This might suggest that Iranian officials’ rhetoric exaggerates the progress made on optoelectronic technologies. That said, the excerpted article also refers to the involvement of Iran Electronics Industries, a subsidiary of Iran’s Ministry of Defense and the Isfahan Optics Industry. Isfahan Optics Industry has previously been linked to both Iran’s nuclear activities and to its ballistic missile work, so projects undertaken at the company warrant serious concern.



Amir Hatami, at a ribbon-cutting unveiling new Isfahan Optics Industry projects.
Source: Tasnim News Agency, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1398/03/22/1398032214044348417635514.jpg>

Regardless of whether Iranian authorities are exaggerating the work supposedly unveiled in Isfahan, Iranian work on military applications of optoelectronics suggests that, even under sanctions, the Iranian government remains committed to becoming a regional military power and to acquiring the most advanced technologies. This is so that Iran can claim not only a quantitative military advantage over its neighbors, but also a qualitative military edge. They are unlikely to achieve this anytime soon, but the ambition remains among the network of companies operated by the Iranian Defense Ministry and the IRGC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Ten systems were built and designed by the scientists of the opto-electric industry of Iran.”

Source: “10 Samaneh Fogh Pishrafteh Rahgiri Havaye va Daryaye Ravanmaye Shod (10 Advanced Air and Sea Systems Unveiled),” *Tasnim News*, 12 June 2019. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1398/03/22/2030663>

Ten Advanced Air and Sea Systems Unveiled

The Defense Minister introduced ten very advanced systems for air and sea surveillance, tracking and intelligence in Isfahan. The Ministry of Defense’s spokesperson said that Defense Secretary Amir Hatami opened the Isfahan Optoelectronics Technology Development Center during a visit to the Isfahan Optics Industry based in Isfahan, Iran.

At the opening ceremony, the Minister of Defense emphasized the importance of the position, mission and responsibility of the electronics and optoelectronics industries in strengthening the power of Iran’s armed forces. He said that in the last few years, we have witnessed impressive improvements in the Iranian technology industry. The Isfahan Optics Industry was able to meet the demands of the armed forces in providing defense needs.

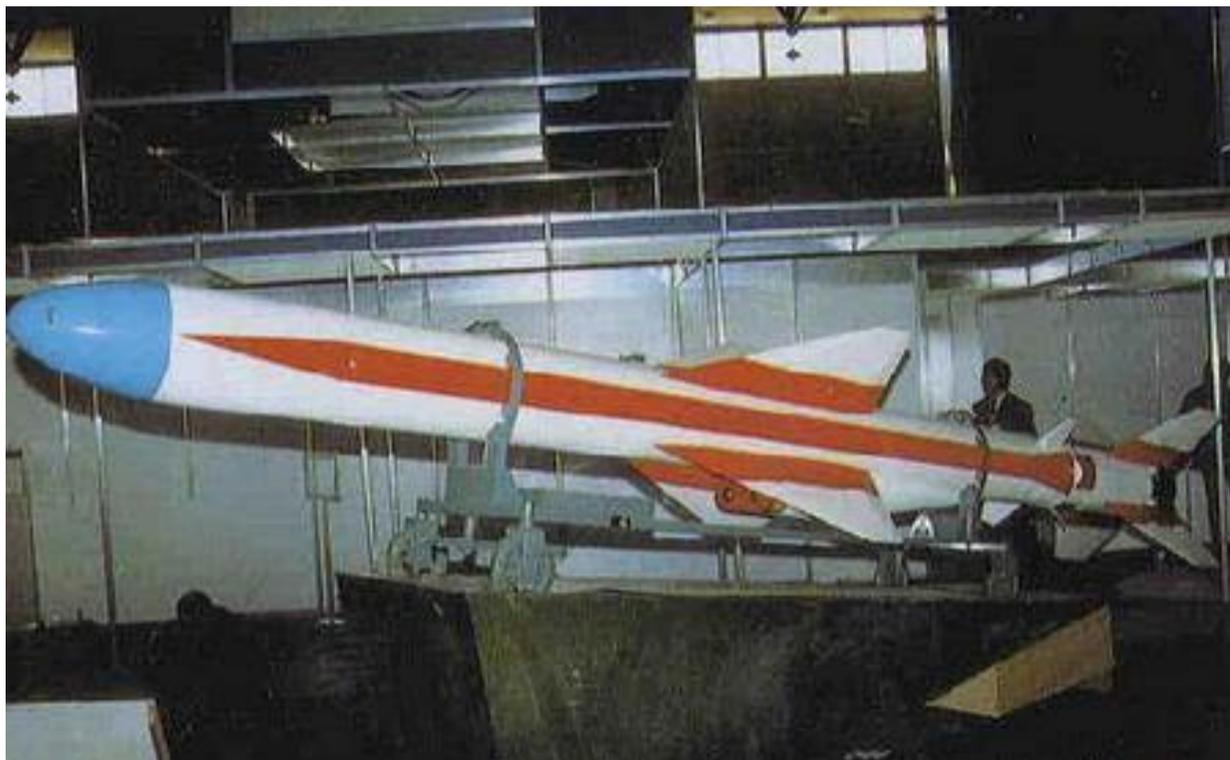
Amir Hatami celebrated the efforts and struggles of the still-young Ministry of Defense Electronics Industries. He said that the increase and diversity of the Industry’s product portfolio in both civilian and military markets was impressive and admirable.

The Minister of Defense said: “These ten systems were built and designed by the scientists of the opto-electric industry of Iran. It increases our deterrence power and provides effective protection against threats. The technology of these systems is competitive at international standards and is on par with foreign systems.”

Iran's C-802 Joint Venture with China

OE Watch Commentary: In a wide-ranging interview with *Mashregh News*, Abbas Mohtaj, an Iran-Iraq War-era Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officer and commander of Iran's naval forces between 1997-2005, discussed the Islamic Revolution, his career experiences, and the Iran-Iraq War. The accompanying passage from the interview is significant because it sheds light on Beijing's military relationship with Tehran and China's role in helping Iran develop its indigenous military industries.

Mohtaj talks openly about China providing missiles to Iran's Ministry of Defense for reverse-engineering. This is important because many international sanctions on Iran prohibited Iranian export of weaponry, but not import. Mohtaj's interview implies China was aware of Iran's intention to reverse-engineer weaponry as well. Many analyses from the time suggest Iran's neutrality during the period, but Beijing's enabling of Iran's military industries and ultimately the Islamic Republic's arsenal suggest China was anything but neutral.



The Iranian "Nur" Cruise Missile, reverse-engineered from the Chinese C-802.

Source: Iran Khabar, <http://www.irankhabar.ir/fa/doc/news/97752>

The implications of the Sino-Iranian relationship go deeper. During the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, Hezbollah fired a C-802 missile, crippling an Israeli corvette. The deliberate Chinese provision of technology, therefore, appears to have enabled Iran to proliferate the same weaponry to its proxy groups. Mohtaj's acknowledgment may therefore have reverberation on Israeli technology partnerships with China, since it reveals China's willingness to allow Iran to reverse-engineer and proliferate the technology it provides.

Mohtaj says China's provision of anti-ship missiles came only after the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War, thereby absolving China of any indirect responsibility for the use of Iranian missiles against international shipping during the 1987-1988 "tanker wars." Nevertheless, China's quiet military relations do have implications as Iran again threatens shipping in international waters and as Iranian officials go on the market for upgraded weapons systems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“The Chinese even wanted to produce C-802s with us.”

Source: “Moshak-e C802 Peruzheh-e Moshtarek Iran va Chin Bud (The C-802 Was a Joint Project of Iran and China),” *Mashregh News*, 11 June 2019. <https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/965897/>

“The C-802 Was a Joint Iran-China Project”

In the 1980s, we bought a submarine from the Russians. Couldn't we have bought a destroyer from them too?

The purchase was not done while I was there, and I was not involved with the transaction.... The submarine was just as important for us as a destroyer because we did not have a submarine. Before the revolution, we had tried to obtain a submarine from Germany but that did not result in anything.

The anti-ship cruise missiles like Silkworm and C-802 were bought during your period?

Yes. We gave a number of this first series of missiles that we brought to the Ministry of Defense, to reverse engineer them and create them ourselves. The purchase agreement for the C-801 and C-802 missiles was completed in 72 and I traveled to China to sign the agreement before the missiles were produced. We had harpoon missiles and we had good missile expertise. In fact, the Chinese even wanted to produce C-802s with us.

The C-802 was produced in Iran under the name “Nur [Light] Missile.” It is one of the most famous anti-ship cruise missiles in Iran. Both the regular military and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps want it.

So that project was a joint project?

Yes, I guess you can say that it was a joint project. Our missile experts went to China to teach them and exchange knowledge.

What was our military relationship with China?

China did not sell us weapons during the war. After the war, they sold us a number of missiles and arms.



China's Interest in Israeli Tech and Ports

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from Israeli and Chinese sources discuss two important aspects of the growing Israel-China relationship. While the first passage focuses on China's investments in Israel's technology and innovation sector, the second passage discusses its interest in Israeli ports.

The first passage from the *Jerusalem Post* features an interview with Tehila Levi-Lati, the head of an international law firm that helps facilitate the growing Israel-China tech relationship. Levi-Lati notes that "China sees Israel as a country of innovation" and is particularly interested in Israeli innovation in the fields of big data, artificial intelligence and the biomedical industries. She points out that there is a new trend between Israel and China, which entails joint ventures whereby "the Chinese bring the money, and the Israeli companies bring the technology." She also notes that recent years have seen an increase in direct flights between China and Israel. However, Israeli companies do face some challenges when working within the Chinese market, such as the need for "deep pockets," the lack of transparency and cultural differences.



Port of Haifa.

Source: Zvi Roger via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Port_of_Haifa_2752-1.jpg, CC BY 3.0

The second passage, from the *South China Morning Post*, discusses recent developments regarding a 2015 deal between Israel and China's Shanghai International Port Group (SIPG) to operate parts of the Haifa port for 25 years, starting in 2021. The Haifa port would be an important part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as it would link China to the Mediterranean. The passage points out "SIPG has committed \$2 billion to the project and plans to transform the port's bay terminal into the largest harbor in the country." However, the passage laments that Israel is reconsidering the deal due to "pressure exerted... by Washington," pointing out that "Haifa... regularly hosts joint US-Israeli naval drills and vessels. The SIPG deal has raised intelligence and security concerns that are... prompting an Israeli inter-agency review."

Haifa is not the only Israeli port that China is interested in. In 2014, a subsidiary of China Harbor Engineering won a contract to build a \$876 million port at Ashdod on Israel's Mediterranean coast. Tech and infrastructure investments are only two examples of the growing economic relationship between the two countries. The passage points out that "trade between China and Israel has surpassed \$11 billion, a figure 200 times larger than it was 25 years ago." **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

"...the Chinese bring the money, and the Israeli companies bring the technology."

Source: "China Needs Technology and Israel can Provide it- Here's How," *Jerusalem Post*, 18 July 2019. <https://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/The-growing-Israel-China-tech-relationship-595969>

"... A decade ago the relationship was mostly one-directional, with Israeli companies trying to enter the Chinese market, so that money was only going into China via foreign direct investment.

"Today, the world is different and, with the launch of China's Go Global reform, we've seen money coming out of China, with Chinese companies investing in Israel and bringing back Israeli tech to China," she said....

China needs new technology, and so they began forming joint ventures – the new trend between Israel and China."

...the Chinese bring the money, and the Israeli companies bring the technology.

The Chinese market is notoriously difficult to penetrate, Levi-Lati explained. There are lots of barriers, and if companies want to enter the market independently, they need "deep pockets" and patience. "In the last few years, we have assisted a few Israeli biomedical companies to open their activity independently in China, and with the right guidance and with a long-term plan, it is successful."

"Finding the right partner is very difficult, and one of the main problems in China is transparency, as is maintaining control in the business and dealing with cultural differences," she said. "Partners are also customers, distributors or companies you cooperate with. This is where our law firm can assist, because we understand the culture and we can do due diligence, which is the most important thing in China."

China sees Israel as a country of innovation...

Recent years have also seen more and more direct flights from China to Israel...

...While Israel has seen Chinese investments in a number of areas, including in infrastructure, there is currently great interest in big data, artificial intelligence and the biomedical industries.

Source: "Israel reviews 2015 Haifa investment deal with China as Washington considers future of navy operations at port," *South China Morning Post*, 17 December 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/2178382/israel-reviews-2015-haifa-investment-deal-china-washington>

SIPG has committed US\$2 billion to the project and plans to transform the port's bay terminal into the largest harbour in the country. The deal with the Israeli government granted SIPG control of the port for 25 years....

Trade between China and Israel has surpassed US\$11 billion, a figure 200 times larger than it was 25 years ago. In the same period – 1992 to 2017 – US-China trade grew 20 times, according to the US Council on Foreign Relations....

Pressure was exerted by Washington, since the US Navy has acknowledged that its longstanding operations in Haifa may change once SIPG takes over the civilian Haifa port in 2021...

Haifa is Israel's largest port city, which regularly hosts joint US-Israeli naval drills and vessels. The SIPG deal has raised intelligence and security concerns that are only now prompting an Israeli inter-agency review....

Haifa is not the only Israeli port that involves Chinese money – a subsidiary of China Harbour Engineering won a contract to build a US\$876 million port at Ashdod on Israel's Mediterranean coast.



Ethiopia's Reform Movement Threatened by Ethnic Nationalism

OE Watch Commentary: Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia's Prime Minister, has been working to implement economic and political reforms. However, as the excerpted accompanying article from *The East African* notes, implementation of his agenda is hitting a major obstacle: ethnic nationalism. The situation has deteriorated to the point where a coup was attempted against the Amhara regional government (one of Ethiopia's nine ethnically-based and politically autonomous regional states). While the coup attempt was unsuccessful, it did result in the death of five reformist leaders, including General Seare Mekonnen, the Army Chief of Staff.

To understand the reason behind this ethnic obstructionism, one must look at Ethiopia's history. In the late 1980s, with the Soviet Union partially retreating from the world stage, Ethiopia lost a significant portion of its aid. During this time, Western countries backed the minority Tigray in Ethiopia, as opposed to the majority Oromo who were viewed as too difficult to deal with regarding western security and resource interests. Abiy (as he is called in Ethiopia) assuming the role of Prime Minister represents the first time in three centuries that an Oromo has been in power in this land that traces itself back to antiquity.

When Abiy came to power he purged the military and intelligence services, and installed reformist leaders in regional governments. This has upset several of the country's ethnic groups, including some Amhara nationalists who Abiy blames for the attempted coup. Abiy's pick to replace his Army Chief of Staff will purportedly indicate whether he wants to take an additional step to keep the Amhara and Tigray from regaining control.

Neighboring Kenya is keeping a watchful eye on these developments in Ethiopia, as northern Kenya has close political, security, and business ties with southern Ethiopia. Some of these are threatened by Abiy's reforms, particularly with regards to transportation. Abiy has prioritized access to ports in the Horn of Africa, including in Djibouti and Somalia, to move much of landlocked Ethiopia's merchandise, dealing a direct blow to Kenya through which a great deal of Ethiopian goods presently flow.

There are other factors that make Abiy's reform initiatives difficult to implement, including the country's nine regions having autonomy over their revenues and security forces. Still, despite the problems, Ethiopia has been a favorite of foreign investors, who in 2017 pumped \$8.5 billion into the economy. However, should insecurity and instability increase, investors may look elsewhere to place their money, to the detriment of Ethiopia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Abiy's purge on the military, intelligence services and placement of reformist leaders in regional governments has threatened to upset this apple cart, bringing to the fore what has over time been dubbed the Oromo question.”

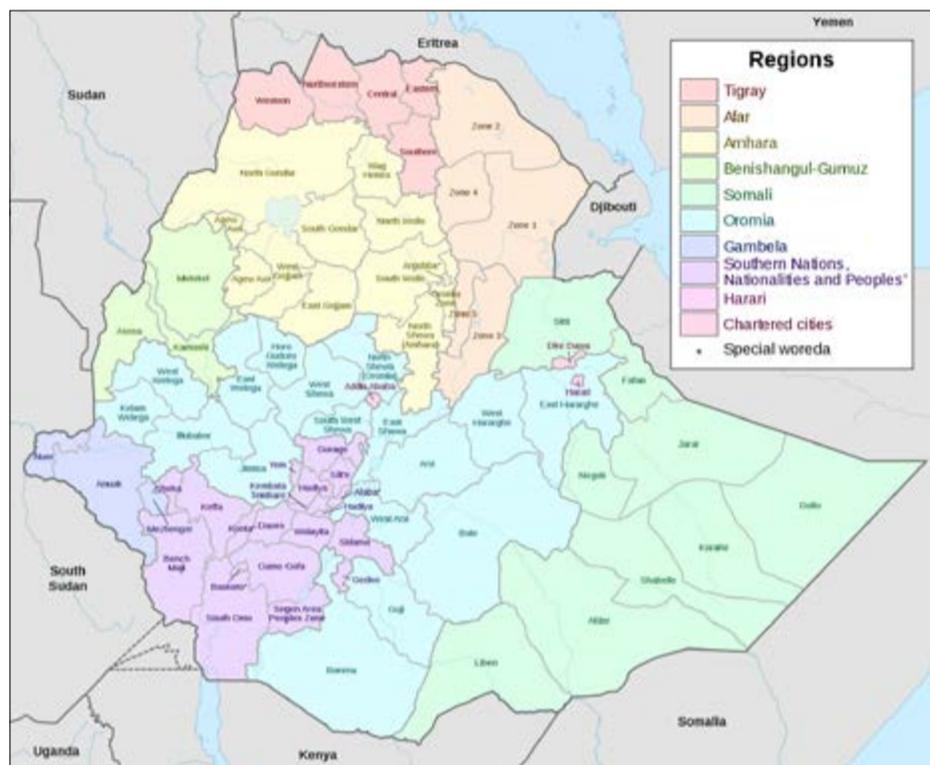
Source: Gatu Mbaria, “Ethnic nationalism is the PM's major hurdle, he has to pacify interest groups,” *The East African*, 30 June 2019. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/africa/Ethiopia-ethnic-nationalism-is-abiy-ahmed-major-hurdle/4552902-5176660-13uyospz/index.html>

Abiy's purge on the military, intelligence services and placement of reformist leaders in regional governments has threatened to upset this apple cart, bringing to the fore what has overtime been dubbed the Oromo question.

[Abiy] said the Amhara nationalists blamed for the killings had ill motives, starting with stopping the reforms and creating mistrust among Ethiopians; demoralizing and disrespecting the country's security personnel to create ethnic division and put the nation at great risk.”

Some analysts are also looking to see whether the transitional government will go on with elections scheduled for next year or delay them to restore calm across the country, now torn by ethnic mistrust and clashes that have displaced thousands.

The brief says militant groups that joined forces in October 2016 to bring down the government are now a threat to Ethiopia's national security and territorial integrity should the Abiy reforms not come through.



Ethiopia is divided into two chartered cities and nine ethnically-based, politically autonomous regions. Ethnic nationalism is proving to be an obstacle to Prime Minister Abiy's reform efforts.

Source: NordNordWest via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_zones_of_Ethiopia.svg, CC BY-SA 4.0



Liberia: Corruption and Economic Hardship Fuel Anger

OE Watch Commentary: On 7 June 2019, Liberia experienced its biggest anti-government protests since the country's civil war ended in 2003. Thousands of people took to the streets of Monrovia, venting their anger over poverty, inflation, and the corruption of President Weah, a former professional footballer who won the vote in 2017 with promises to boost the economy and tackle corruption. As the excerpted accompanying article from *African Arguments* explains, 18 months after he took office in January 2018, much of that hope and optimism has dissipated.

During Weah's relatively short time as President, there have been several high profile corruption scandals, with the most prominent being the disappearance of approximately \$2 million of funds. That money was supposedly being overseen by the Minister of Finance and the Central Bank Governor.

The economic news has also not been favorable under Weah. In a country where the majority of people survive on under \$2 per day, inflation continues to rise, at one point hitting 23.3%, while unemployment remains stubbornly high. With so many economic difficulties, the IMF has downgraded the country's growth rate from 4.9% to just 0.4% for this year. Against this backdrop of hardship, Weah has completed a condominium complex, refurbished several of his old homes, and travelled extensively on his private jet.

Weah has made conciliatory gestures, telling the people he is concerned about their economic woes, and asking for dialogue to gather ideas. Additionally, he has promised action, including endorsing an IMF program to help stabilize the economy and having the anti-corruption commission investigate the missing \$2 million. Despite these new moves, the public is wary, and more anti-government protests are being planned. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“For many Liberians now, enough is enough. They believe Weah has let the country down and are demanding widespread change.”

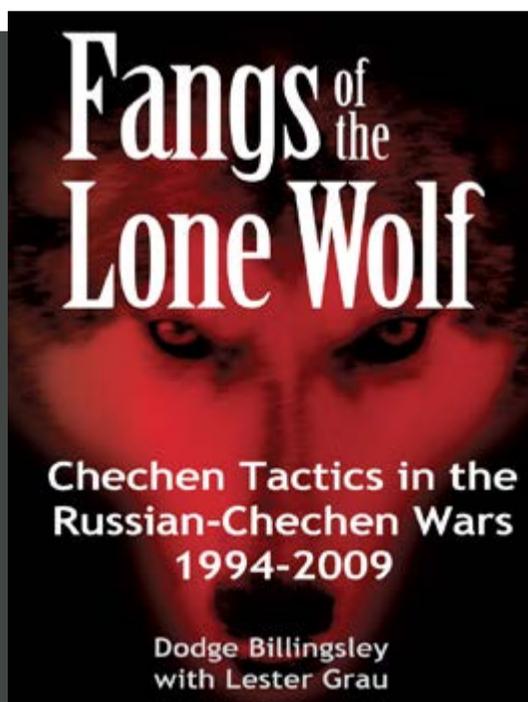
Source: Stephen D. Kollie, “Not the change we voted for: Liberia awaits more protests as anger rises,” *African Arguments*, 27 June 2019. <https://africanarguments.org/2019/06/27/not-change-voted-liberia-protests/>

For many Liberians now, enough is enough. They believe Weah has let the country down and are demanding widespread change.

The day after the protest, the organizers released a lengthy list of demands. Among other things, they called on the president to fire his finance minister and central bank governor for their alleged role in graft. They urged him to dissolve the government's Technical Economic Management Team. And they demanded that Weah publish his assets, stop using private jets, and establish a war and economic crimes court.

“This is not the change we voted for,” proclaimed 42-year-old Emmanuel Dolo, complaining of the rising cost of living since President Weah came to office in January 2018. “How can we live under these kinds of harsh circumstances?”

“We have a president who is building mansions and living in luxury, but he has refused to publish his assets”, added mother-of-three Mary Sampson, 37, complaining of corruption allegations. “Where is he taking all the money from to build his private homes when we don't even have drugs at our hospitals?”



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

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



Some Commentators Ask: Is It Time to Negotiate with al-Shabaab?

OE Watch Commentary: At its peak, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) deployed over 22,000 military personnel at an annual cost of approximately \$1 billion to defeat al-Shabaab. However, as the excerpted accompanying article from South Africa's *Institute for Security Studies* notes, the terrorist group's operational capability remains intact. In fact, the 2018 Global Terrorism Index ranked it as one of the four deadliest in the world. In light of al-Shabaab's resilience, the article's author thinks that it is not sustainable for African nations and the international community to keep channeling funds towards a military solution. The author asks whether it is time to consider negotiating with the group.

According to the author, one potential obstacle to negotiations is slowly being removed-- that of AMISOM troops on Somali soil. Al-Shabaab has been objecting to foreign troops in Somalia, but by December 2021 the last of them are supposed to have departed, thus paving the way for potential negotiations.

Another obstacle, according to the author, is the role of sharia in government, with al-Shabaab wanting its own strict version. Somalia's constitution designates Islam as the state religion, and sharia inspires national legislation. Therefore, while there is a divide between al-Shabaab and the government regarding their interpretations of sharia, there is some common ground that could serve as a basis for dialogue. The article explains that questions regarding the interpretation of sharia cannot be solved through military force.

The article suggests that learning more about who joins al-Shabaab would be quite useful when developing a negotiating strategy. Such information could be used to know what incentives might bring these individuals to the negotiating table. This knowledge would also probably help in choosing an appropriate third party to mediate and facilitate the contentious discussions necessary to reach agreements.

It will probably take more than just the Somali government and al-Shabaab for successful negotiations to occur, especially because there are issues involved that extend beyond Somali's borders. Thus, regional and international stakeholders, including the African Union (AU) and others would need to be supportive of the effort.

In deciding what to address in potential negotiations, the concerns of local communities that bear the brunt of terrorist attacks should be prioritized. Additionally, the article argues that "basic human rights and economic vulnerabilities need to be part of the discussion." However, as the article notes, before such discussions can take place, "political will must break the deadlock between al-Shabaab and the Somali government." **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“The use of force hasn't worked, and negotiation is one of several non-military options for preventing terrorism.”



When all AMISOM soldiers, such as the ones pictured here, leave Somalia by December 2021, a key obstacle to negotiations between al-Shabaab and the Somali government will be removed.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union_Mission_to_Somalia_\(2007-present\)#/media/File:2014_08_31_Kurtunwaarey-13_\(15102327122\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_Union_Mission_to_Somalia_(2007-present)#/media/File:2014_08_31_Kurtunwaarey-13_(15102327122).jpg), Public Domain

Source: Akinola Olojo, "Time to Consider Negotiating with Al-Shabaab in Somalia?" *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 11 June 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/time-to-consider-negotiating-with-al-shabaab-in-somalia>

The use of force hasn't worked, and negotiation is one of several non-military options for preventing terrorism.

Al-Shabaab aims to replace the Federal Government of Somalia with its own version of sharia or an Islamic government. The group also demands the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country. Because Somalia's constitution defines Islam as the state religion and sharia inspires national legislation, dialogue over issues of sharia offers the government some scope for negotiation. What is in question is the interpretation of sharia – and this cannot be resolved through the use of force.

Analysts describe three main reasons for people joining al-Shabaab. The first is ideological, the second is the desire for personal gain, and the third is socio-economic and political grievances. However there are nuances when it comes to individuals' reasons for being members of the group. Collective motivations offer a useful perspective, but experts like Anneli Botha note that understanding al-Shabaab from an individual standpoint makes more visible the potential openings for members to disengage.

The most important requirements for negotiation are understanding the (ideological) objectives and membership structure of al-Shabaab, identifying acceptable third parties or mediators, and involving regional and global actors.

Negotiations with al-Shabaab should prioritise the concerns of local communities who bear the brunt of terror attacks. Basic human rights and socio-economic vulnerabilities should also be addressed. Gauging the mood of the battlefield in order to discern the ideal time to initiate dialogue is vital. Equally important is political will to break the current deadlock between the Somali government and al-Shabaab.



Cape Verde, Narco-State?

OE Watch Commentary: The archipelago nation of Cape Verde off the west coast of Africa enjoyed stability and relative prosperity for decades. However, as the accompanying excerpted article by a researcher for ENACT (Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organized Crime) reports, in the last decade, the country has been struggling with narco-trafficking and the violence and corruption that accompanies it. Serving as a transshipment and storage point for drugs trafficked from Latin America to Europe, it ranked at the top of the list of West African countries with regards to the quantity of cocaine seized on land and sea between 2009 and 2014.

The article notes two seizures of drugs in particular. The first was in 2016, when 280 kg of cocaine was found on a Brazilian flagged ship. The drugs were “intercepted as they were being transferred to a United-States flagged yacht.” The second seizure occurred early this year when police discovered 9.5 tons of cocaine on a Panama-flagged vessel that was bound for Tangiers, Morocco. All 11 crew members were Russian, which the article claims is an indication of Russian mafia involvement in this lucrative trade.



The Cape Verde military is heavily involved in the effort to stop drug trafficking. Traffickers use the archipelago for transshipment and storage of drugs from Latin America to Europe.
Source: US Navy via Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Verde#/media/File:Marins_du_Cap-Vert_en_2011.jpg, Public Domain

Cocaine is not just transiting through Cape Verde. Although there is no reliable data on drug addiction in the country, the article quotes a journalist who claims that “drug addiction has reached an alarming rate in Cape Verde over the past years.”

Violence and criminality have been some of the costs of the drug trade as criminal groups battle for control of the market. Threats against government officials have occurred, and in 2014 the top anti-drug investigator's mother was murdered. Several months later the prime minister's son was injured during a shooting.

A 2016 evaluation by Cape Verde's Financial Information Unit found the country particularly vulnerable to money laundering related to drug trade. Criminals are reportedly laundering drug money through businesses, NGOs and real estate companies.

The country is working hard to battle the drug trafficking and criminal organizations, an effort that has earned it technical and financial support from several foreign allies. With the country's peace and stability, as well as its tourism industry, at stake, Cape Verde is determined to avoid earning the designation of narco-state. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Cape Verde is becoming a key location in the transshipment of drugs being trafficked to Europe.”

Source: Mouhamadou Kane, “Is Cape Verde doomed to become a narco-state?” *ENACT/ISS [Enhancing Africa's Response to Transnational Organized Crime/ South Africa Institute for Security Studies]*, 4 June 2019. <https://enactafrica.org/enact-observer/is-cape-verde-doomed-to-become-a-narco-state>

Cape Verde is becoming a key location in the transshipment of drugs being trafficked to Europe...

In 2016, the police and coastal guard seized 280 kg of cocaine from a Brazil-flagged ship. Police said the drug shipment was intercepted as it was being transferred to a United States-flagged yacht after the ship ran out of fuel. Four Brazilians, one Cape Verdean and a Russian were reportedly arrested during the operation. Other Cape Verdeans were arrested in Assomada on Santiago island. These seizures also shed light on the presence of Russian mafia operating in Cape Verde....

The eradication of drug trafficking is a long-term priority. It requires multi-layered responses and substantial funds. The international community should support the new national action plan and ensure its full implementation within the assigned time frame of 2018 to 2023.

Drugs are increasingly becoming associated with violence and criminality in Cape Verde. The important financial stakes underpinning the illicit market for cocaine harden the resolve of criminal groups to secure and sustain their activities, despite government measures.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit 2018 Democracy Index, Cape Verde is ranked 26th, right after the US and second in Africa, behind Mauritius. These incidents, if not contained, are likely to tarnish the country's enviable image of being a model democracy.



Russia Signs Military Cooperation Agreement with Mali

OE Watch Commentary: On 25 June 2019, Russia took another step in its “renewed push for global prestige and influence.” As the accompanying article from South Africa’s *DefenceWeb* notes, defense ministers from Russia and Mali met at the ARMY 2019 International Military and Technical Forum in Russia and signed an agreement on military cooperation. Russia’s Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu said, “the agreement will strengthen bilateral relations in the defense sphere,” adding that they appreciated Mali’s understanding of Russia’s approaches to Ukrainian and Syrian issues.

Since 2014, when the West sanctioned Russia for annexing Crimea, Moscow has signed 19 military cooperation deals with sub-Saharan countries, reflecting Russia’s attempt to revive relations with African nations that lapsed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These agreements typically involve the provision of weapons and training in areas such as piracy and counterterrorism. The article explains that some of these have yet to come into force.

Russia has also been actively trying to establish a base on the continent. Its attempt to set up a base in Djibouti, already home to US, French, Japanese, and Chinese bases, was blocked by the Djibouti government on grounds that they did not want to become a site for proxy wars. Russia had better luck with Eritrea, where it now plans to build a logistics center.

Moscow’s initiatives to strengthen its old ties to Africa as well as to create new ones are “part of its wider campaign to shake-up long standing power dynamics on the continent.” Previous articles have described Russia’s difficult economic situation as constraining its desire to be even more ambitious on the continent. Still, as the article describes, Moscow has a growing presence in Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



“Malian soldiers, such as the ones pictured here, may soon be benefiting from a military cooperation agreement their country signed with Russia,” MINUSMA/Marco Dormino/Flickr.

Source: MINUSMA/Marco Dormino/Flickr, [*“Moscow is making a renewed push for global prestige and influence, and its involvement in Africa is part of a wider campaign shaking up long-standing power dynamics on the continent.”*](https://www.flickr.com/photos/minusma/9391965979/in/photolist-fvWvgV-fjaZJb-fjbgM7-fjboHb-fjb6Ls-bKTqzi-fjaYRY-dRCFYQ-7KcCKS-7JQTYX-dSeAds-eaunRG-eCKSG7-RoCApP-fvMQij-7HM3Eb-VkTM3D-fvymkq-7QkDPj-7JuRac-UPdcgq-2bM5JZu-7Jq67b-2dxw29c-qxGN6b-TeF7Fc-V9XnA5-hEsoza-7YGZAn-7ZKW4C-fjbob1-dzUY7H-fjbuo1-fjaXTJ-dNkZnR-SaKoTg-2efJJrb-nfovncN-83xQvM-bQUd3e-F3KTM4-nhqVM2-eWZYj3-fwpKzv-yC2G-fwDWU9-njcjKx-kEJKTs-XgZdL9-qbXhAX, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0</small></p>
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Source: “Russia and Mali sign military cooperation agreement,” *DefenceWeb (South Africa)*, 29 June 2019. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/russia-and-mali-sign-military-cooperation-agreement/>

Moscow is making a renewed push for global prestige and influence, and its involvement in Africa is part of a wider campaign shaking up long-standing power dynamics on the continent.

“In our opinion, the intensification of military ties is in the interests of our two countries,” Shoigu said...He stressed that the agreement will strengthen bilateral relations in the defence sphere.

Russia is now trying to revive some of the relationships that lapsed after the Soviet Union’s collapse. It joins a number of countries such as Turkey and the United Arab Emirates looking to set up bases in Africa, mediate in diplomatic stand-offs and strike business deals.



Egypt Ventures into Sub-Saharan Conflicts



With Egypt's domestic situation steadying, President el-Sisi has decided to play a role in regional conflicts.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abdel_Fattah_el-Sisi#/media/File:Abdel_Fattah_el-Sisi.jpg, CC BY 4.0

major source of water for Egypt. However, as the article notes, Abiy is informally representing the African Union (AU) in his mediation, and the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) has come down squarely on the side of the civilian protesters.

The issue spills over into the AU, where el-Sisi is presently chair, and has been trying to dilute the PSC's stance, which previously has gotten out ahead of AU leaders with regards to African conflicts. However, the brutal crackdown on 3 June by the Sudanese military on the civilian protesters that left an estimated 100 people killed is making it more difficult for Egypt's president to bring the PSC in alignment with the more tepid AU. Still, as the article notes, with a strong military as well as financing from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, el-Sisi likely feels he can counter any opposition to Egypt's renewed role in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Under el-Sisi, who now chairs the AU, Egypt is becoming a player in regional conflicts like Sudan and Libya.”

Source: Peter Fabricius, “What is driving Egypt's more assertive role in Africa?” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 21 June 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-is-driving-egypts-more-assertive-role-in-africa>

Under el-Sisi, who now chairs the AU, Egypt is becoming a player in regional conflicts like Sudan and Libya.

Some of it is no doubt about el-Sisi taking a greater genuine interest in Africa than his deposed predecessor Hosni Mubarak. But el-Sisi has also been keeping company recently with the likes of the assertive Saudi Arabia and UAE in their African adventures, suggesting a broader strategy.

So for example, members of Sudan's notorious Rapid Support Forces – formerly the feared Janjaweed Arab militias who terrorized the people of Darfur and brutally dispersed protesters in Khartoum on 3 June – have been helping Saudi Arabia and the UAE fight the Iran-backed Houthi Shi'a militias in Yemen. The Gulf states probably fear that a civilian government in Khartoum would pursue a far less aggressive foreign policy.

Egypt has the big global players on its side, and has a critical geopolitical position astride the Suez Canal, Red Sea and Nile and alongside the Mediterranean. Together with its potent military and financial backing from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, el-Sisi probably feels he has enough bargaining chips to counter any opposition to his more assertive positions in the region. And indeed Egypt's more repressive politics at home. The two seem, depressingly, to go together.



Mozambique Downplays First ISIS Attacks

OE Watch Commentary: In May, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed its first ever attack in Mozambique in Cabo Delgado in the north of the country. This followed ISIS's declaration of a "Central African Province" in Congo, which has since incorporated Mozambique. However, as the excerpted Portuguese-language article from 25 May discusses, Mozambican authorities suggest that the ISIS claim is "misleading," noting that there is no evidence of any formal relationship between ISIS and militants in Mozambique. Instead, the article claims that ISIS "is wanting to show itself as a global terrorist organization in recent months after territorial losses in Syria and Iraq."

The article suggests that whoever conducted the attack would have been in the country since 2017 and that they were no militants who entered the country from Iraq or Syria. Further, the article notes that ISIS's claim including photographs of the attack is unauthenticated and, even if true, the photographs could have been transferred to ISIS through Whatsapp and not personal contact.

According to analysts interviewed for the article, it remains difficult to assess the longer term consequences of ISIS's claim. In other countries, for example, analysts note ISIS claims of attacks have not been followed by broader attack campaigns. However, in Mozambique the militants appear to lack an organized leadership. Therefore, if ISIS can exercise influence and command loyalty from these militants from outside of the country, it could bring the various militant factions in Mozambique together and have impact.

One thing is for certain, according to the article: The conflict will remain an issue of intense scrutiny both domestically and internationally because the site of attacks- Cabo Delgado- is rich in natural resources and up to 200 people have been killed since 2017. ISIS's claiming a stake on the country's militancy also means future attacks will generate greater interest than when the conflict began in 2017. This will be due to ISIS's high-level propaganda capabilities and worldwide notoriety. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“The [ISIS] statement, in which the number of victims is not specified, is the first time the terrorist group has claimed an attack in northern Mozambique, which is an area that has been affected since October 2017 by armed attacks carried out by groups established in mosques in the region.”

Source: “Ataques em Moçambique. Reivindicação do Daesh no norte do país é ‘enganadora’ (Attacks in Mozambique. Daesh in the north of the country is ‘misleading’),” <https://expresso.pt>, 25 May 2019. <https://expresso.pt/internacional/2019-06-05-Ataques-em-Mocambique.-Reivindicacao-do-Daesh-no-norte-do-pais-e-enganadora>

It seems credible that there has been a confrontation between insurgents and Mozambican security forces, but “there is no indication that there is any formal relationship” between the aggressors and Daesh. A consultant following the attacks in northern Mozambique said Tuesday’s claim of the first attack by the jihadist group Daesh is “misleading” by suggesting it has a presence in territory that is not proven. “All that is needed” to make a claim - which have been accompanied by unauthenticated images of war material that the group has been able to collect - is that the perpetrators “have uploaded images via mobile phone through Whatsapp or Telegram, to someone they have contacted.... Daesh is wanting to show itself as a global terrorist organization in recent months after territorial losses in Syria and Iraq, and does so by announcing its new provinces, such as the province of Central Africa in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and where it includes this attack in Mozambique.

Other groups elsewhere in the globe that have been associated with Daesh claims have not experienced any expansion or reinforcement thereafter, ie there does not appear to be any logistical or financial support from the terrorist organization. Daesh [said] that it had killed and wounded the Mozambican military on Monday in a clash with the army in the Cabo Delgado region. The statement, in which the number of victims is not specified, is the first time the terrorist group has claimed an attack in northern Mozambique, an area that has been affected since October 2017 by armed attacks carried out by groups established in mosques in the region.

The province of Cabo Delgado, where mega-projects of natural gas exploration in the country are advancing, has been the scene of attacks by armed groups that have killed at least 200 people.



Cabo Delgado.

Source: Wikimedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Msumbiji_Cabo_Delgado.PNG, Public Domain



New Governor Rewards Anti-Boko Haram Vigilantes

OE Watch Commentary: In northeastern Nigeria, the anti-Boko Haram vigilante group, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), has supported the military in combatting Boko Haram. The governor of northeastern Nigeria's Borno State, Babagana Umara Zulum, who entered office in March 2019, is now seeking to elevate the CJTF's status and create a more professionalized organization.

According to the excerpted article, Zulum raised the allowances for CJTF members by 33% starting in June to promote and reward good performance. Although CJTF members are technically volunteers, they also require funding to cover their basic needs. In addition, Zulum authorized three new vehicles for the CJTF and hunter groups to increase patrol in two areas of Maiduguri, Borno's capital that had recently been attacked by Boko Haram. Zulum also praised the CJTF and hunters for protecting the city during the Eid al-Fitr holiday when the city was mostly free from Boko Haram attacks.

Zulum also encouraged CJTF members to set up bank accounts for themselves. Further, he encouraged security agencies to communicate with the CJTF for information-sharing purposes. It therefore appears Zulum seeks to create a more professionalized CJTF with the understanding that the CJTF will be a long-term initiative. This is because the Boko Haram crisis has endured for 10 years, shows few signs of abating, and requires the type of local knowledge of the group's operational area that only the CJTF can provide.

Zulum's changes regarding the CJTF also come in context of his expressing openness to negotiating with Boko Haram and visiting rural towns to understand their perspective on the crisis. It has been said for several years that existing approaches to Boko Haram were insufficient to generate peace in Borno. Therefore, Zulum's approach will be welcome, but time will tell whether it is effective. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Nigeria Borno State map.

Source: Himalayan Explorer based on work by Uwe Dederig via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nigeria_Borno_State_map.png, CC BY-SA 3.0

“The governor said he had appealed to all security agencies in the state to cooperate with the hunters, vigilantes and CJTF to help reduce the rising cases of Boko Haram attacks in the area.”

Source: “Civilian-JTF gets pay rise from Borno governor Zulum, now to earn N20,000,” *legit.ng*, 5 June 2019. <https://www.legit.ng/1241882-boko-haram-civilian-jtf-pay-rise-borno-governor-zulum-earn-n20000.html>

The governor of Borno state, Babagana Zulum, has reportedly raised the allowances of each member of the Civilian JTF from N15,000 to N20,000. The CJTF is a group of residents who have volunteered to support security operatives in the fight against Boko Haram in the north eastern part of Nigeria. It was learnt that Zulum took the decision at a meeting with the group at Government House, Maiduguri, saying the new amount would be paid beginning from June, 2019. Daily Sun reports that the governor also asked each of the hunters, vigilante and CJTF to open a bank account. Zulum told the group that he had provided three operational vehicles to them for effective coverage of Bakassi and Ajilari, areas of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state.

Apart from this, the governor said he had appealed to all security agencies in the state to cooperate with the hunters, vigilantes and C-JTF to help reduce the rising cases of Boko Haram attacks in the area.



Article Details Life under Terrorism in Burkina Faso

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying French-language article reports on the militant situation in northern Burkina Faso, with a focus on Ansaroul Islam. The group has been active in northern Burkina Faso, especially Soum province, advocating for jihad and attacking Muslims and Christians who do not support its cause.

The article notes that the current phase of the conflict has been ongoing for three years and differs from other longstanding customary conflicts such as those among chieftainships, farmers and pastoralists. As the article discusses, Ansaroul Islam has caused the closure of over 1,200 schools disabling over 150,000 students from attending schools through its attacks. It expresses particular concern that 47% of those students are girls, saying that they are now “forced on the street.” Many attacks are also targeting what the article refers to as symbols of the state, such as soldiers whose stolen weapons then become part of the armory of Ansaroul Islam.

The article indicates the situation is becoming more complex now that insurgents are attacking churches and pastors; cutting off routes to villages and setting up checkpoints on roadways. Moreover, some insurgent recruits are joining after the Burkinabe military has killed their parents or relatives during counter-insurgency or retaliatory operations. Meanwhile, the insurgents are reportedly killing anyone suspected of collaborating with the military. This means that civilians are inevitably caught in the crossfire in the conflict.

Rather than proposing solutions, the article indicates that people increasingly must fend for themselves and provide medical care, shelter, and food independently, including in conflict-affected areas. With military efforts struggling and humanitarian efforts hindered, the article presents little reason for optimism. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“His group advocates jihad and attacks other members of the Muslim community and all religious denominations who do not adhere to his cause.”



Burkina Faso in Africa.

Source: TUBS via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Burkina_Faso_in_Africa.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0

Source: “Dans le centre-nord, la situation sécuritaire reste préoccupante (In the north-central, the security situation remains worrying),” *sahelien.com*, 16 June 2019. <https://sahelien.com/burkina-faso-dans-le-centre-nord-la-situation-securitaire-inquiete/>

For more than three years, the country has faced many terrorist threats. In April, the threats intensified in the north, which is besieged by armed men killing dozens and displacing dozens.

The northern part of Burkina Faso, close to the Malian border, is the target of terrorist attacks of various types. The conflicts that have existed since the beginning of time are essentially linked to land and customary chiefdoms. Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists are recurrent, especially in winter.

During the last three years, Ansaroul Islam led by the radical preacher, Mallam Ibrahim Dicko, has settled in Soum province. His group advocates jihad and attacks other members of the Muslim community and all religious denominations who do not adhere to his cause.

Initially, local officials and state symbols were attacked, soldiers were killed and their equipment carried away. Teachers left their classes. More than 1,200 schools have been closed of which 46.6% students were girls forced on the street in 2019, according to the Minister of Education, Stanislas Ouaro.

Since then, the situation has become more complicated day by day. Last April, attacks took an even more worrying proportion. This is the first time a church has been attacked in Silgadji, killing 5 people, including the pastor.

On the ground, the collaboration between the army and the population has been strained from the beginning. Those who are suspected of providing information to the military are targets.



Ecuador, China, Corruption and Oil

OE Watch Commentary: The first of the accompanying references is an article from an Argentina-based news agency that updates the long-reported business relationship that the government of mainland China has had with the government of Ecuador in the hydrocarbons sector. Evidently, a hallmark of that business relationship is massive corruption. The article outlines a difficult debt situation facing the current government of Ecuador. That debt is owed mostly to Chinese enterprises, and stems from the former government of Raphael Correa. Ex-President Correa is now living in exile in Belgium, but wanted by authorities in Ecuador on various criminal indictments, including ones related to oil dealings with the Chinese. Among other assertions in the author's outline of a highly involved corruption scheme is that much of the in Correa's government were heavily involved in the scheme. That government was a central part of the Bolivarian Alliance with the Cuban Communist Party and United Venezuelan Socialist Party.

The second reference is from a pair of Ecuadoran economics professors (Marxism orientation) who are lamenting the size and reach of the corruption scheme. It is a curious article that may explain, or at least exemplify, a political and intellectual conflict within leftist Ecuadoran parties. The authors decry the horrors of neoliberalism and their country's apparent turn back to the right, but nevertheless square blame for Ecuador's financial woes on ex-President Correa and on Brazilian ex-President Lula da Silva (now in jail). These two characters seem unlikely candidates for being labeled either neoliberal or rightist, if indeed authoritarian. (In political literature in and about Latin America, the sobriquet 'authoritarian' has traditionally been reserved for a rightist, which Correa and Lula da Silva are clearly not.) Perhaps the authors wish to contextualize the not-so-leftist decisions of erstwhile Marxist and current Ecuadoran President Lenin Moreno, highlighting Odebrecht and Petrobras, that is, the corrupt failings of an un-representative cabal of Brazilian-led leftists. Such an interpretation, however, may be too generous to the two economists, who don't even mention China. We should wonder why not. The third reference, from the same Ecuadoran opinion publication (but from 2013), reprints two articles that had sparked widespread interest in the question of Chinese control over Ecuador's hydrocarbon industry as a matter of geostrategy. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Former President of Ecuador, Rafael Correa.
Source: Fernanda LeMarie - Cancillería del Ecuador via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rafael_Correa_in_France_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rafael_Correa_in_France_(cropped).jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0

“The bleeding of resources that Ecuador confronts is no accident or mere ‘innocent’ mismanagement of public finances. Much of the bleeding comes from authoritarian management and corruption of political power...”

Source: Mercedes Alvaro, “El más grande atraco de la historia de Ecuador”: la investigación que revela los negociados de Rafael Correa con China (‘The biggest theft in the history of Ecuador’: The investigation that revealed the deal Rafael Correa made with China),” *Infobae*, 15 July 2019. <https://www.infobae.com/america/america-latina/2018/10/13/el-mas-grande-atraco-de-la-historia-de-ecuador-la-investigacion-que-revela-los-negociados-de-rafael-correa-con-china/>

“...In this case, characterized by his accuser, the activist and researcher Fernando Villavicencio, as ‘the greatest theft in the history of the country’ not only Correa is under the loupe, but also dozens of ex high functionaries of his government, among whom his then Vice President Jorge Glass (now in jail linked to the Odebrecht corruption)...”

Source: “Alberto Acosta and John Cajas Guijarro, “Petrobras, Odebrecht, OXY: Recordando un billar a tres bandas... en contra del país (Petrobras, Odebrecht, OXY: Remembering a three-cushion shot... against the country),” *Plan V Multimedia*, 29 April 2019. <https://www.planv.com.ec/historias/sociedad/petrobras-odebrecht-oxy-recordando-un-billar-tres-bandas-contra-del-pais>

“...For those who live in Ecuador these are complex times, really. Times in which we [are in an] accelerating march ‘to the bottom’ and ‘to the right’, and where neoliberalism has returned in its full magnitude. ...The bleeding of resources that Ecuador confronts is no accident or mere ‘innocent’ mismanagement of public finances. Much of the bleeding comes from authoritarian management and corruption of political power...”

Source: Joshua Schneyer and Nicolás Medina Mora Pérez, “Reporte Especial: cómo china se apropió del petróleo de Ecuador (Special Report: How China took Ecuador's oil),” *Plan V Multimedia*, 27 November 2013. <https://www.planv.com.ec/investigacion/investigacion/reportes-especial-como-china-se-apropio-del-petroleo-ecuador>

“...These dispatches from Reuters reveal that 83 % of Ecuadoran oil is consigned to Chinese companies. The Chinese firms serve as middlemen in the major part of Ecuadoran oil sales, while they maintain the strategic option of diverting barrels to China should they need them. The Chinese resell our oil to the United States...”



Dire Conditions at Venezuelan Hydroelectric Plant

OE Watch Commentary: News about the disheartening conditions in Venezuela tailed off after the failed attempt at an overthrow of the regime of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) earlier this year. The attached references are offered as a reminder that the next step-decrease in humanitarian conditions in that country could easily be caused by another electric power blackout. The hydroelectric station at Guri satisfies a major proportion of the total energy requirements of Caracas. The plant is not in good shape. The first reference reports a Band-Aid attempt to sustain generating capacity, but the move is itself a witness to how dire the technical situation is at the plant. The second reference highlights a core issue. There are likely not enough people at the plant, or in the country for that matter, who will know how to fix it the next time there is a breakdown. It appears that the only real question is when the next big blackout will be. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Guri Dam in Venezuela.

Source: en:User:Davidusb via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guri_Dam_in_Venezuela.JPG, Public domain

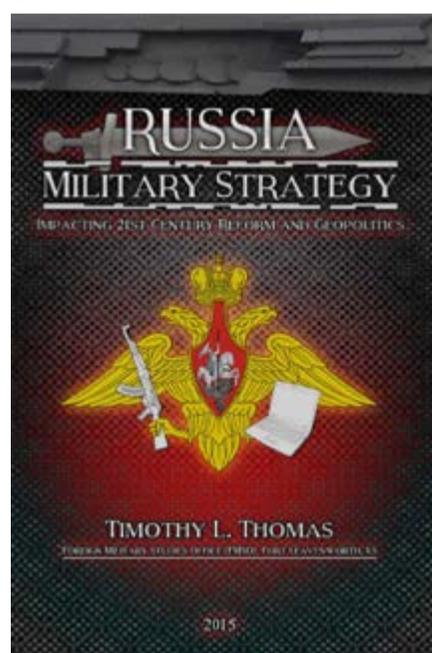
“...the [next] blackout will be more severe, because we will not have the personnel qualified to attend to the damage, and it will last longer... At the present time, we do not have personnel with the capacity to do the maintenance...”

Source: “Vivian Ariza, “Autogenerador de 800 Kv va camino a la hidroeléctrica de Guri (800 KV generator is on its way to Guri),” *Ultimas Noticias*, 23 June 2019. <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/general/autogenerador-de-800-kv-va-camino-a-la-hidroelectrica-de-guri/>

“...The generator was in the San Geronimo substation yard of Corpoelec, in Valle de la Pascua (Gua) and was part of none single phase autotransformers that work at that substation. It will be taken to Machine Room 1 of the Guri plant... The autotransformer will replace part of the equipment of the hydroelectric plant that was damaged in March. Its installation will contribute 400 Megawatts to the National Electric System... The Guri plant has an installed capacity of over 10,000 MW...”

Source: Gabriel Ramos, “Ingeniero eléctrico alerta sobre un apagón ‘más catastrófico’ que el del #7Mar (An electrical engineer warns about a ‘more catastrophic’ blackout than the one March 7),” *El Pitazo*, 7 June 2019. <https://elpitazo.net/regiones/ingeniero-electrico-advierte-que-podria-registrarse-un-apagon-mas-catastrofico-que-el-del-7mar/>

“...Winston Cabas explained that, ‘the [next] blackout will be more severe, because we will not have the personnel qualified to attend to the damage, and it will last longer... At the present time, we do not have personnel with the capacity to do the maintenance’...”



RUSSIA MILITARY STRATEGY: IMPACTING 21ST CENTURY REFORM AND GEOPOLITICS by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS

Russian military's main tasks are to maintain the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and to ensure the Russian Federation's defensive capability. Russia's military heritage will assist this process tremendously. Combat readiness includes updated strategic thought, new equipment revelations, and future-war projections. Defensive capability includes not just protecting Russia's territory, but also the security of the nation's national interests and conduct of geopolitics. Capturing the essence of these developments is the goal of this book. In the process a few templates for understanding Russian military thought and actions are offered for further consideration and use.

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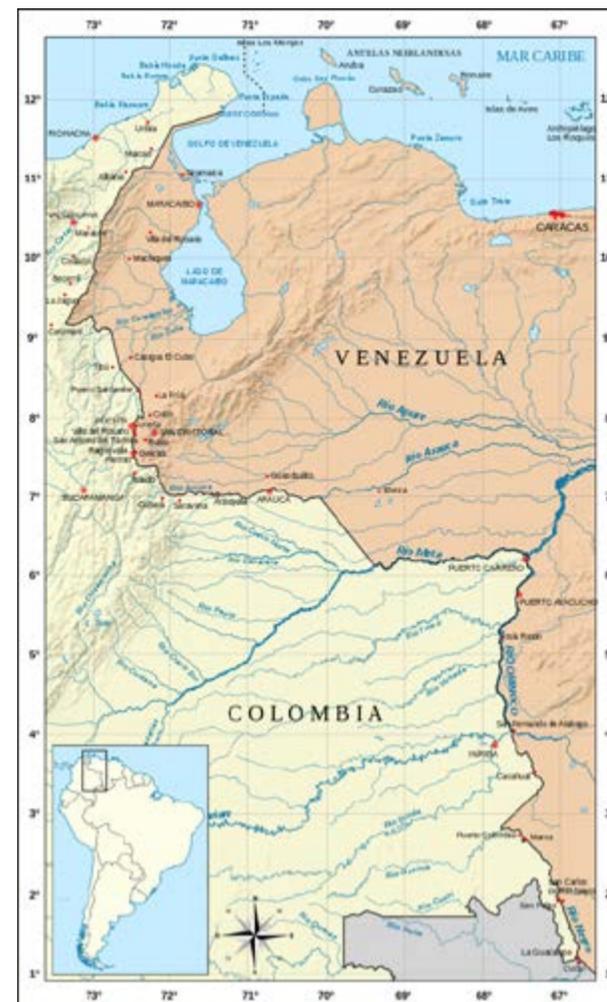
Battleground Colombia: “FARC 2.0”

OE Watch Commentary: The degenerating life caused by irregular war in northern South America is most hotly contested in Colombia’s border regions and in remote areas that harbor smuggling routes in and out of Colombia. The warfare features violent attacks against civilian and government police or military targets by armed units of various colorings. These armed elements are in service of a handful of transnational criminal organizations (TCO) and the two apex political parties, the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV).

The first accompanying reference reports on a series of recent attacks against oil infrastructure inside Colombia, mostly near the border with Venezuela. Although it only imputes responsibility to the National Liberation Army (ELN), it coincides with many recent reports about the (ELN), its consolidation inside Venezuelan territory, its growing power and its subordination to the greater Bolivarian hierarchy (PCC and PSUV). Part of the ELN’s modus operandi is to induce other organizations to conduct actions against government-associated enterprises and offices, especially in border counties where the ELN maintains smuggling corridors.

The second accompanying reference is a report based on a Colombian government document, which claims certainty of the creation of a new FARC, a “FARC 2.0.” This is not good news, but it might not really be new news. In any case, FARC 2.0 and the ELN will have to get along and will be subordinated to the same general hierarchy giving guidance from Caracas or Havana.

The third accompanying reference reports on the ominously growing health and violent activities of other criminal organizations that are not as well-known as the ELN or the FARC, and that might nevertheless be indirectly subordinated to the same Bolivarian enterprise. These criminal bands share agendas with the better known organizations both in seeking to weaken Colombian government authority and in their transnational criminal activities. The three reports, taken on their face, together paint a bleak security challenge for the current government of Colombia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Colombia-Venezuela border.

Source: Shadowfox via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mapa_de_la_frontera_Colombia-Venezuela.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0

“...it is absolutely certain, FARC 2.0 is budding...”

Source: Cristian Serrano, “Ecopetrol sufre cuatro ataques terroristas en el noreste del país (Ecopetrol suffers four terrorist attacks in the country’s northeast),” *RCN Radio*, 14 July 2019. <https://www.rcnradio.com/economia/ecopetrol-sufre-cuatro-ataques-terroristas-en-el-noreste-del-pais>

“Colombian oil Company Ecopetrol reported that four terrorist attacks occurred against the infrastructure of the Caño Limón-Coveñas oil pipeline and at Campo Tibú, both in the northeast of the country [Catatumbo area]... ‘approximately 100 persons took the plant in a violent manner’ abruptly breaking through the external fencing of the installation’... Last year Colombian oil infrastructure suffered 107 attacks, of which 89 affected the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline...”

Source: Luis Carlos Vélez and William Calderón, “Documentos de inteligencia militar señalan que las Farc 2.0 son una realidad (Military intelligence documents show that FARC 2.0 is a reality),” *La Linterna Azul*, 12 July 2019. <http://www.lalinternaazul.info/2019/07/13/documentos-de-inteligencia-militar-senalan-que-las-farc-2-0-son-una-realidad/>

“...various ex-members of the FARC secretariat are fighting head to head to gain armed military support to lead a new stage of a new guerrilla. There have been glimmers, indicators that this was real, but now it is absolutely certain, FARC 2.0 is budding and the authorities are very concerned...the most dangerous wing, with terrorist and narco-trafficking experience of the former Eastern Bloc abandoned the process [the ‘peace’ accord between the FARC and the Santos administration]...”

Source: Editors, “Las nuevas guerras de las Bacrim para expandirse en la Costa (New wars of the Bacrim [criminal bands] to expand themselves the coast),” *El Heraldo*, Barranquilla, 14 July 2019. <https://www.elheraldo.co/magdalena/las-nuevas-guerras-de-las-bacrim-para-expandirse-en-la-costa-649541>

“...Samarianos [people of Santa Marta on the Atlantic coast] remain terrorized by a streak of murders; in the Guajira, the fear is among indigenous tribes living in the Sierra Nevada; in Sucre, the terror is planted in coastal counties of the Gulf of Morrosquillo; in Córdoba [Department] the killing of leaders and forced displacements have gotten worse; in Cesar and Bolívar they find themselves affected by armed groups in the southern parts of their respective territories; and in Atlántico, the smallest of the departments, drug trafficking is on the rise. This is the panorama of the Caribbean region, in spite of the control of matters of public order that the military and police authorities exercise, [the region] finds itself affected by the new wars of the criminal bands, or Bacrim...”



Mexican Cartels Producing their Own Cocaine

OE Watch Commentary: According to Colombian authorities, Mexican cartels are no longer simply transporting and importing cocaine into their country. They are working with their counterparts in Colombia to produce their own cocaine. As Argentinian news source *Infobae* points out, “Colombian cartels are sending cocaine base to Mexico so that it can be produced into a refined product in laboratories located closer to the US border.”

The passage notes that the Mexican Attorney General’s office stated that authorities have not detected any cocaine labs in the country. However, this is not consistent with a statement by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador at a conference in April 2018 in which he said that authorities had indeed located narco labs in the Mexican state of Sinaloa. Months later, information released by SEMAR (Mexican Navy) affirmed the statement made by the President.

While some in Mexico assert that cocaine is not being produced in the country, Mexican news source *El Financiero* suggests otherwise. According to that source, Colombian anti-narcotics police first became aware of the phenomenon three years ago. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Tranquilandia cocaine complex in Colombia.

Source: Source: DEA Employee via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tranquilandia_Colombia_by_DEA.png, Public Domain

“Colombian cartels are now sending cocaine base to Mexico instead of a finished product. This method is not only cheaper, it also implies that Mexican cartels are producing refined cocaine within their own laboratories.”

Source: “Cárteles mexicanos han comenzado a producir cocaína, asegura la policía colombiana (Mexican Cartels Have Started Producing their Own Cocaine),” *Infobae*, 15 May 2019. <https://www.infobae.com/america/mexico/2019/05/15/carteles-mexicanos-han-comenzado-a-producir-cocaina-asegura-la-policia-colombiana/>

Colombian cartels are sending cocaine base to Mexico so that it can be produced into a refined product in laboratories located closer to the U.S. border. This method is also cheaper. According to Luis Ramirez, Colombia’s Anti-Narcotics Director, Colombian cartels are shipping cocaine base with more frequency because 4 years ago, the Colombian government imposed enhanced controls on the importation and sale of precursor chemicals to produce cocaine to include potassium permanganate and hydrochloric acid, which has created a shortage. Also, by shipping cheaper, unrefined cocaine, the traffickers minimize the cost of a cargo getting seized.

This information has been denied by the Mexican Attorney General’s office, but corroborated by the Mexican President and SEMAR. In late 2018, SEMAR reported that Marines operating in the 4th Naval Zone located in Mazatlán, Sinaloa located clandestine drug production labs where they found more than a metric ton of chemical precursors as well as equipment needed to produce drugs.

Source: “Cárteles mexicanos ahora producen cocaína: Policía colombiana (Mexican Cartels are Producing Their own Cocaine According to Colombian Police),” *El Financiero*, 15 May 2019. <https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/nacional/carteles-mexicanos-ahora-producen-cocaina-policia-colombiana>

Colombia’s anti-narcotics police say they first became aware that Mexican cartels were producing cocaine in the country 3 years ago with cocaine base sent to the country by Colombian cartels. They are also aware of cases where coca base has been shipped to Belgium and Spain, according to Colonel Carlos Bueno of Colombia, who works alongside General Ramirez.