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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



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Ethiopian soldier serving with AMISOM in Somalia

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/61765479@N08/27550154106/>, Public Domain

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Russia's 1L125 Niobium-SV Mobile Radar System

OE Watch Commentary: The 1L125 Niobium-SV [1Л125 «Ниобий-СВ»] mobile radar system is a smaller version of the Aerospace Defense Forces' 55ZH6UM Niobium [55Ж6УМ «Ниобий»] (a Nebo-series radar) intended for use by the Air Defense Troops of the Russian Ground Forces. The modification of Aerospace Defense Forces' systems for use by Ground Forces is a common practice, as it was done with the 1L13 Nebo-SV [1Л13 «Небо-СВ»] and 1L119 Nebo-SVU [1Л119 «Небо-СВУ»]. The 1L125 Niobium-SV was developed by the Nizhny Novgorod Research Institute of Radio Engineering (NNIIRT) [«Нижегородский научно-исследовательский институт радиотехники» (НИИРТ)], which is part of the Almaz-Antey Aerospace Defense Corporation.

The 1L125 Niobium-SV mobile radar system is designed to provide 360° reconnaissance of air targets at medium and high altitudes by means of an active phased antenna array. It can detect, provide coordinates, track, and recognize (determine state affiliation) of aircraft, helicopters, cruise and ballistic missiles, and small unmanned aerial vehicles, including those with stealth technology, and providing this information to consumers. The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestiya* discusses plans to field the 1L125 Niobium-SV in Crimea to augment the Russian air defense system. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**



55Zh6M Nebo-M Radar System.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/ARMY-2017-Static-p4/i-cXc78Lz/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

“The VHF band, in which the radar [1L125 Niobium-SV mobile radar system] operates, permits it to see stealth aircraft (including the B-2 Spirit Bomber) and the latest American F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning II fighter aircraft.”

Source: Aleksey Ramm, Aleksey Kozachenko, Bogdan Stepovoy, “Появление РЛС «Ниобий-СВ» в Крыму станет ответом на развертывание ПРО США (The Appearance of ‘Niobiy-SV’ Radars Will Become the Response to the Deployment of the American Missile Defense Systems in Romania),” *Izvestiya*, 15 October 2019. <https://iz.ru/931984/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-bogdan-stepovoi/zator-na-granitse-novye-zenitnye-kompleksy-zashchitat-kaliningrad>

The Appearance of ‘Niobiy-SV’ Radars Will Become the Response to the Deployment of the American Missile Defense Systems in Romania

The extremely-powerful “Niobiy-SV” long-range radars will cover the Crimean Peninsula and Russia’s South. Izvestiya’s sources at the Ministry of Defense have reported “that the hunters for stealth aircraft” will arrive in the inventory of Southern Military District units already by the end of the year. These radar sites easily detect not only ordinary aircraft but also stealth aircraft and even hypersonic and cruise missiles. In the process, The Niobiy is practically invulnerable due to its high maneuverability and unique technical characteristics. The appearance of those radars in the troops will seriously augment radar monitoring of the airspace on the southern axis. In the opinion of the experts that Izvestiya polled, this mission is becoming especially pertinent since the breakdown of the Treaty on Intermediate Range Missiles...

The new radars will reliably cover the Crimea and the country’s entire south. What is more, there is something to protect from, military experts think. For example, the so-called missile defense launch area, which the US has created in Romania and is called upon to defend Europe from the “Iranian threat” - a pretty legend in order to conceal the deployment of offensive weapons, Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov, the President of the Academy of Geopolitical Problems, is confident. “It is well known to specialists that the Missile Defense System’s launchers can be used to launch ‘Tomahawks’ without modifications”, the expert told Izvestiya. “You can’t call them a defensive weapon. These multipurpose precision-guided cruise missiles can attack both ground-based and also naval surface targets. Their deployment in Romania is advantageous for the US from the strategic point of view. From here, they can threaten Russia’s South and even Turkey, which is leaving the orbit of American influence right now”.

The Niobiy-SV 3D radar station, which has been named in honor of the metal of the same name, was developed for Ground Troops PVO. It is designed to detect, track, and identify airborne objects of all types – aircraft, helicopters, cruise and ballistic missiles, and also small unmanned aerial vehicles. These radars can operate in the round-the-clock mode for a long time, while tracking the air situation. For example, several Niobiy-SV radars, which are deployed in the Crimea, will be able to monitor the entire Black Sea, Lieutenant-General Aleksandr Luzan, the former Ground Troops PVO Deputy Commander for Ordnance-Ground Troops PVO Chief Engineer, told Izvestiya.

The VHF band, in which the radar operates, permits it to see stealth aircraft (including the B-2 Spirit Bomber) and the latest American F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning II fighter aircraft.

“This is the main property of the VHF range radars, which nullifies stealth technology”, he told Izvestiya. “If we complement the Niobiy-SV radars with S-band radars, target designation will become even more precise. It is also very important that the seeker heads of enemy AGM-88 HARM anti-radiation missiles do not detect radars, which operate in this frequency range. Consequently, those radars are invulnerable to them”. Thanks to these qualities, the Niobiy-SV permits the organization of effective combat alert both in peacetime and in wartime. The radar operates trouble free in complex jamming conditions, which permits it to be used under the serious countermeasures of enemy electronic warfare systems. The radar even sees complex targets at a range of 300 kilometers and simultaneously tracks up to 300 targets. The Niobiy-SV is mounted on a KamAZ all-terrain wheeled motor vehicle chassis, which permits the equipment to be redeployed in a matter of minutes. These qualities increase the radar’s survivability – it will be extremely difficult to destroy those...



Improvements to the Onyx Coastal Defense Missile

OE Watch Commentary: The Onyx (Yakhont for export variant) supersonic homing anti-ship missiles were first fielded in 2002, after being in development since 1982. They were designed to destroy surface ships of all classes, particularly vessels comprising surface strike groups, carrier battle groups, amphibious assault forces, and convoys. One of the Onyx missile's most interesting characteristics is its guidance system. The guidance system can purportedly work in tandem with other missiles, and can allocate and classify targets based on their importance, and then select an appropriate attack scheme. Following the destruction of the primary target, the remaining missiles attack other ships, so no target is attacked by more than one missile. After an initial target lock is achieved, the Onyx shuts down its radar and descends to a low altitude (5 to 10 meters), below the operational level of most air defense radars. Once the missile emerges from beneath the radio horizon, the radar is reactivated and locks back on to the target. This feature, in conjunction with the Onyx's high rate of speed, greatly complicates adversarial air defense and electronic warfare countermeasures. The Onyx can be ship-launched, and launched from the "Bastion" Coastal Missile Complex (BRK).

The accompanying excerpted article from *TASS* discusses plans to upgrade the Onyx missile that currently has a 600km range to the Onyx-M with an 800km range, among other improvements. The passage from *Izvestiya* discusses Russia's efforts to provide additional targeting data to these Onyx-M missiles, so the missiles' enhanced range may be fully exploited. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“A machine-building science and production association has developed an Onyx-M sea-launched cruise missile with a maximum range of 800 km and enhanced accuracy of delivery to naval surface and ground targets.”



Bastion-P Coastal Defense Missile System.

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense via mil.ru http://eng.mil.ru/images/military/gallery/2018/_NEV1557-550%281%29.jpg, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



Continued: Improvements to the Onyx Coastal Defense Missile

Source: “Эксперт: бросковые испытания ракеты “Оникс-М” с дальностью 800 км уже проведены (Expert: An ‘Onyx-M’ Cruise Missile with an 800 km Range Has Been Developed in Russia),” *TASS Online*, 25 September 2019. <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/6925991>

Expert: An ‘Onyx-M’ Cruise Missile with an 800 km Range Has Been Developed in Russia

A machine-building science and production association has developed an Onyx-M sea-launched cruise missile with a maximum range of 800 km and enhanced accuracy of delivery to naval surface and ground targets. The missile’s flight tests will begin in the months immediately ahead, two sources in the Russian Federation defense industry complex informed TASS on Wednesday.

“Based on the Onyx cruise missile that exists in the armory, a new version -- the Onyx-M -- has been developed, with a maximum range of 800 km,” one agency informant reported.

The source added that “the missile is equipped with a perfected control system and will be able to destroy both naval surface and ground targets with greater accuracy.” The missile’s protection against effects of electronic warfare equipment has also been increased, the agency’s informant added.

The other defense-sector source informed TASS that the flight design tests of the Onyx’s latest version were due to begin in the first ten days of September, on the Northern Fleet’s naval weapons test range in the Barents Sea water area. To guarantee the safety of shipping and of civil aviation flights, several areas of the sea were being closed off to accommodate these tests; “However, the launches were not executed, because of the need for additional checks on the product’s experimental models.” “It is expected that the flight tests will begin in the next month or two,” the agency’s informant said. According to the source, the upgraded missile, like the Onyx currently in the arsenal, is capable of carrying a conventional and a nuclear warhead. The Onyx-M’s maximum velocity and its weight and size characteristics have remained the same as those of the missile’s original version. The machine-building science and production association that developed the Onyx has not commented on the information provided by the sources.

The machine-building science and production association earlier announced plans for improving the Onyx’s characteristics, without specifying which actual parameters were meant. “Yes, we proposed to improve the Onyx missiles’ flight characteristics in order to boost this antiship system’s effectiveness,”...

Source: Aleksey Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoy, “С корабля на «Бастيون»: атака береговых батарей станет внезапной (From the Ship to the ‘Bastion’: An Attack of the Coastal Batteries Will Become a Surprise Attack),” *Izvestiya*, 22 October 2019. <https://iz.ru/930452/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/s-korablia-na-bastion-ataka-beregovykh-batarei-stanet-vnezapnoi>

From the Ship to the ‘Bastion’: An Attack of the Coastal Batteries Will Become a Surprise Attack

State-of-the-art Project 22160 “Vasiliy Bykov” corvettes will be able to guide “Bastion” coastal missile complexes (BRK) to the enemy. The new tactic will permit them to operate from an ambush. The low-observable “Bykov” corvettes, which are manufactured based upon “stealth” technologies, will track the enemy from a safe distance for themselves. But the BRKs, which are now impossible to detect with their radars switched off, having received target designations from the seamen, will immediately conduct a strike against the enemy...

*The coordination system of the “Bastions” and the corvettes was tested this year, when the “Vasiliy Bykov” was following US military ships on the Black Sea. The seamen conducted surveillance of the Americans not only visually but also using radars and reconnaissance – these systems permit them to pinpoint the location of ships based upon the operation of their equipment, sources in the Ministry of Defense told *Izvestiya*.*

*Inter-branch reconnaissance-weapon loops, which seriously increase the effectiveness of the coordination of the Ground Forces, Aerospace Forces (VKS), and the Navy, are being introduced into the Armed Forces right now, Arsenal of the Fatherland” Publication Editor-in-Chief Viktor Murakhovskiy pointed out. “Three components are part of the loop – reconnaissance and target designation systems, the command post, where the decision is made on the strike, and the weapon systems directly”, the expert told *Izvestiya*. “In our case, the ships must find the enemy and transmit the information to the command post, where they will conduct an analysis of the situation and will make a decision on target destruction. Then the order and coordinates of the enemy ships will arrive at the ‘Bastion’ battery, which will open fire”...*

The coastal complexes can destroy both individual ships and also ships in the composition of landing formations, convoys, and carrier strike groups. Their missiles are capable of destroying targets at a distance of approximately 500 kilometers...The “Bastion’s” launchers are installed on a highly-mobile MZKT-7903 chassis, which provides the capability to the batteries to change firing positions. The BRKs that are roving along the coast with their radars switched off will be inconspicuous to the enemy. One will only be able to find them using satellite or aircraft reconnaissance, which will be difficult to do.

Meanwhile, having received a target designation from the escort ship, they will be able to practically immediately conduct a surprise attack against the enemy. New “Onyx” supersonic anti-ship missiles, which any state-of-the-art air defense system is unable to combat, are in the BRK’s ammunition allowance. Military personnel don’t need precise coordinates for a successful attack – it is sufficient to know the quadrant, where the hostile ships are located.

The supersonic “Onyx”, having reached the detection locations, will switch on the seeker head, which will find the target. A warhead weighing 300 kilograms can destroy or disable even the largest surface combatants. After the attack, the complexes will leave the firing positions without turning on the radars...



Russia Grows Missile Warning Constellation

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian Federation is currently fielding its third generation of missile warning satellites. Russia's second generation of satellites, the Oko series, consisted of eight satellites with infrared payloads. As noted in Russian open sources, the Oko series had some serious limitations, and even with a full constellation, they were only able to identify the fact of a missile launch, but could not determine the missile's ballistic trajectory. Russia's last Oko ceased operation in the fall of 2014, but a successor system was ready to be fielded. (The Oko-1 (71Kh6) type satellites operated in a geostationary orbit, while the Oko-2 (72Kh6) satellites operated in highly elliptical orbits.)

Russia's third generation of missile warning satellites, the Tundra (14F142) series, are part of the Russian Missile Attack Warning System (SPRN) [Системой Предупреждения о Ракетном Нападении (СПРН)], which consists of space and ground-based systems. The Unified Space System (YeKS) is the space component of the SPRN, in which the Tundra satellites are replacing the Oko satellites. The main capability of the Tundra over the Oko series satellites is that the Tundra can independently determine parameters of a missile's ballistic trajectory and probable target areas of launched missiles.

In 2014, after some delays, the Deputy Commander of the Aerospace Defense Forces, Major General Anatoliy Nestichek, announced that Russia would deploy ten Tundra-series satellites by 2018, the schedule was later pushed back to 2022. As of 2019, only three Tundra satellites have been deployed. The first Tundra satellite, the YeKS-1 (Kosmos-2510) was launched on 17 November 2015. The second satellite, the YeKS-2 (Kosmos-2518) was launched on 25 May 2017. The third, as explained in the accompanying excerpted *Interfax* article, YeKS-3 (Kosmos-2541) was launched on 26 September 2019. Given the current situation, it appears likely that if the constellation is fully deployed, the date of full deployment will be well after 2022. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

“The Russian military inserted the third satellite of the “Tundra” Unified Space System (YeKS-3), which is designed to detect launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles...”

Source: “Военный космический аппарат отделился от третьей ступени ‘Союза-2.16’ (Military Satellite Separates from the Third Stage of Soyuz-2.16),” *Interfax Online*, 26 September 2019. <https://www.interfax.ru/world/678018>

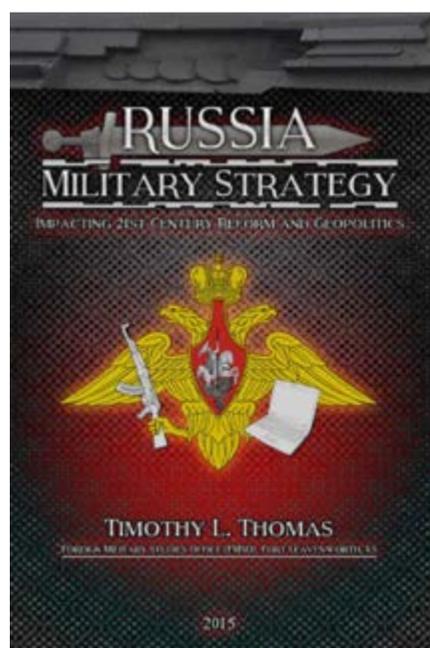
Military Satellite Separates from the Third Stage of Soyuz-2.16

A military satellite has separated from the third stage of a Soyuz-2.16 space launch vehicle launched on Thursday from the Plesetsk Cosmodrome, the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense reported...

The specialized website Spaceflightnow had earlier reported that on Thursday that the Russian military inserted the third satellite of the “Tundra” Unified Space System (YeKS-3), which is designed to detect launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles...

The first two new satellites of the Missile Attack Warning System (SPRN), the YeKS-1 and YeKS-2 (designated as Kosmos-2510 and Kosmos-2518), were inserted into orbit in 2015 and 2017.

It has been reported that in the future the orbital grouping will consist of 10 “Tundra” satellites and that their deployment would be completed by 2022...



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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Russia's Nationwide Strategic Forces Exercise: Grom-2019

OE Watch Commentary: The *Grom-19* strategic command-staff exercise was quite an impressive undertaking. The nationwide exercise of strategic command and control, systems and crews involved President Putin and the National Defense Command Center. *Grom* exercises have been held since 2012 and this was the most involved exercise yet. The accompanying passage from *Krasnaya Zvezda* discusses the exercise.

Not all went according to plan. The *Ryazan* was supposed to launch two ballistic missiles. However, an R-29R ballistic missile, fired from the *Rayazin* Delta III-Class nuclear-powered submarine failed to leave the silo. The R-29R is a Soviet-era system introduced in 1977.

The passage quotes the Minister of Defense, General of the Army Sergey Shoygu as saying “The exercise evaluated the capability of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to resolve missions in an armed conflict and in a nuclear war involving the implementation of the integrated use of precision nuclear weapons and weapons based on new physical principles.” The inclusion of the phrase “weapons based on new physical principles” is interesting and signals general staff doctrinal categorization. Hypersonic missiles are included in that category, among others. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The Armed Forces of Russia have completed the strategic command-staff exercise Grom-2019. Under the leadership of Supreme Commander in Chief of the Russian Federation Forces Vladimir Putin, ground, sea and air components of the strategic deterrence forces conducted cruise and ballistic missile training launches on 17 October, as part of a CKIIIY [strategic command-staff exercise]. All missiles reached their targets.”

Source: “The Strategic Triad performed as expected” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 October 2019. <http://redstar.ru/strategicheskaya-triada-otchitalas-dostojno>

The Strategic Triad performed as expected

Minister of Defense, General of the Army Sergey Shoygu stated that, the training launches were the concluding phase of the Grom-2019 strategic command-staff exercise. The exercise evaluated the capability of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to resolve missions in an armed conflict and in a nuclear war involving the implementation of the integrated use of precision nuclear weapons and weapons based on new physical principles.

Formations and military units of the Strategic Missile Forces, the high commands of long-range and military transport aviation, subunits and military units of the western, southern, central and eastern military districts, and the Northern Fleet were involved during the Grom-2019 strategic command-staff exercise.

On the final day of the exercise, the crew of a Yars mobile, land-based missile complex executed a launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile from the Plesetsk State Testing Cosmodrome to the Kura test range on Kamchatka, which struck the designated target. The strategic Yars mobile, land- and silo-based missile complex is able to strike targets at ranges up to 11,000 kilometers. It is equipped with a separating reentry vehicle with maneuvering, individually guided warheads.

This was not the only use of ground-based missile systems during the Grom-2019 exercise. Crews of an Iskander operational-tactical missile system conducted training launches of cruise missiles at test ranges in the Southern and Eastern Military Districts.

On the same day strategic submarines of the Northern and Pacific Fleets from regions of the Barents Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk, respectively, launched ballistic missiles to the Kura range on Kamchatka and the Chizha [range] in Arkhangel'skaya Oblast. And surface ships of the Northern Fleet and the Caspian Flotilla in the Barents and Caspian Seas launched Kalibr precision cruise missiles against shore targets.

During the exercise strategic Tu-95MS missile-carrying bombers launched cruise missiles over the Republic of Komi and over Kamchatka against ground targets at the Pemboy and Kura ranges, respectively.

Command and control of the actual launches of cruise and ballistic missile was conducted by the Russian Federation's National Defense Command Center, at which Supreme Commander in Chief of the Russian Federation Forces Vladimir Putin directed the training exercise.

The Grom-2019 strategic command-staff exercise, which began on 15 October, engaged approximately 12,000 servicemen and involved 213 Strategic Missile Troops launchers, up to 105 aircraft (including five strategic missile-carrying bombers), up to 15 surface ships and five submarines, and 310 combat and special equipment systems. Long-range, military transport and operational tactical aviation airfields, training ranges of the military districts and the Northern Fleet, and naval ranges in the Barents, Baltic, Black and Caspian seas and the Sea of Okhotsk were used during the exercise.

The missions designated for execution during the training exercise of the strategic deterrence forces were fully performed. All missiles reached their targets and validated their specific characteristics.



Russian Navy Commander Discusses Surface Shipbuilding and Modernization

OE Watch Commentary: The rapid modernization of Russia's military seems to be slowing to a more moderate and sustainable pace. Russia is primarily a ground power and much of its defense spending has gone to upgrading the ground forces and nuclear delivery systems. The Russian Navy has had a lower priority, but it is more a green water navy than blue water navy. It has one aircraft carrier which is undergoing a three-year upgrade and rebuild. The nuclear strike submarines have received priority modernization. Modernization of the surface fleet is also underway. In the accompanying *Krasnaya Zvezda* interview, the Commander of the Russian Navy discusses the developments in surface shipbuilding. The Commander also notes the part of the fleet that has been most overworked in support of the fighting in Syria- the large amphibious landing ships that have been essential in logistics support. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“The intensity of combat training substantially increased practically along all of the indicators. ... The surface ships’ total time spent underway during 2019 has total more than 12,000 underway days....”

Source: Olga Vorobyeva, “The St. Andrew’s Flag Demonstrates Sovereign Power on the World Ocean,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 30 October 2019. <http://redstar.ru/andreevskij-flag-v-mirovom-okeane-demonstriruet-derzhavnuyu-moshh/>

The St. Andrew’s Flag Demonstrates Sovereign Power on the World Ocean

[Vorobyeva] What are main directions in the development of surface shipbuilding? At which Defense Industrial Complexes are they being implemented?

[Yevmenov] Baltic “Yantar” Shipyard is constructing Project 11711 large landing ships. The latest BDK [Large Landing Ship] Ivan Gren – the lead ship of this project – arrived in the Northern Fleet a year ago. Its younger brother the BDK Petr Morgunov is nearing the completion of trials. The keel laying of two more large landing ... occurred this year. These are the BDKs Vladimir Andreyev and Vasiliy Trushin. “Severnaya Verf” Shipyard is building several multipurpose off-shore maritime zone frigates and their subsequent modifications. The lead Project 22350 Ship Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Gorshkov joined the Navy more than a year ago and, along with a surface combatant squadron, conducted the first long-range cruise in its history from February through August. This was a unique round-the-world cruise with a length of 35,000 nautical miles and with a duration of six months.

The trials of the second Project 22350 Frigate Admiral of the Fleet Kasatonov are proceeding ... now. The “Severnaya Verf” shipbuilders are preparing to launch Admiral of the Fleet Golovko. The frigate Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Isakov is under construction. The keels of the Admiral Amelko and the Admiral ...were laid in April 2019.

The latest series production mine defense ships... [are being built] at “Sredne-Nevskiy” Shipyard. They are built from monolithic fiberglass and are distinguished by the ship’s increased durability, maneuverability, and survivability.... The fourth Project 12700 Minesweeper Vladimir Yemelyanov was launched in May. It was built right after the Mine Defense Ship Aleksandr Obukhov, ... Georgiy Kurbatov and Ivan Antonov. Construction of the ships of this project, the Yakov Balyayev and the Peter Ilichev continues. And the keel laying of the seventh Project 12700 Minesweeper, the Anatoliy Shlemov occurred in July.

The Project 22800 Small Missile Ships are being actively built in St. Petersburg and Tatarstan....

[Vorobyeva] Comrade Commander-in-Chief, tell us about the intensity of combat training.

[Yevmenov] One can illustrate this intensity ...by the effective accomplishment of the mission of the naval presence on the World Ocean. At this time, over 70 Russian Navy ships and vessels are accomplishing the missions of the naval presence in various maritime zones and ocean areas. In the 2019 Training Year, the Russian Navy once again confirmed its readiness to accomplish the assigned missions in various areas of the World Ocean. The crews of the surface ships and support vessels accomplished dozens of long range cruises. In the reporting period, approximately 200 ships and approximately 50 tactical ship groups were prepared to accomplish their designated combat missions.



Strategic Missile Test for Submarine Slated for Northern Fleet

OE Watch Commentary: The Borei class (also called the Dolgorukii class) nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine is replacing the Typhoon and Delta class submarines of the Russian Navy. Reportedly, the Boreis carry on board up to 16 R-30 Bulava-30 solid-propellant intercontinental ballistic missiles with an operating radius of over 9,000 kilometers. Each of these is fitted with 150-kiloton warhead-armed reentry vehicles. Norway reported ten Russian submarines involved in a major submarine exercise. The strategic launch discussed in the passage from *The Barents Sea Independent Observer* was a separate event from the nonstrategic submarine deployment, but was probably not coincidental. The *Izvestia* article listed ten nonstrategic nuclear submarines and six diesel submarines in the Northern Fleet. The fact that the submarine launch was detected is an indication that the purpose of the exercise was not stealth, but statement. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**



Map of Northern Fleet Bases.

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

“Simultaneously, while the Northern Fleet conducted the largest submarine maneuvers since the days of the Cold War, the Knyaz Vladimir Borei-class submarine launched its first test missile that crossed the Arctic and hit its target on Kamchatka in the Far East.”

Source: Thomas Nilsen, “Bulava ballistic missile launch from brand new strategic sub in White Sea,” *The Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 30 October 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/10/bulava-ballistic-missile-launch-brand-new-strategic-sub-white-sea>

Bulava ballistic missile launch from brand new strategic sub in White Sea

In late October, eight Russian nuclear-powered submarines sailed out from their bases on the Kola Peninsula. Two of the subs protected the entrance to the eastern Barents Sea [from] the waters east of the Bear Island. Another two sailed south and southwest of the Bear Island and other sailed south and southwest in the northern part of the Norwegian Sea.

On 29 October, a ballistic missile launched from the White Sea. According the Russian Defense Ministry, “For the first time, the newest strategic missile submarine “Knyaz Vladimir” of project Borei-A, test-fired a sea-based Bulava ballistic missile.”

This launch was necessary in order for Knyaz Vladimir to pass its acceptance tests before transfer to the fleet from the Sevmash shipyard that built the submarine. Kura training ground, where the missile hit after crossing the skies of the Arctic, is located on the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Far East of Russia. The submarine was submerged during the launch.

Commander of the Russian Northern Fleet, Vice-Admiral Aleksandr Moiseyev previously told TASS that Knyaz Vladimir will be accepted by the navy after all its weapons tests are conducted. The transfer is likely to happen in late December. Knyaz Vladimir is the fourth Borei-class submarine, but the first version of the upgraded Borei-A. The submarine will serve with the Northern Fleet with a homeport in Gadzhiyev. This will be the second Borei-class sub with the Northern Fleet, joining the “Yuri Dolgorukii”. Two others, the “Aleksandr Nevsky” and “Vladimir Monomakh” serve with the Pacific Fleet.

Source: Dmitriy Boltenkov, “Penetration to the West: What Russian Submarine Crews Did in the Atlantic. The Northern Fleet Forces’ Exercises Became the Most Massive Exercises Since the Times of the Soviet Union,” *Izvestia*, 1 November 2019.

Penetration to the West: What Russian Submarine Crews Did in the Atlantic. The Northern Fleet Forces’ Exercises Became the Most Massive Exercises since the Times of the Soviet Union

One can determine the composition of the Northern Fleet nonstrategic submarine forces grouping, which recently “stormed” the Atlantic. Four submarines with cruise missiles are at the disposal of the Submarine Forces Command ...: the Project 949A “Voronezh”, “Smolensk”, and “Orel”, and also the Project 885 Submarine “Severodvinsk”.

Furthermore, there are the two Project 945A Submarines “Nizhniy Novgorod” and “Pskov”. They are unique because they have titanium pressure hulls, an extreme low level of physical fields (magnetic, acoustic portrait, the amount of water being displaced, and so forth), and a great maximum dive depth.

The Project 971 Submarines “Pantera”, “Tigr”, and “Gepard”, and also the Project 671RTM Nuclear Submarine “Obninsk” are also registered as in service. The majority of the nuclear submarines listed above are classified as third generation.

The Northern Fleet diesel submarine fleet is represented by the Kola Flotilla’s 161st Submarine Brigade, which has second generations submarines at its disposal: one Project 677 “Sankt Peterburg”, and five Project 877 – these are the “Kaluga”, “Vladikavkaz”, “Lipetsk”, “Yaroslavl”, and “Magnitogorsk”. ...The “Kaluga” and “Vladikavkaz” recently returned from overhaul at “Zvezdochka” Plant in Severodvinsk.



The Three 'Faces' of Russia's AI Strategy

by Sergey Sukhankin

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/the-three-faces-of-russias-ai-strategy/>

OE Watch Commentary: On 11 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the “National Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the Period Until 2030.” The documents calls for “accelerated development of AI,” including an emphasis on “research, availability of information and computing resources for users” as well as improving “training in this area.” Although Russia is not presently considered a global leader in AI, it does arguably possess a national base of knowledge and domestic expertise on which the government could draw on and achieve more impressive results.

Historically, the first major research into AI was initiated in the Soviet Union in 1954 (under the roof of Moscow State University) as an interdisciplinary initiative, assembling prominent Soviet physiologists, linguists, psychologists and mathematicians. In 1988, the Association of Artificial Intelligence (AAI) was inaugurated and brought together 300 Soviet researchers. Nonetheless—similar to some other technological novelties of the time, including the Internet—the Soviet authorities failed to fully comprehend the future potential of AI, and both state interest and funding flagged. A similar trend continued after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Only in recent years has there been a visible shift in the Russian state’s approach to the issue. Assessing Moscow’s current policies in this domain, the development of AI (and related technologies) could serve the country’s strategic objectives in three main areas.

First are domestic-civilian purposes, premised on expectations that the integration of AI technologies in various spheres of public life will result in much-needed socio-economic transformations. As noted earlier this year by Russia’s Minister for Economic Development Maksim Oreshkin, the integration of AI could result in significant increases to labor productivity by 2030. German Gref, the CEO and chair of the executive board of Sberbank, has pointed to the potential Russia has in this realm, claiming that the integration of new economic or financial solutions based on AI could have a huge transformative effect “on the whole country [Russia].”

During a recent conference hosted by the League for Assisting Defense Enterprises of Russia—an event that assembled a large number of both civilian and military experts, participants offered interesting assessments of the benefits associated with integrating AI in Russia’s public sphere. Notably, the deputy director of Ruselectronics (fully owned by the defense-contractor Rostec), Azret Bekkiev, highlighted that, “Achievements in the realm of AI will have a large influence on almost all markets, including security, manufacturing, energy, agriculture, education, medicine and others.” In turn, the director for AI issues at the Institute of Artificial Intelligence (at the Russian Academy of Science), Gennady Osipov, approached the issue from a different angle. When referring to the strategic importance of AI for Russia, he pointed to the link between non-military and military use of AI-related technologies, which he considers inherently essential. He also argued, “[O]ne may reasonably argue that a group of countries, a country or a coalition that wields the most powerful means of intellectual analysis of information could become the winner of any conflict even before its official eruption.”

As such, the second important facet of AI research for Moscow is related to military objectives. Here, Russia’s main motivator appears to be keeping pace with the United States in terms of integrating AI into its Armed Forces. A recent article in *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* suggests that, by 2025, over 30 percent of US land forces will consist of various robotics- and AI-based systems. The piece posits that, since US war spending is (and will remain) far larger than Russia can afford, “we [Russia] need to create more effective and less expensive means to confront looming challenges. It is quite clear that a forerunner’s strategy [*strategiya dogoniayushhego*] in this situation will result only in the existing gap [between Russia and the US] widening even more. Direct and asymmetric measures should be combined and used against our opponents, creating our own means of military-specific technologies... we need to concentrate on the creation of domestic... systems equipped with AI, [and] continue studies in the realm of optical and quantum computers. Special attention must be diverted to AI. Its development opens up unlimited prospects in perfecting the methods of military confrontation.”

Speaking about the military-related domain of AI, special attention should be paid to Russia’s ERA “technopolis,” inaugurated on 25 June 2018, located in Anapa, Krasnodar Krai. Primarily, the defense-and-high-technology research-and-development facility focuses on “a complex of issues” that include finding solutions to “expedite the development and practical integration of most advanced technologies in the defense sector... [as well as] support [the country’s] most talented youth via special programs designed for the young scientist in the Russian Armed Forces.” At least at this level, the Russian defense-industrial complex seems to have successfully overcome one of its most damaging Soviet legacies. Mainly, the ERA (aside from serving military purposes *per se*) has purportedly become a platform for intra-ministerial collaboration and is now an embodiment of “business-army” interlinkages. Currently, 250 scientific, business- and defense-related enterprises have signed agreements and are actively cooperating with the ERA, already resulting in a broad spectrum of research activities conducted at the Anapa technopolis, which has doubled in size in the past year alone. As noted by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yury Borisov (former deputy minister of defense), “[T]he ERA has become the leading [in Russia] platform for cooperation between consumers and producers of arms and weaponry, special, as well as dual-use technologies.”

Russia’s third domain of AI focus involves using this area of technological research to achieve various foreign policy objectives. Namely, Gazprom Neft and Saudi Aramco have concluded an agreement—during President Putin’s recent trip to Saudi Arabia—that *inter alia* envisages tightening cooperation in developing AI solutions for oil-sector research and exploration/extraction. Additionally, according to Russia’s Ministry of Digital Development, Communications and Mass Media (*MinComSvyaz*), the Russian and Saudi governments agreed to broaden wider technological collaboration on AI, mass communication, media and information outlets, as well as cyber security. Similarly to Russia’s use of arms production and exports, artificial intelligence is now emerging as a tool for the Kremlin to secure strategic interests both at home and abroad. (Also see: Update on Technopolis-ERA,” *OE Watch*, September 2019.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Sukhankin)**



A Century of Military-Humanitarian Studies

OE Watch Commentary: In November, the Russian military celebrated “the centenary of the Military University of the Ministry of Defense of Russia.” Given the dramatic changes which have occurred in Russia over the past 100 years, tracing the lineage of this hybrid organization can be tricky. Nevertheless, as the brief excerpt from the popular military weekly *Voенно-Промышленный Курьер (VPK)* points out, “the Military University is the successor of the famous Soviet universities: the Lenin Military-Political Academy, the Military Institute of Foreign Languages, the Military-Financial and Military-Law Academies, the Lviv Military-Political School and the Moscow Military Conservatory.”

During the ceremony to mark the occasion, Deputy Minister Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov stated, “our university is a unique educational institution that combines the entire humanitarian component of Russia’s military education.” The university is a huge and complex organization, and according to the excerpt “includes 1,500 disciplines taught among 10 faculties, 51 departments and 5 five research centers.” The university offers three degrees (“bachelor’s degree, specialty, master’s program,”) where they “train psychologists, economists, lawyers, social educators, linguists, journalists and conductors,” among others.



Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Colonel General Andrei Kartapolov speaks to graduates at the Military University, 16 October 2019.
Source: mil.ru CCA 4.0

Entrance requirements for new Military University cadets are quite intense, and as the article points out, “there are four to five applicants per slot.” Besides training specialists in military-political work for the recently reactivated Main Military-Political Directorate, the university also serves as the primary foreign language training facility, where 44 foreign languages are studied according to the website (<http://vumo.mil.ru/>). The article states that “cadet translators can be found at all major events - they worked at the Olympics in Sochi, attend the Moscow International Security Conference and the Army forums in Patriot Park.”

While much attention has been paid to the reform and modernization of Russia’s conventional armed forces over the past decade, similar processes have also taken place within their military education and training system. As this article makes clear, the Russian military will continue to place a high priority on humanitarian skills such as military-political work and foreign language expertise, which are taught at the Military University of the Ministry of Defense of Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“...Our university is a unique educational institution that combines the entire humanitarian component of Russia’s military education....”

Source: Peter Kamnev, “Школа командиров гуманитарных войск,” [School of humanitarian commanders] *Voенно-Промышленный Курьер*, 5 November 2019. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/53442>

On the eve of the centenary of the Military University of the Ministry of Defense of Russia, Deputy Minister Colonel-General Andrei Kartapolov unveiled a monument to university graduates. A bronze monument on a granite pedestal is a collective image.

...The Military University is the successor of the famous Soviet universities: the Lenin Military-Political Academy, the Military Institute of Foreign Languages, the Military-Financial and Military-Law Academies, the Lviv Military-Political School and the Moscow Military Conservatory.

“Our university is a unique educational institution that combines the entire humanitarian component of Russia’s military education. Over the course of the university’s existence, more than 230,000 officers have been trained, who have become generals and leaders who have completely fulfilled their military duty,” Colonel General Kartapolov said at the opening of the monument.

Today, at the Military University, educational programs of three degrees - bachelor’s degree, specialty, master’s program - train psychologists, economists, lawyers, social educators, linguists, journalists and conductors....

The uniqueness of the university is that personnel for law enforcement agencies are trained in the humanitarian, legal, financial, linguistic military areas. The educational process includes 1,500 disciplines taught at 10 faculties, 51 departments and 5 five research centers.

...Before gaining the right to take entrance exams, the applicant will have to pass serious tests, and assessing the knowledge acquired at school is not the most important thing.... Cadet competition is intense...there are four to five applicants per slot.

...Cadet translators can be found at all major events - they worked at the Olympics in Sochi, attend the Moscow Moscow International Security Conference and the Army forums in Patriot Park.

The plans of the leadership of the Military University include the opening of training for cadets and students in new specialties.



Russia Plans to Revive Soviet Law on Classified Military Information

OE Watch Commentary: According to the accompanying passage from *Sputnik*, Russia is planning to resurrect a Soviet law under which “information about the location of military forces, their composition, assignment and armament, as well as their designation and force structure, will be classified.” As the passage notes, a KGB General claims this is necessary “due to the rise in leaks of classified information” and would apply only to servicemen. The Defense Ministry is responding to this by “examining all legal aspects and nuances.”

This effort appears to seek a legal cudgel over the military preventing the release of low-level material. However, it also raises the issue of increased government control over the public at large. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“Currently, some military information is protected by the law on state secrets. However, security experts point out that this legislation doesn’t address all the loopholes. The Russian government plans to introduce the notion of military secrets...”

Source: “X-Files! Russia Plans to Resurrect Law on Classified Military Information,” *Sputnik*, 5 November 2019. <https://sputniknews.com/russia/201911051077231289-x-files-russia-plans-to-resurrect-law-on-classified-military-information/>

X-Files! Russia Plans to Resurrect Law on Classified Military Information

... Former KGB General Boris Kurdyumov said that the resurrection of a Soviet law is necessary due to the rise in leaks of classified information. “The situation on the geopolitical arena is tense now and many countries want to obtain our secrets. Unfortunately there have been many leaks. Very often the West gets information about Russia’s new armament right after the weaponry is sent to military bases or after the military has tested the new equipment”...Under the new law, information about the location of military forces, their composition, assignment and armament, as well as their designation and force structure, will be classified. At the moment, this information is protected by the law on state secrets, but it doesn’t address all the intricacies of military information. For example, the law on state secrets doesn’t protect information that is qualified as confidential or “for internal use”. Hence Russian authorities cannot prosecute individuals who have disclosed this data. The Defense Ministry said it is examining all legal aspects and nuances while preparing documents for the future law. The ministry noted that the legislation’s requirements would extend only to servicemen. Individuals that would be granted access and would work with classified information will receive privileges, while violation of the law would amount to criminal offence. Russia abolished the Soviet-era law on military secrets in the 1990s and replaced it with the law on state secrets. In the Soviet Union, individuals were punished with up to ten years in jail for disclosure of classified information.



Kalashnikov and Youth Patriotism

OE Watch Commentary: In September 2017, Kremlin authorities unveiled a statue in downtown Moscow dedicated to the designer of the AK-47, Mikhail Kalashnikov. At the time, some observers suggested that this new statue reflected not only an appreciation for Kalashnikov's weapon design, but the Kremlin's increased focus on defense and military readiness. This emphasis of defense preparedness continues today. As the brief excerpt from the pro-government news agency *Lenta.ru* points out, in November, the "Ministry of Education suggested that Russian schools conduct a 10 November lesson on the centenary of the birth of designer Mikhail Kalashnikov."

The excerpt stresses that "the nation-wide lesson with machine guns will help to form a sense of patriotism among schoolchildren 'as a spiritual and moral category,' lay 'the foundations of national self-awareness' and raise in children 'a sense of responsibility and duty towards the Motherland, the formation of readiness to protect it.'" More importantly, the article points out that this "focus on Kalashnikov's centenary should "help to increase the interest of schoolchildren in military service in the Russian Armed Forces, in military specialties and studies in the country's military universities, in their physical and psychological preparation for service in the Armed Forces."

A key portion of the lesson will allow a contest where "children will compete to assemble and disassemble the AK-47 and AK-74." Providing an international aspect to the lesson, the excerpt also points out that "schoolchildren will also be offered to compare domestic Kalashnikov assault rifles with an American-made M-16 assault rifle." The article concludes by describing the "Parade of Preschool Troops" which was held earlier this year and where over 500 children "marched across the area at the Eternal Flame in the form of foot soldiers, tankmen, pilots, sailors, artillerymen and nurses. The children were also wearing modern camouflage and held toy weapons in their hands." The article quotes a local education expert who claims that "the sooner patriotic education begins, the healthier the society is." **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Russian weapon designer, Mikhail Kalashnikov.
Source: mil.ru CCA 4.0 Intl

“It is expected that the nation-wide lesson with machine guns will help to form a sense of patriotism among schoolchildren “as a spiritual and moral category”

Source: “Российским школьникам предложили отпраздновать столетие Калашникова с автоматами,” [Russian students were invited to celebrate the centenary of Kalashnikov with machine guns] *Lenta.ru*, 29 October 2019. <https://lenta.ru/news/2019/10/29/kalashnikovvv/>

The Ministry of Education suggested that Russian schools conduct a November 10 lesson on the centenary of the birth of designer Mikhail Kalashnikov, in which children will compete to assemble and disassemble the AK-47 and AK-74....

It is expected that the nation-wide lesson with machine guns will help to form a sense of patriotism among schoolchildren “as a spiritual and moral category”, lay “the foundations of national self-awareness” and raise in children “a sense of responsibility and duty towards the Motherland, the formation of readiness to protect it.”

In addition, the focus on Kalashnikov's centenary should “help to increase the interest of schoolchildren in military service in the Russian Armed Forces, in military specialties and studies in the country's military universities, in their physical and psychological preparation for service in the Armed Forces,” according to the recommendations for conducting the lesson.

In addition to assembling and disassembling the AK-47 and AK-74, schoolchildren will also be offered to compare domestic Kalashnikov assault rifles with an American-made M-16 assault rifle. Students of all ages are invited to participate in the lesson.

Russian designer of small arms Mikhail Kalashnikov was born on November 10, 1919. The AK-47 he invented is considered one of the most sought-after automatic weapons in the world.

On May 7, a “Parade of Preschool Troops” was held in the center of Pyatigorsk, in which more than 500 children took part. They marched across the area at the Eternal Flame in the form of foot soldiers, tankmen, pilots, sailors, artillerymen and nurses. The children were also wearing modern camouflage, they held toy weapons in their hands, saluted and laid flowers at the memorial.

According to Natalya Vasyutina, the head of the education department of the Pyatigorsk administration, this parade was supposed to help teach children how to behave properly. In her opinion, “the sooner patriotic education begins, the healthier the society is.”



Soviet-Finnish War Lessons

OE Watch Commentary: In November, the popular military weekly *Voenna-Promyshlenny Kurier* (VPK) included a short article that discussed some of the painful lessons learned from the Soviet-Finnish War (1939-40) and how “that bitter experience must be taken into account when building the modern army of Russia.” The author, former Soviet Chief of the General Staff, General Mikhail Moiseev, stated that the “war with Finland forced a critical look at the current state of the Armed Forces,” and that even though corrective measures were taken, “only a year remained before the start of the Great Patriotic War, and it was not possible to fully implement the plan.”

General Moiseev then describes the Russian military today where he asserts that “military reform is being systematically carried out, the command and control system is being modernized, and the organizational structure is being optimized.” He goes on to list all the impressive statistics regarding new military equipment, recently formed units, and improvements in personnel, asserting that “staffing of the Armed Forces has been brought up to 95-100 percent... [and] 96 percent of commanders of combined arms brigades and regiments have combat experience.” He concludes by praising the reintroduction of the “Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces... the central military-political control body that carries out military-patriotic work in the Armed Forces,” suggesting that “the de-ideologization of the political system, including the Armed Forces, in my opinion, was erroneous.”

Russian military leaders (both past and present) continue to scour their history for pertinent lessons that might be applied today. The Soviet-Finnish War certainly provided a number of painful lessons, not least of which are the hazards of invading a neighboring country under spurious pretexts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Soviet troops invading Finland, 30 November 1939.
Source: Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain

“... That bitter experience must be taken into account when building the modern army of Russia....”

Source: Mikhail Moiseev, “Уроки финского не забываются,” [Finnish lessons are not forgotten] *Voenna-Promyshlenny Kurier*, 5 November 2019. vpk-news.ru/articles/53455

The war of the mighty Soviet Union with little Finland, which began 80 years ago, laid bare strategic problems, revealed political and military leadership errors in the Armed Forces, miscalculations in strategy, operational art and tactics of military operations. That bitter experience must be taken into account when building the modern army of Russia.

Being the Chief of the General Staff in the late 90s, I thoroughly analyzed the report of the People’s Commissariat of Defense of the USSR S.K. Timoshenko from comrade K. Y. Voroshilova (May 1940), which, among other things, reflected the shortcomings that emerged during the war with Finland....

...The war with Finland forced a critical look at the state of the Armed Forces, unresolved problems, put an end to the widespread mood of complacency, unreasonable self-confidence, forced the leading cadres to look at the combat readiness... with different eyes. It became clear that urgent extraordinary measures were needed to correct the situation, and in the conditions of growing military danger it was impossible to hesitate further.... The corresponding reform program was developed, however, only a year remained before the start of the Great Patriotic War, and it was not possible to fully implement the plan....

Now in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, military reform is being systematically carried out, the command and control system is being modernized, and the organizational structure is being optimized....

Equipment with modern weapons reached 61.5 percent: in the Strategic Nuclear Forces, 82 percent, in the Ground Forces - 48.3 percent, in the Air Forces - 74 percent, in the Navy - 62.3 percent, in the Airborne Forces - 63.7 percent.... The staffing of the Armed Forces has been brought up to 95-100 percent. All commanders of the military districts, combined arms armies, air force and air defense armies, divisional commanders, as well as 96 percent of commanders of combined arms brigades and regiments have combat experience.

The country’s leadership pursues an active foreign policy, analyzes the international situation, takes care of equipping the army and navy with modern weapons and military equipment, and improving the professional skills of personnel.

War forced an evaluation of the entire system of military-political work in the army and navy, and to begin its restructuring on new foundations. It is proved that one-man management is the only acceptable and most effective method of command in the Armed Forces. The de-ideologization of the political system, including the Armed Forces, in my opinion, was erroneous. The state and society cannot function and develop effectively without a national idea, their own system of views and relations.

The leadership of the country and the Armed Forces have taken practical steps to revive the military-political system in the Army and the Navy. President Vladimir Putin signed a decree (No. 454 dated July 30, 2018), in accordance with which the Main Military-Political Directorate of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation was created - the central military-political control body that carries out military-patriotic work in the Armed Forces....



Arctic Coal Barges from Russia to India

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying excerpt from *The Barents Sea Independent Observer* discusses, “India needs about 70 million tons of high-quality coal for its aluminum and steel industry.” Indian Minister of Oil, Natural Gas and Steel, Dharmendra Pradhan and the Indian business leaders are looking to the Russian Arctic, which has all the carbon-rich rocks they ever might need. Russia is planning to mine the Arctic tundra for coal and export it out of a new port terminal near Dikson on the Kara Sea of the Arctic Ocean. The coal will then begin a sea voyage on the Northern Sea Route to India. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

“While coal is a dying industry in Europe, nearby Russia continues to place its bets of the polluting mineral.”

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Russia finds market for its vast reserves of Arctic coal,” *The Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 1 November 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2019/11/russia-finds-market-its-vast-reserves-arctic-coal>

Russia finds market for its vast reserves of Arctic coal

It was not alternative and green power that was discussed when Indian Minister of oil, natural gas and steel Dharmendra Debendra Pradhan visited Russia in October.... “Our negotiations must end with a successful project decision on the development of metallurgic coal, that is to be exported from Russia” the minister stated in a meeting with the Russian Ministry of the Far East and Arctic. According to Pradhan, India needs about 70 million tons of high-quality coal for its aluminum and steel industry. Pradhan and the Indian business leaders are looking towards the Russian Arctic, where they will find all the carbon-rich rocks they ever might need.

Several new major mining projects are under development in the remote northern region. Among them are the projects of company Vostok Coal in the Taymyr Peninsula. Vostok Coal plans to extract an annual 30 million tons of anthracite, a high-quality coal, from its fields in Taymyr.... Vostok Coal believes that the lands of the Taymyr tundra hides unprecedented volumes of coal... as much as 225 billion tons of high-quality coal....

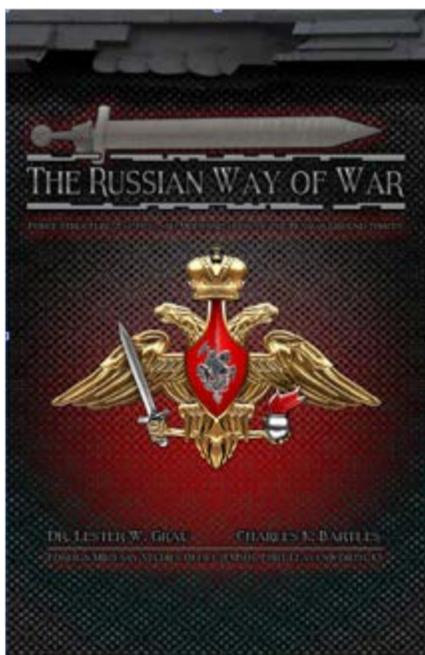
The coal exports from Taymyr constitute a core part of Russia’s ambitious development plans for the Northern Sea Route. Vladimir Putin’s national 5-year plan presented after his re-election in 2018 includes a total annual shipping volume on the Arctic shipping route of 80 million tons. That objective will not be possible to reach without the coal from Taymyr. The Arctic cooperation between Russia and India consequently comes with backing from the highest political level in Moscow....

While coal is a dying industry in Europe, nearby Russia continues to place its bets of the polluting mineral.

Over the last 10 years, Russia has boosted its coal production by more than 30 percent to a total of 440 million tons, and the country is now the world’s third biggest producer.

In the same period, investments in the industry surged 150 percent.

And production is to continue upwards. According to a draft development program, annual coal production might reach as much as 670 million tons in the course of the next 15 years.



THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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Russia Transfers S-300s to Tajikistan

OE Watch Commentary: In late 2015, the Russian government closed the base of the 149th Motorized Rifle Regiment (one of three regiments that make up the 201st Motorized Rifle Division) in Kulyab, Tajikistan and transferred the unit to Dushanbe. The change led to questions about what military presence the Russian government would maintain in Tajikistan. The accompanying excerpted article reports on the transfer of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems from Russia's Central Military District to Tajikistan and it provides a look at how security cooperation in Tajikistan could play out over the next several years.

The article comes from *Asia-Plus*, a Russian-language news website based in Tajikistan, and it reports that the S-300 unit “is made up of about 30 pieces of equipment. Among these – a radar for illumination and guidance, a command post, launchers and support vehicles” and that it will “provide cover for the facilities of the 201st military



24th Anti-Aircraft Rocket Brigade's exercise. S-300PS.

Source: Mil.ru via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anti-AircraftExercise2019-40.jpg>, CC BY 4.0

base from aerospace attacks as well as air defense of the Central Asian region.” The article also notes how “until now, this kind of system in the region was only in service in Kazakhstan.” The Russian government has stated an interest in strengthening air defense for the region in the past, but had held off on related security assistance or cooperation, other than annual joint air defense exercises. The article does not mention when the Russian government made the decision to deploy the S-300 to Tajikistan, but it comes after the Chinese government reportedly established a presence in the region with a post in Gorno-Badakhshan near the Tajik-Afghan border. Ultimately, the transfer of the S-300 to the 201st bases in Tajikistan does provide better air defense in the region, but this move might be worth putting into context alongside future Chinese or Russian security cooperation in Tajikistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The main tasks of the division will be to provide cover for the facilities of the 201st military base from aerospace attacks as well as air defense of the Central Asian region.”

Source: “Россия перебросила С-300ПС на российскую базу в Таджикистан (Russia transferred the S-300PS to the Russian base in Tajikistan),” *Asia-Plus*, 28 October 2019. <https://asiaplustj.info/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20191028/rossiya-perebrosila-s-300ps-na-rossiiskuyu-bazu-v-tadzhikistan>

A division of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems were delivered by rail to the 201st Russian military base in Tajikistan from the Volga... The unit is made up of about 30 pieces of equipment. Among these – a radar for illumination and guidance, a command post, launchers and support vehicles.

“The main tasks of the division will be to provide cover for the facilities of the 201st military base from aerospace attacks as well as air defense of the Central Asian region,” explained the press service of the Central Military District...until now, this kind of system in the region was only in service in Kazakhstan.

...The bilateral agreement, which the base in Tajikistan falls under, is valid until 2042. The units of the base are in Dushanbe and Bokhtar (formerly Qurgonteppa).



The Development of UAVs in Armenia

OE Watch Commentary: The inventory of the Armed Forces of Azerbaijan reportedly includes Israeli-made “kamikaze” unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which were sighted during the April 2016 conflict with Armenia. This is in addition to an incident in July 2017, during which an Israeli defense firm tested a kamikaze UAV on an Armenian target, allegedly at the behest of Azerbaijan officials (see: “The Israeli Defense Ministry’s Investigation into a UAV strike on the Armenian Army,” *OE Watch*, October 2017). The accompanying excerpted article reports on the development of UAVs by the Armenian company UAVLab and there are a couple of things worth noting.

The article, from the Russian-language *News.am*, is an interview with the director of UAVLab, who discusses the development of UAVs in Armenia. He mentions how the company “produces both types of unmanned vehicles – planes and copters” and that the new “Bzez” model “can carry a payload of 4.6 kg up to 9 kilometers,” and is “considered the first Armenian offensive UAV” with a “self-destruct function.” The director also notes how the “Bzez” first appeared in 2012, but that the company “started production only after the April 2016 war.” The director states that the “Bzez” is a “kamikaze quadcopter,” which is different than the fixed-wing type of kamikaze UAVs Azerbaijan’s military reportedly uses. The article shows how small UAVs with offensive capabilities are becoming more of a factor in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



IAI Harop UAV at Paris Air Show, 2103.

Source: Julian Herzog via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IAI_Harop_PAS_2013_01.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

“The “Bzez” belongs in the category of “kamikaze,” it has a self-destruct function.”

Source: Nana Vagramyan, “Армянские беспилотники выходят на международный рынок (Armenian unmanned aerial vehicles are entering the international market),” *News.am*, 22 October 2019. <https://news.am/rus/news/540355.html>

UAVLab is a pioneer in the production of unmanned aerial vehicles in Armenia and in a short period has managed to achieve impressive results...The director of the company, Armen Vardanyan, spoke with News.am on UAV production trends.

(Vagramyan/News.am) – What are the best practices of the Armenian specialists in this field and what models of UAVs does UAVLab produce?

(Vardanyan) – ...We have five successful developments, two of which passed the necessary tests and I hope will be in service in our army in the near future...UAVLab produces both types of unmanned vehicles – planes and copters

We have participated in a number of international exhibitions, our UAV model “Bzez” is the most successful...it can carry a payload of 4.6 kg up to 9 kilometers, while shooting video in real time with a coverage area of 400 square meters transmitted via a secure channel...This model is considered the first Armenian offensive UAV. The “Bzez” belongs in the category of “kamikaze,” it has a self-destruct function.

(Vagramyan/News.am) – How long has the company been manufacturing this model?

(Vardanyan) – Despite its development and appearance at the “DigiTec-Expo 2012,” we started production only after the April 2016 war...in 2012 it did not receive much attention, since no one considered these kinds of UAVs could be turned into effective weapons. During the events of the April conflict, we decided on our own to start producing the “Bzez”...After a month, we not only recreated it, but also conducted all the necessary tests...In addition to the “Bzez” kamikaze quadcopter, we have several reconnaissance-type models...

(Vagramyan/News.am) – What countries are showing interest in Armenian UAVs?

(Vardanyan) – We are already working with dozens of Russian enterprises...



China's New Type Combat Forces: Tomorrow's Ground Forces

OE Watch Commentary: The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been pushing to develop "new-type combat forces," which it says are important forces to win future wars. While the country's military has come a long way in the development and training of its combat forces, China has recognized shortfalls and is moving to rectify things.

Over the past 70 years, PLA ground forces have undergone a number of developmental stages, from being mule and horse-mounted to motorized, mechanized, and informationized. The PLA has gone from being a manpower-intensive military service, with infantry as the primary body to being a technology-intensive military service, with infantry forces being trimmed back. It has also transitioned from mechanization to informatization. Now, the PLA has its sights set on becoming "intelligentized," with an intensified focus on better-trained soldiers. "New-type combat forces" as they are being referred to, have been a growing focus of Chinese media reports, such as the accompanying article excerpts published in *China Daily* and *Beijing Jingshen – Qian Xian*.

China Daily referred to the PLA Strategic Support Force, which was founded on 31 December 2015, as being a "new type of combat force." The same article also refers to "new type of informationized combat forces" in the PLA Navy. With the rapid modernization of China's military, "new type of combat forces" are likely becoming the new normal throughout all branches of service.

With this new normal, as *Beijing Jingshen - Qian Xian* points out, new training methods need to be used to train combat forces. Some of the author's points include: New type combat forces are more information and technology intensive. They are deployed in critical missions and therefore "training should be conducted in the same way that the forces are employed on the battlefield." Personnel will likely be a higher caliber and more highly educated, capable, and trained in information and domains. They are also expected to be more versatile. This means that while soldiers are specialists in one area, they are expected to be "jacks of all trades." Finally, training methods need to be revamped to become more interactive and diverse. The author argues, "the new-type combat forces and the conventional combat forces should band together in combined training around their concrete combat missions, thus realizing the grand fusion of all types of forces in the operational system."

End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)



Emblem of People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force.

Source: 漫漫长冬 via Wikimedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Emblem_of_People%27s_Liberation_Army_Strategic_Support_Force.png, Public Domain.

“The new-type combat forces are important forces in our [China’s] military for winning future wars, and represent the developmental trend of military technologies and warfighting patterns.”

Source: “China Daily: President Xi Reviews Armed Forces on National Day,” *PR Newswire*, 3 October 2019. <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/china-daily-president-xi-reviews-armed-forces-on-national-day-300930646.html>

China Daily: President Xi Reviews Armed Forces on National Day

A formation of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) was reviewed. It marked the first attendance of PLASSF, a new type of combat force for safeguarding national security, in National Day parade. The PLASSF was established on December 31, 2015.

A maritime patrol aircraft echelon was reviewed on Tuesday in China's National Day military parade, marking the collective public debut of the new type of informationized combat forces of the People's Liberation Army Navy. The echelon consists of the KJ-500H and KJ-200 early warning aircraft, the Y-8 anti-submarine patrol aircraft and the y-8 technical reconnaissance aircraft.



Continued: China's New Type Combat Forces: Tomorrow's Ground Forces

Source: Zhao Ruibing, “新型作战力量训练须用“新”招 (New Methods should be Used to Train the New-Type Combat Forces),” *Beijing Jingshen - Qian Xian*, 17 October 2019. <http://www.bjqx.org.cn/qxweb/n429183c1096.aspx>

The new-type combat forces are important forces in our military for winning future wars and represent the developmental trend of military technologies and warfighting patterns.

... Training for the new-type combat forces is different from that for the conventional forces. ... In general, the new-type combat forces have the characteristics of being information-dominating and technology-intensive... the new-type combat forces will mostly be employed in the key areas to perform critical missions. So, training should be conducted in the same way the forces are employed on the battlefield, and should truly be oriented to and driven by actual operations, be conducted according to the use timing, organizational scale, action forms and methods, and battlefield environment of the new-type combat forces. ... Training methods and regularity should be studied around the building of individual capability, single-piece equipment capability, units combined capability, elements interaction capability, and systems integration capability.

... In addition to the good qualities of physical fitness, operational skills, and intelligent capacity, the new-type personnel should also have the following three types of crucial qualities. First, the quality of informatization.... Second, the quality of professional proficiency.... Third, the quality of versatility.

...the new forces are technology-intensive and include diverse specialties, and in particular, as the key posts have high requirements for the personnel's skills and require a long training cycle, it is necessary to concentrate the organization of training at a high level of precision and accuracy.

Forces should be grouped for training in the same way as in wartime.

To maximize their combat effectiveness, the new-type combat forces must be merged with other forces to shape an integrated entity. So the new-type combat forces and the conventional combat forces should band together in combined training around their concrete combat missions, thus realizing the grand fusion of all types of forces in the operational system.

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

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



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



Zhongguancun: China's Silicon Valley



Buildings in Zhongguancun/ Panorama of a Tech Hub.
 Source: Charlie Fong via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:中关村科技园全景图.jpg>, Public Domain.

OE Watch Commentary: In October, China held its 11th annual Zhongguancun Forum. Zhongguancun is a government-backed “incubation zone for start-ups.” It is a place that aims to find “the next big thing in technology.” It is at the forefront of China’s drive to turn the country from a workshop of the world into a global technology powerhouse.

During the event, President Xi Jinping sent a letter to congratulate the forum for achieving “win-win results.” China has been leaving no stone unturned in its effort to become an innovation superpower

and Zhongguancun is part of this effort. One of the main goals of the Zhongguancun Forum is to help build a world-leading sci-tech park and innovation highland, according to the first article extract, published in *Xinhuanet*. An important strategy China uses to build its technological base, is the cooperation in various key technologies with participants from around the world.

The excerpts from the second article, published in *South China Morning Post* a year ago, offer an excellent write-up on the history and goals of Zhongguancun. In 1978, when Deng Xiaoping was about to kick off his economic reforms, Zhongguancun was merely a street where people could purchase consumer electronics (“cun” means “village” in Chinese). In 1988, with the approval of China’s State Council, Zhongguancun became the country’s first hi-tech industry pilot zone. Its mission was to learn from and replicate Silicon Valley. Since then, it has become the “launch pad” for some of the China’s most successful entrepreneurial firms. With the government’s backing, it has been transformed into “a national innovation center with global influence.” Today the 488-square kilometer zone is home to nearly 9,000 hi-tech firms, including some of China’s biggest internet firms, such as Baidu and Sina Corp. It is also located near some of China’s most prestigious universities and research institutes. In the Haidian park of Zhongguancun, there are more than 40 universities, including Peking and Tsinghua Universities, often cited as China’s top two academic institutions. There are also over 200 research institutes and key state laboratories within the vicinity. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Founded 30 years ago with a mission to “learn from Silicon Valley and replicate Silicon Valley,” Zhongguancun is at the forefront of Beijing’s drive to turn the country from [the] ‘workshop of the world’ into a global technology powerhouse.”

Source: “Xi Sends Congratulatory Letter to Zhongguancun Forum,” *Xinhuanet*, 17 October 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/17/c_138479841.htm

Xi Sends Congratulatory Letter to Zhongguancun Forum

President Xi Jinping on Thursday sent a congratulatory letter to the 2019 Zhongguancun Forum (ZGC Forum) held in Beijing.

Xi said in the letter that with the accelerating new round of sci-tech revolution and industrial transformation, innovation, development and cooperation with win-win results have become an inevitable trend.

The ZGC Forum is of great significance to the sharing of innovative ideas and development concepts among all countries by discussing cutting-edge science and technologies, future industrial development trends, global innovation rules and innovative governance, he said.

Source: Meng Jing, “Zhongguancun: Beijing’s Innovation Hub is at the Centre of China’s Aim to Become a Tech Powerhouse,” *South China Morning Post*, 13 November 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/tech/start-ups/article/2172713/zhongguancun-beijings-innovation-hub-centre-chinas-aim-become-tech>

Founded 30 years ago with a mission to “learn from Silicon Valley and replicate Silicon Valley”, Zhongguancun is at the forefront of Beijing’s drive to turn the country from ‘workshop of the world’ into a global technology powerhouse.

It is home to nearly 9,000 hi-tech firms, including some of China’s biggest internet firms, such as Nasdaq-listed Baidu and Sina Corp. Nearly half of China’s 70 unicorns – start-ups with a valuation of more than US\$1 billion each – are located in the area. As many as 80 tech start-ups are born there every day.

... in 1988, Zhongguancun became the country’s first hi-tech industry pilot zone. Since then, the areas has become the launch pad for some of China’s most successful entrepreneurial firms with the backing of Beijing to make it “a national innovation centre with global influence”.

... Zhongguancun enjoys great advantages in access to talent. The Haidian park of Zhongguancun is home to more than 40 universities, including the world-class Peking and Tsinghua Universities, as well as more than 200 research institutes and national-level laboratories.

Government also lends a hand. Preferential policies, including tax breaks and funding, offered in Zhongguancun by local and central government, helps to make the place a magnet for tech talent and companies. To attract global talent, Beijing’s municipal authorities earlier this year announced plans to offer permanent residence for senior hires and allow them to bring their domestic helpers – if needed – with them to China.



“Intelligentization” and a Chinese Vision of Future War

OE Watch Commentary: In today’s world of rapidly developing concepts and technologies, many theories are emerging about what warfare will resemble in the future. Nowhere does this seem truer than in China, where scholars, researchers, and scientists are putting their thoughts to paper, such as the accompanying article, which looks at how “intelligentization” will change the structure and outcome of warfare.

The thought-provoking article, which was republished in various journals, such as *Jiefangjun Bao*, the official newspaper of the People’s Republic of China’s Central Military Commission and *Qiushi Journal*, which falls under the Central Party School and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, looks at how intelligentized warfare, a term commonly used by Chinese scholars, is expected to redraw the boundaries of warfare, restructure combat forces, and reshape the rules of engagement. Some of the more salient points worth pondering are highlighted in the accompanying excerpted passages.

The article claims that the art of combat power will inevitably change because artificial intelligence is rapidly infiltrating military operations. Traditional battlefields and battlefronts will “be hard to reproduce.” The current battle domains in warfare (the physical dimensions of land, sea, air, and space and the informational dimensions of electromagnetic and cyber) will be updated to include a new dimension: the cognitive domain, which would fall under the cognitive dimension.

Intelligentized warfare will see the integration of military and non-military domains; and the boundary between peacetime and wartime will get increasingly blurred. The outcome of a war will not be determined by who destroys whom in a kinetic sense, but rather who gains maximum political benefits. Intelligentized warfare will see the integration of human and machine intelligence. It will reshape warfighting in every dimension and within every realm. Human fighters will eventually stop being the first line of fighting and intelligence systems will prevail. “Human-on-human” warfare will be replaced by “machine-on-human” or “machine-on-machine warfare.”

Combining humans and machines into brain-machine interfaces, external skeletal systems, wearable devices, and gadgets implanted into human bodies will “comprehensively enhance the inherent cognitive and physiological capacity of human fighters and will forge out superman combatants.” Intelligentized warfare will upend traditional rules of military engagement. Cross-domain unconventional and asymmetrical fighting in military engagements will become the new normal. Unmanned operations will rewrite the rules of engagement and reshape the support process. Intelligence control will become the center of gravity.

Based on the article, one might surmise that the military tactics of yesterday and today are not likely the area in which the People’s Liberation Army will place too much effort, if any at all. With artificial intelligence and other technologies rapidly gaining ground, China seems keener on leading the curve in the long term than honing tactics in the immediate future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“The cognitive domain will become another battle domain next to the land, sea, air, space, electromagnetic, and cyber domains of warfare.”

Source: Yang Wenzhe, “在变与不变中探寻智能化战争制胜之道 (How to Win Intelligentized Warfare by Analyzing what are Changed and What are Unchanged),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 22 October 2019. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2019-10/22/content_245810.htm

Seeking the Way to Win Intelligentized Warfare by Analyzing what are Changed and What are Unchanged

...With AI technology rapidly infiltrating into the military domain, it will inevitably lead to a thorough change in the way combat power manifests itself. ... The cognitive domain will become another battle domain next to the land, sea, air, space, electromagnetic, and cyber domains of warfare. ...the three major warfighting dimensions, that is, the physical dimension, the informational dimension, and the cognitive dimension. The boundaries of war will extend into the deep land, deep sea, deep air, deep cyber, and deep brain domains... Intelligentized warfare will be generalized to all military conflicts and rivalries, giving rise to a more striking feature of integration between military and non-military domains. The scope of warfighting will expand to the extremes. The boundary between peacetime and wartime will get increasingly blurred.

Gaining political benefits is an invariable standard for measuring winning in war.... Military victories must guarantee political predominance.

Human fighters will fade away from the first line of fighting. Intelligent equipment will be brought onto the battlefield in large quantities and as whole units. “Human-on-human” warfare in the traditional sense will be superseded by “machine-on-human” or “machine-on-machine” warfare.

Such means of human-machine combination as brain-machine interfaces, external skeletal systems, wearable devices, gadgets implanted into human bodies will comprehensively enhance the inherent cognitive and physiological capacity of human fighters, and will forge out “superman combatants”...

...operations”. Cross-domain unconventional and asymmetrical fighting will become a new normal in military engagements...Unmanned operations, as a prominent hallmark of the new warfighting pattern, will rewrite the rules of engagements and reshape the support processes. Intelligence control will replace spaces control as the center of gravity in war.



Chinese Military Sponsors Exoskeleton Competition

OE Watch Commentary: In October, the PLA’s Army Equipment Department [陆军装备部] held a competition for exoskeleton designs. The accompanying article explains that the competition showcased recent advances in loadbearing and maneuverability for a number of different designs. A group of 29 teams fielded 50 prototype exoskeletons submitted to the competition. The exoskeletons were put through a series of tests, including light maneuvering, marching carrying heavy loads, handling materials, and reloading artillery.

Exoskeletons are wearable frameworks meant to aid in lifting heavy objects or carrying equipment. The article explains that the strain of these tasks can lead to long-term medical problems. There are numerous military and civilian applications for exoskeletons. As noted in the article, Russia has fielded “K-2” exoskeletons for mine clearing work in Syria. The US and Canada have also shown a number of models. In 2010 for example, Lockheed Martin displayed a Human Universal Load Carrier (HULC) intended for a number of applications, including artillery. The article further notes that exoskeletons potentially offer a breakthrough in mobility in complex terrain, or behind enemy lines, where opportunities for fuel resupply are limited.

While not identified in the article, photos circulating in Chinese language forums indicate that Chinese armaments giant Norinco has an exoskeleton program. Norinco’s Northwest Institute of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (202 Research Institute), established an exoskeleton research program in April 2013. The research institute apparently completed the digital design, modeling and physical prototyping of the exoskeleton in two years and it entered environmental testing in 2015. A number of civilian universities appear to be involved related work with civilian applications. Walking assistance exoskeletons for the elderly in particular seems to be an area of interest, due to China’s ballooning elderly population.

For the moment, the application of these exoskeletons will remain limited. Unpowered exoskeletons have already been used for some physically demanding tasks in manufacturing, but these systems are still limited by the operator. To allow more demanding tasks or further reduce strain on the operator, powered systems are necessary. A key hurdle has been the energy density of battery power—the amount of energy a given weight battery can put out. While the specifics vary depending on the battery application, it appears that energy density has roughly doubled every decade. Combined with the development of lighter and stronger structural materials and better drive systems (such as electric motors or hydraulics), more powerful exoskeletons are on the horizon. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



DARPA Exoskeleton.
Source: DARPA via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DARPA_Exoskeleton.tiff, Public domain

“The competition... tested light-duty mobility, weight-bearing marching, material handling, and other areas, fully demonstrating that exoskeletons have a strong prospect for use on a future battlefield.”

Source: “有了这款单兵外骨骼，我军炮弹装填手就不用这么辛苦了 (With this Exoskeleton, Reloading Artillery Shells Does Not Have to Be So Hard),” *Ordnance Industry Science & Technology* 《兵工科技》, 30 October 2019. Post on Wechat - <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/>

As we all know, reloading artillery is tiring work. This is especially true for large-caliber howitzers, whose shells often weigh tens of kilograms, and repeated movement of reloading artillery is exhausting, and many people suffer from deteriorative back problems starting at a young age, impacting the effectiveness of artillery operations.

So, how to reduce this burden? From October 23 to 27, the Army Equipment Department organized the “Super Warrior - 2019” Individual Soldier Exoskeleton System Challenge. At the challenge, they presented an exoskeleton system specially developed for artillery reloaders. The loaders, wearing mechanical power-assisted exoskeletons, were transformed into “Hercules” effortlessly lifting 155mm shells weighing between forty and fifty kilograms.

Exoskeletons are able to achieve these marvelous effects mainly through external power and mechanical power-assist systems, helping address some of the limitations of individual soldiers such as insufficient strength, limited mobility, etc. In combat situations such as operations behind enemy lines, mountain warfare, on border patrols, or rescue and disaster relief, mobile platforms generally cannot reach mission areas or their fuel supplies are insufficient to operate for very long. Exoskeletons could enhance mobility while carrying heavy loads or adaptability to complex terrain while reducing the physical fatigue of long-term marching.

...
Many people believe exoskeletons remain in the realm of science fiction, but this view has been disproved, and with the advance of technology, the exoskeleton has become practical. Russia has released videos of soldiers on the Syrian battlefield employing K-2 exoskeletons for mine clearance operations, and several U.S. exoskeleton systems have been put into use on the battlefield in the Middle East.

China, of course, is not backward, and this “Super-Power Warrior - 2019” competition demonstrates that China’s exoskeleton systems have also gradually moved towards practicality. In addition to reloading, the competition also tested light-duty mobility, weight-bearing marching, material handling, and other areas, fully demonstrating that exoskeletons have a strong prospect for use on future battlefields.



China Introduces New Battle Rifle for the PLA

OE Watch Commentary: China recently displayed a new rifle during the military parade held to celebrate the 70th anniversary of its founding. According to the accompanying excerpted article, the new rifle was developed by the state-owned defense firm NORINCO's 208 Research Institute [208所], also known as the Chinese Soldier Equipment Research Institute [中国兵器装备研究院] in Beijing. As laid out in the article and related interviews with members of the development team, the new rifle represents a shift in how China develops firearms.

The new rifle, which does not currently have a public designation, incorporates a number of significant changes from the QBZ-95 used by most PLA units. Elements of the Chinese Armed Forces, including People's Armed Police and border guards, use the QBZ-03 assault rifle, which uses the same ammunition as the QBZ-95 but which follows a more traditional configuration.

Most obviously the new rifle abandons the Type 95's bullpup design, which places the rifle's action and magazine behind the trigger, with a more traditional configuration with the magazine in front as in the AK-47 or M-16. Both rifles use a 5.8mm cartridge designed at the time to pierce standard NATO body armor.

The top of the rifle has a Picatinny-style rail for mounting optics and the plastic handguard is capable of mounting lights and vertical grips. The rifle uses a new rail-mounted 3x optic called the QMK152, which uses light-gathering fiber optics. It is also equipped with backup iron sights that fold down when not in use and an ambidextrous charging handle. Several barrel lengths for the rifle appear to exist, with a shorter carbine version carried by some vehicle crews during the parade.

The rifle also includes improved magazines produced by Chongqing Construction Industry Company [重庆建设工业] that feature an enhanced grip over their predecessors, and the magazine release appears to have been lengthened to speed reloading or manipulation when using gloves. The rifle also features an adjustable buttstock, a change from the QBZ-95 whose bullpup design does not allow it. Another difference with the QBZ-95 is that the grip is removable and includes a storage compartment, likely for a cleaning kit or lubrication.

Overall these changes address a number of the criticisms of the QBZ-95 and bring it up to a standard adopted by most countries (though notably the UK, Australia, France, and Singapore among others still use bullpup designs).

Also on display at the parade was a pistol-caliber submachine gun or personal defense weapon (PDW) design, designated as the CS/LS-7 and carried by the crew of armored vehicles. It features an MP-5-like magazine and a retractable buttstock. It is equipped with a holographic sight similar to that produced by US-based company EOTECH.

He Long [何龙], deputy chief of the 208 Institute noted that previously whatever the 208 Institute developed the PLA would adopt, but that now they work together to develop equipment appropriate to requirements.

Wang Yingsong [王英松], director of the 208 Institute's Firearms Research Institute [枪械技术研究所], emphasized that digital design tools have significantly decreased their research and development times, with the various stages compressed from between six months or a year to roughly a month allowing them to move from conceptualization to prototype much faster. The 208 institute is able to fully model a prototype in a digital environment, fabricate a practical prototype and then begin testing at the institutes' environmental simulation labs. It was noted for example that the new rifle had undergone rigorous testing including firing after immersion in muddy water meant to mimic China's famously salty rivers.

More importantly, these new firearms are only one component of a broader set of improvements to the PLA's individual soldier equipment. What appear to be earlier versions of the new "Integrated Soldier Combat System" [单兵综合作战系统] from NORINCO were designed as a modularized system "composed of a weapon system, information system and protection system," "targeted at improving integrated combat capability of soldiers." **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The rifle is highly reliable, feels comfortable to operate, shoots with very high accuracy and has less recoil, Li Xiang, a test marksman at the research institute, told CCTV, noting that the ergonomics of the weapon can better fit the battlefield.”



Continued: China Introduces New Battle Rifle for the PLA



QBZ95 Automatic Rifle.

Source: User:Tyg728 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:QBZ95_automatic_rifle.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: “China’s New Rifle to help Create Future ‘Super Soldiers,’” *Global Times*, 24 October 2019. www.globaltimes.cn/content/1167915.shtml

China’s new service rifle, first made public at the National Day parade on October 1, is said to be reliable, accurate and comfortable to shoot with and has low recoil. China’s recently revealed new service rifle is reliable and comfortable, and “super soldiers” are in the making when paired with an advanced individual soldier combat system, said a senior Chinese light arms developer.

The gun, which was first shown to the public at the National Day parade on October 1, was developed by the No. 208 Research Institute of China Ordnance Industries, the developer of the QBZ-95 rifle, national broadcaster China Central Television (CCTV) reported on Monday.

The rifle is highly reliable, feels comfortable to operate, shoots with very high accuracy and has less recoil, Li Xiang, a test marksman at the research institute, told CCTV, noting that the ergonomics of the weapon can better fit the battlefield.

Wei Dongxu, a Beijing-based military analyst, told the Global Times on Thursday that compared to the QBZ-95, China’s previous generation of service rifles that features a bullpup design, the new one has an optimized conventional design with better ergonomics.

It will likely use new materials that make it very light, and its advanced optics could help the user measure distance and accurately acquire targets any time of the day, Wei said.

Multiple tests under harsh conditions, including in simulated sandstorms and sand-filled river water, were conducted to make sure the gun can adapt to any situation and remain consistent, CCTV reported.

The No. 208 Research Institute applied advanced computer simulation technologies during the rifle’s development that can simulate every component of the gun and their movements and status when the gun fires or falls from high places. This greatly shortened the rifle’s development period, according to CCTV.

China’s guns have been ranked among the world’s most popular guns as China’s gun development capability grew, CCTV said.

Wei said China’s guns are very competitive in the international market. Older generations of guns still have huge international demand because they are cheaper and perform very well, while new and advanced guns can also compete in high-end markets, he said. Accompanying the new rifle is an individual soldier combat system, which integrates dozens of advanced devices, including an information exchange interface packed up on the chest of a soldier, the CCTV report said.

“We will provide the Chinese warriors with our advanced equipment, making them super soldiers on the future battlefield,” He Long, deputy head of the No. 208 Research Institute, told CCTV.

Wei said the individual soldier combat system can greatly increase the battlefield situational awareness of soldiers by sharing information, so the battlefield would become more transparent to them as they can recognize danger and more accurately attack targets, gaining a significant advantage.



New PLA Air Force Training Exercise Focuses on Electronic Warfare

OE Watch Commentary: The PLA Air Force has announced a new annual training exercise focused on electronic warfare (EW). The exercise joins the existing set of “four major training brands” [四大训练品牌], its annual large scale exercises, each focused on a particular mission set. The new exercise is called Qingdian [擎电] (which so far lacks a standardized English translation) while the others are called “Red Sword,” “Blue Shield,” “Golden Helmet” and “Golden Dart.” While Red Sword is focused on Command and



PLANAF-GX4-02.

Source: 日本防衛省統合幕僚監部 via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PLANAF-GX4-02.jpg>, CC BY-SA 4.0

Control, Golden Dart on Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD), Golden Helmet on air-to-air combat, and Blue Shield on integrated air defenses, the new exercise will further enhance EW training. The first of these exercises was established in 2009 to test the PLAAF’s ability to carry out complex aerial combat operations. Golden Helmet added additional competitions to address severe deficiencies in pilot skills. The Golden Helmet fighter exercise has evolved into a significant competition, with the winners receiving the prestigious award for PLAAF pilots.

The PLAAF’s role has evolved significantly in the past 20 years, from acting in a subordinate and supporting role for the PLA Ground Forces and engaging in territorial defense [国土防御], to its 2004 adoption of “Integrated Air and Space Operations, Simultaneous Offensive and Defensive Operations” [空天一体, 攻防兼备]. In particular, descriptions of training exercises have seen a rising emphasis on integration with airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft, and both use of and response to electronic warfare.

With new aircraft equipped with more powerful radars and longer-range weaponry being fielded, pilot training has lagged behind as integration of these new skills requires time and opportunities to test their full capabilities. Chinese military writers have paid close attention to the use of electronic warfare by Russia in Ukraine and Syria. All of the PLA’s services can be expected to integrate this more heavily into their training. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The Shaheen series has become a real combat training brand of the PLAAF, effectively deepening and promoting the cooperation and exchanges between the two air forces.”

Source: “空军实战化训练推出‘擎电’提升电子战能力 (PLA Air Force Launches ‘Qingdian’ Exercises to Raise Electronic Warfare Capability),” *Xinhua*, 14 October 2019. china.zjol.com.cn/gnxw/201910/t20191014_11181855.shtml

On October 13th, at the opening press conference at an event held in Beijing to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), PLAAF spokesperson Shen Jinke [申进科], said that in addition to the existing “four major training brands,” the PLAAF will launch a new “Qingdian” brand to improve the Air Force’s electronic warfare capability.

Shen Jinke said that in information systems combat operations, the side that seizes control of the electromagnetic spectrum the electromagnetic power, will control the course of the war. Echelons of electronic warfare aircraft featured prominently during the military parade held in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. In the new era of training and preparation, the PLAAF will take new steps to strengthen electronic warfare capabilities. Qingdian will act as a new hallmark of the Air Force’s operational training.

Shen explained that the PLAAF has carried out continuous improvement of its combat training, establishing the “Red Sword,” “Blue Shield,” “Golden Helmet,” “Golden Darts” and now Qingdian, comprehensively enhancing the PLAAF’s overall combat capability. He noted that a ceremony was planned for a few days after the news conference to confer awards on pilots who won the “Golden Helmet” and “Golden Darts” competitions will be presented to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Founding of the People’s Air Force.

Shen Jinke said that the Air Force will never forget to prepare for war, be capable of winning wars, closely adhere to the mission and battlefield environment to strengthen the actual combat training, and constantly improve the ability to win, to maintain the national air and space security.

Shen Jinke said that the Air Force will always uphold its mission of training to fight and win wars, closely adhere to realistic battlefield environment conditions in training, and safeguard China’s national air and space security.



The People's Liberation Army Air Force Turns 70

OE Watch Commentary: On 9 November, the Chinese state media outlet *People's Daily* announced that President Xi Jinping had visited the China Aviation Museum in the Changping District of Beijing to congratulate the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) ahead of their 70th anniversary celebration, which took place on 11 November. President Xi began his visit by presenting a flower basket outside of the museum to honor PLAAF soldiers and subsequently visited an exhibition illustrating the history and achievements of the PLAAF. According to the article, "Xi Jinping emphasized that the People's Liberation Army Air Force stands at a new historical starting point. We must thoroughly implement the party's strong military ideology and strategy in the coming era, bear in mind our original mission while carrying forward the glorious tradition, dare to innovate, strive to build the People's Liberation Army Air Force into a world-class air force, and constantly create new and greater achievements!"



Chengdu J-10 of the 'August 1st' Aerobatic Team.

Source: Peng Chen via Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:August_1st_\(aerobatic_team\)](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:August_1st_(aerobatic_team)), CC BY-SA 2.0

In preparation for the 70th anniversary of the PLAAF's founding, Chinese government outlet *Xinhua News Agency* published an article on 3 November boasting of a "new leap" in combat capabilities and aviation technology. The article claims the PLAAF has accelerated its equipment upgrades since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, which began on 8 November 2012. Domestically produced fighter planes including the J-10B, J-10C, J-16, J-20, Yun-20, H-6K, and the Air Police (空警)-500 have "successfully installed" new upgrades including early warning devices, reconnaissance equipment, and upgraded bombing capabilities within each aircraft structure. The H-6K bomber has recently "cruised around the island of Taiwan" while the J-20 stealth fighter plane "carried out practical training on the sea," potentially signaling the PLAAF's interest in developing air presence within the region.

According to the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*, China's new supersonic arsenal can give the H-6N bomber force greater reach. Citing official Chinese military sources, the article claimed the upgraded H-6N bomber can now carry "CJ-100 supersonic cruise missiles or the WZ-8 supersonic stealth spy drone, increasing its maximum strike range to 6,000km (3,728 miles)." The new H-6N bomber was unveiled most recently at China's National Day Parade on 1 October and featured two distinctive upgrades including an aerial refueling probe on the planes' noses and a semi-recessed area on their bellies. An anonymous PLAAF source claimed the newest upgrades allow the H-6N bombers to carry oversized weapons payloads to the required altitude and launch coordinates. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartnett)**

“Xi Jinping emphasized that the People's Liberation Army Air Force stands at a new historical starting point. We must thoroughly implement the party's strong military ideology and strategy in the coming era, bear in mind our original mission while carrying forward the glorious tradition, dare to innovate, strive to build the People's Liberation Army Air Force into a world-class air force, and constantly create new and greater achievements!”



Continued: The People's Liberation Army Air Force Turns 70

Source: Li Xuanliang & Zhang Yuqing, “Xi Jinping: Build the People’s Liberation Army Air Force Into a World-Class Air Force,” *People’s Daily*, 9 November 2019. <http://military.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1109/c1011-31446538.html>

Xi Jinping emphasized that the People’s Liberation Army Air Force stands at a new historical starting point. We must thoroughly implement the party’s strong military ideology and strategy in the coming era, bear in mind our original mission while carrying forward the glorious tradition, dare to innovate, strive to build the People’s Liberation Army Air Force into a world-class air force, and constantly create new and greater achievements!

Source: Zhang Yuqing, Huang Shubo, & Wang Zhijia, “A New Leap In the Combat Capability of the People’s Liberation Army Air Force Aviation System,” *Xinhua News Agency*, 3 November 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/2019-11/03/c_1125187402.htm

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the air force has accelerated the upgrading of its equipment. The domestically-produced new fighters such as the J-10B/C, J-16, J-20, Yun-2 and Air Police-500 have been successively installed. With the three-generation machine as the main body and the fourth-generation machine as the backbone, early warning, sniper, bombing, reconnaissance, transportation and other aircraft upgrades have been added.

Entering a new era, the air force aviation police patrol the East China Sea and South China Sea, and cruise around the island. The far-sea ocean training is normalized, systematic, and the new track is continuously extended. The multi-type fighters such as the H-6K cruised around the island J-20 fighters carried out practical training on the sea, and the Sino-Russian Air Force combined air strategy achieved a new leap in combat capability.

Source: Minnie Chan & Liu Zhen, “China’s new supersonic arsenal could give H-6N bomber force greater reach, military experts say,” *South China Morning Post*, 10 November 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/print/news/china/military/article/3036994/chinas-new-supersonic-arsenal-could-give-h-6n-bomber-force>

China’s new H-6N strategic bomber could carry CJ-100 supersonic cruise missiles or the WZ-8 supersonic stealth spy drone, increasing its maximum strike range to 6,000km (3,728 miles), military sources said.

When a flight of three H-6Ns passed over Beijing during rehearsals for the October 1

military parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic, military experts and aircraft enthusiasts reported two distinct new features: an aerial refueling probe on the planes’ noses and a semi-recessed area on their bellies.

The latest designs suggested that the planes could carry oversized weapons payloads to the required altitude and launch coordinates, the air force source said.



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

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



Chinese Maritime Militia Increase Realism in Training

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying article highlights some of the improvements in training that have been implemented in maritime militia units in Zhejiang Province, on China’s east coast. Maritime militia units have been effectively used to support so-called “grey zone” operations below the threshold of war to assert Chinese territorial claims, but their explicit purpose is to support the PLA Navy during wartime or act in a variety of law enforcement or aid roles in peacetime (see inset chart). Elements (sometimes Romanized as fendui [分队]) are the smallest organizations and are believed to typically include 30-40 personnel. Larger organizations, such as Squadrons [中队] or Companies [连] are also common in China’s coastal provinces (see map).

While these units appear to be located in almost every major coastal city and many small ones, the Chinese military acknowledges that a number of problems are severely limiting their utility in a conflict.

An article in July 2016 by Wang Wenqing [王文清], head of the Militia and Reserve Bureau in the Central Military Commission’s National Defense Mobilization Department [军委国防动员部民兵预备役局局长] had highlighted some of the problems that the maritime militia units needed to overcome to become an effective force. Wenqing identified four areas in need of improvement: force reorganization, improved training, data-enabled management, and financial incentives. He argued that greater effort should be put into recruiting militia fishermen, employees of maritime transport companies, and coastal communities. Targeted training was vital, he argued, especially for captains and chief engineers of fishing vessels, oil tankers, and cargo ships. Lastly, he noted that the Chinese military lacked an up-to-date database of militia units and equipment, hampering training and planning. Lastly, the article acknowledged that greater financial incentives were needed to offset the costs of participation in militia activities, something he believed was achievable through greater “Military Civil Fusion” [军民融合], or stronger links between civilian organizations and businesses and militia units.

The excerpted article from earlier this year, which describes a unit preparing to participate in joint exercises with the PLA Navy, provides some insight into how many of the problems laid out by Wang Wenqing have been addressed. Of particular note is the emphasis in training further offshore, rather than keeping to more routinized and superficial training. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

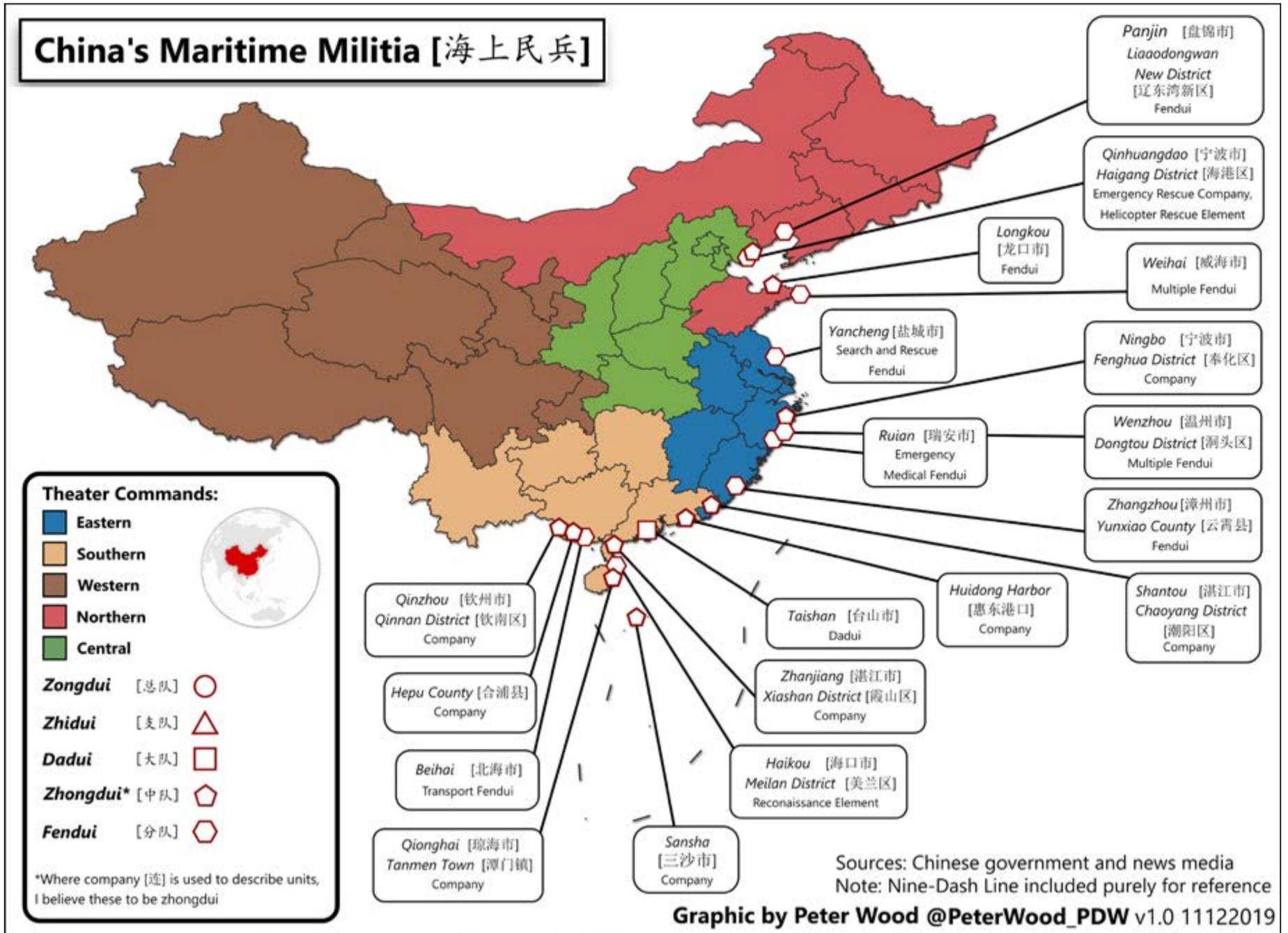
Specialized Elements [专业分队] in Chinese Maritime Militia Units*	
Helicopter Rescue	直升机救援
Maritime Guard	海上警戒
Maritime Reconnaissance	海上侦察
Medical Rescue	医疗救护
Maritime Rights Enforcement	海上维权
Maritime Search and Rescue	海上搜救
Resupply	补给
Ship Repair	船舶抢修
Transport	运输

*Note these are not exclusive to Elements [分队] and larger units, such as repair units are confirmed at the Group [大队] or Company [连] level

“They discarded the old training routine, repositioned the mission mandate of each detachment, reconstructed the battlefield environment, and reorganized the training content. The training field has been “extended” to the open ocean for the various...Military Subdistrict leaders also arranged for the training window to coincide with the PLAN’s training missions, to help the militia effectively learn operational requirements.”



Continued: Chinese Maritime Militia Increase Realism in Training



Source: “让民兵训练搭上强军快车——浙江省紧贴新时代强军备战需求开展民兵训练闻思录 (Let Militia Train on the ‘Strong Army Express’ --Record of Zhejiang Province’s Close Adherence to Militia Training Following New Era Strong Military Readiness),” *China Defense News* [中国国防报], 14 February 2019. http://www.81.cn/gfbmap/content/2019-02/14/content_227234.htm

In February 2019, Li Demin [李德民], a Staff Officer of the Taizhou Military Subdistrict Mobilization Division in Zhejiang Province [浙江省台州军分区动员处参谋], began working on the plan for the annual militia training program [年度民兵训练计划]. Planning the training program was supposed to be “a piece of cake” for Li, who has been in charge of training planning for many years, but this time, Li spent a week meeting with grassroots units in preparation for this. Why was that? According to Li, in order to bring militia training in line with the demands put forth by Xi Jinping’s Strong Military mandate, and against the backdrop of the national defense and military reform, it is necessary to break away from the old routine and establish a benchmark for measuring combat capabilities. As a result, every component of the militia training program—from the initial planning, coordination to the finalization of personnel and training subjects to be involved in the training—must be examined for its feasibility, soundness, and potential utility for improving actual-combat capabilities. This is the secret behind the Zhejiang Military District’s success when it took home the championship during the 2018 militia reorganization and reform inspection assessment, organized by the Central Military Commission’s National Defense Mobilization Department.

In the Wenzhou Military Subdistrict [温州军分区], the reporter reviewed the maritime militia’s annual training plan and noticed that each of the units added long-distance sailing and maritime psychological endurance training components to their training plans.

At the start of 2018, when planning the annual military training of the maritime militia, senior leaders of the Military Subdistrict reoriented the training program to reflect the priority of “responding to enemies on the battlefield.” They discarded the old training routine, repositioned the mission mandate of each detachment, reconstructed the battlefield environment, and reorganized the training content. The training field has been “extended” to the open ocean for the various data-enabled, including the maritime rights protection, maritime search and rescue, maritime transport, maritime police patrol, and vessel rapid repair, among others, who honed their combat skills through day-into-night training under complex weather conditions. Military Subdistrict leaders also arranged for the training window to coincide with the PLAN’s training missions, to help the militia effectively learn operational requirements.



PLA Navy Ships Conduct Replenishment at Sea with Civilian Cargo Ships for the First Time

OE Watch Commentary: In November, the PLA Navy announced a breakthrough in logistics resupply for its ships, successfully carrying out dry goods resupply at sea between a civilian cargo ship and two navy ships. The civilian ship involved, the SinoTrans Fuzhou [中外运福州], is a 180m-long, container ship operated by Sinotrans & CSC Holdings, a state owned enterprise and the largest logistics company in China. According to the excerpted article, the PLA Navy regards this as a major step forward in development of new technologies for replenishment-at-sea, and for the rapid installation of these systems aboard members of China's extensive merchant vessel fleet.

According to the article, the exercise was set up by naval units under the PLA's Northern Theater Command to test a new electrical sling system and validate whether it could be installed aboard a civilian vessel. Members of three naval ships were involved: the Linyi [临沂] (Pennant number 547), Taihu [太湖] (Pennant number 889) and Dongping Lake [东平湖] (Pennant number 960). The Linyi is a Type 054A (Jiangkai II) Guided Missile Frigate and the Taihu and Dongping Lake are Type 903 resupply ships. Both are assigned to the North Sea Fleet. The Linyi has participated in a number of long distance voyages and foreign port calls since its commissioning in 2012, including evacuation of Chinese citizens from Yemen in 2015.



Type 054A Frigate.

Source: U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Shannon Renfro via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People%27s_Liberation_Army_\(Navy\)_frigate_PLA\(N\)_Yueyang_\(FF_575\)_steams_in_formation_with_42_other_ships_and_submarines_during_Rim_of_the_Pacific_\(RIMPAC\)_Exercise_2014.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:People%27s_Liberation_Army_(Navy)_frigate_PLA(N)_Yueyang_(FF_575)_steams_in_formation_with_42_other_ships_and_submarines_during_Rim_of_the_Pacific_(RIMPAC)_Exercise_2014.jpg), Public domain

Video of the exercise shown on Chinese state television included short interviews with members of the crew. Zhao Zhenqiang [赵珍强], head of an unspecified research office at China's Naval Research Academy who was aboard noted that "This test of this maritime replenishment system integrated the use of a number of key technologies, and features high compatibility with other ship types and is suitable for rapid conversion of merchant ships into dry cargo resupply ships with offshore resupply capability."

Captain of the Taihu, Guo Dong [郭栋], further noted that "The success of maritime replenishment mission further verifies and improves the suitability of civilian ships to resupply warships." According to the video, replenishment operations with the Linyi altogether took 13 minutes. The Taihu then maneuvered to begin replenishment operations with the Fuzhou. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“China has a large number of civilian ships, with a vast number of supply routes. If supplied with equipment for maritime replenishment, it would create a capable force with great potential military and economic potential. The success of this test will provide important technical support for the application of fully electric sling transfer systems for replenishment ships, which will have real significance in helping China achieve its military goals.”

Source: “重大突破！民船为水面舰艇实施干货补给 (Major Breakthrough! Civilian Ship Carries out Dry Cargo Replenishment At Sea for Surface Ships),” *Navy News Public Wechat Account [海军新闻 微信公众平台]*, posted on *The Observer [观察者]*, 16 November 2019. https://www.guancha.cn/military-affairs/2019_11_16_525353.shtml

Recently, the Chinese navy used civilian ships in modular underway replenishment, a major breakthrough.

The replenishment test officially began at 9 a.m., with naval research institute experts and crew from the Dongping Lake's Combat Support Ship Detachment providing guidance from the deck of the Fuzhou. The Linyi maneuvered to the port side of the Fuzhou and launched a cable which was quickly used to attach the cargo transfer system. The Fuzhou then smoothly transferred modular dry cargo containers to the deck of the Linyi, completing the test.

At about 2 p.m., the Fuzhou cargo vessel and the Navy's Taihu vessel began their connection test. The two goals of the test were to verify the smooth operation of the system and test resupply operations with a civilian vessel.

According to this reporter's understanding, the system was developed by PLA Naval Research Institute, and the test was organized by naval units of the Northern Theater Command. The use of civilian ships to carry out dry cargo resupply of naval vessels at sea is a new development in the field of naval logistics support, with the growing numbers of China's naval surface ships, and in increase in the number of long-distance missions, there is greater demand for maritime logistics support.

The system adopts the modular design concept, using an electric drive system, super capacitor energy storage, constant tension control and many other key technologies, and is meant to be easily integrated into other ships so that cargo supply ships can be converted to be capable of maritime replenishment in a short period of time.

China has a large number of civilian ships, with a vast number of supply routes. If supplied with equipment for maritime replenishment, it would create a capable force with great potential military and economic potential. The success of this test will provide important technical support for the application of fully electric sling transfer systems for replenishment ships, which will have real significance in helping China achieve its military goals.



Taiwan Debuts Indigenous Jet Trainer

OE Watch Commentary: Taiwan has unveiled a new jet trainer, developed locally, to improve fighter pilot training and increase the countries' self-reliance. The "Brave Eagle" [鷹勇] project was first proposed in 2016 and work began in 2017.

Though Taiwan continues to operate submarines and fighter jets purchased from the Netherlands and France, most nations have ceased selling arms to the island due to pressure from the People's Republic of China. Taiwan has roughly 100 fixed wing aircraft for pilot training split between T-34C propeller driven trainers and AT-3A/B Tzu-Chung advanced jet trainer. According to the article, Taiwan's inventory of aging F-5 E/FII fighters are also used in training.

Developed in the mid-1980s, the AT-3 Tzu Chung (自強; lit. Self Reliance), was one of several earlier initiatives, which included F-CK-1 indigenous fighter to reduce Taiwan's reliance on imports of fighter jets from abroad.

Taiwan has raised defense spending, and promoted self-reliance in the defense sector as both a national security issue and a way to promote growth in high-tech manufacturing and related fields. According to Taiwan's 2017 *Quadrennial Defense Report*, another goal of indigenizing the program is to promote spin-off technologies for the civilian sector. Taiwan is also attempting to indigenize much of its naval development with a facility under construction to build Taiwan's first indigenous submarine. The first prototype is slated for completion by the end of 2024.

The article notes that without domestic programs replacing imports, Taiwan's aerospace and maritime R&D would likely wither. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



AIDC T-5 Brave Eagle.

Source: 玄史生 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:XAT-5_Advanced_Trainer_Model_Display_at_AIDC_Booth_20150815a.jpg, Public Domain.

“If we still relied on importing advanced jet trainers, our research and development capability of military aircraft and vessels would stand very little chance of surviving.”

Source: “Taiwan’s 1st indigenous advanced jet trainer makes public debut,” *Kyodo News*, 24 September 2019. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/09/1fdee542565d-taiwans-1st-indigenous-advanced-jet-trainer-makes-public-debut.html>

Taiwan’s first prototype of indigenous advanced jet trainer made its public debut on Tuesday, the first completion of a major project of President Tsai Ing-wen’s “design and build at home” policy for military equipment.

At the launching ceremony at a factory of the state-owned Aerospace Industrial Development

Corp. (AIDC) in Greater Taichung, central Taiwan, Tsai called the completion of the aircraft, named Yong Ying or Brave Eagle in English, a “historic moment.” Tsai recalled that she decided not long after taking office May 2016 to build advanced jet trainers at home “to turn the tide around.”

“If we still relied on importing advanced jet trainers, our research and development capability of military aircraft and vessels would stand very little chance of surviving,” she said. Tsai said since the work began in 2017, the NT\$68.6 billion (US\$2.2 billion) project has created at least 1,200 jobs at home and more than half of the orders go to local manufacturers. The air force contracted AIDC to build 66 advanced trainers to replace Taiwan’s aging AT-3 Tzu Chung jet trainers, as well as F-5E/F “Tiger II” fighters that are mainly used now to train pilots. It plans to see the completion of the prototype of the aircraft this year and the start of mass production in 2023. The goal is to take the delivery of the last batch no later than 2028.

A high-ranking AIDC manager, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that the company plans to build four prototypes: two for ground testing and two others for flight testing.

The prototype made public debut on Tuesday is scheduled for its flight testing in June next year. If all goes well, maybe it can deliver the last batch ahead of time, he said.

AIDC President Ma Wan-june told reporters that the advanced jet trainer is aimed to simplify the training process of fighter jet pilots.

Currently, a fighter jet pilot first flies a propeller plane before moving on to AT-3 and then F-5. With the advanced jet trainer, the person can fly a fighter jet after completing the training of a propeller aircraft and then the advanced jet trainer.

The AIDC has the experience of co-building the AIDC F-CK-1 Ching-kuo, commonly known as the Indigenous Defense Fighter, with the help of the United States in the late 1980s. The IDF fighter was until now the last project of indigenous aircraft.

When Tsai’s predecessor Ma Ying-jeou was in power between 2008 and 2016, the AIDC signed a teaming agreement with the manufacture of Alenia Aermacchi M-346 Master transonic trainer to build advanced trainers.

However, since Tsai took office, she has been pushing a “design and build at home” policy for military airplanes, vessels and submarines, leaving the Italian aircraft maker out of the picture.

After years of reluctance to sell new, advanced fighter jets to Taiwan, the United States finally decided last month to sell F-16 Block 70 fighter jets worth \$8 billion. The last sale of U.S. fighter jets to Taiwan took place in 1992 under the George H.W. Bush administration. The move drew strong protests from China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province awaiting unification, by force if necessary.

The AIDC is also responsible for refitting a fleet of 142 older model F-16s, which has undergone several upgrades.

Malaysia Weighs Releasing 9/11-Linked Terrorist from Prison

OE Watch Commentary: In December 2001, Malaysian militant Yazid Sufaat was arrested for his alleged involvement with al-Qaeda and links to the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. A former biochemistry student in the US, he was tasked with developing anthrax as a bio-terror weapon for al-Qaeda and was an explosives expert for Southeast Asia-based Jemaa Islamiya, a group responsible for a series of large attacks in Indonesia. According to the first excerpted article in the Malaysian *Berita Haria* [Daily News], Malaysia is now facing the prospect of Sufaat being released from prison. However, the government is examining whether his detention should be extended and whether his release will foment terrorism in the country.

According to the article, Malaysia has a Terrorism Prevention Board, which will be reviewing Sufaat's case and deciding whether he may be released. It will need to determine whether he is fully recovered and deradicalized. Given the difficulty of this type of examination, the article notes the Board recognizes the evaluation will need to be thorough. If Sufaat no longer holds his previous views and is no longer a threat to the public, according to Malaysia's former chief of police, "there is nothing immoral about releasing Sufaat."

The article also demonstrates that this case is unique insofar as the Terrorism Prevention Act under which Sufaat has been detained was previously used to detain Communists in the country, but only until even Communists recanted their ideology. Now the same Act is being used in a new era and the Sufaat case is the first major test. Before concluding the article, it also lists Sufaat's experience, including his service in the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Perhaps most relevant, however, is that he was released once before, and then recruited for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). This may raise questions about whether he will recant his ideology this time if he did not the last time. The second accompanying passage provides further details on his background, links to the September 11 attacks, and previous arrests. It notes that "Yazid, a US trained bio-chemist, was detained... in December 2001 for his alleged involvement with bin Laden's al-Qaeda. He was released in 2008 but re-arrested five years later and again in 2017 after a brief release. Yazid was arrested in 2013... for recruiting new members for the Islamic State. Following his release, Yazid was detained in December 2017 after authorities discovered that he had been recruiting fellow inmates for al-Qaeda while in jail." **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Malaysian UNGERIN anti-terror-police on 23 May 2009, at the Muar in Johore, Malaysia.
Source: Rizuan via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marine_UNGERIN021.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0

“For me, it is not wrong to give him a chance if he is fully recovered, but the examination of Yazid [Sufaat] must be done very carefully.”



Continued: Malaysia Weighs Releasing 9/11-Linked Terrorist from Prison

Source: “Apakah Yazid Sufaat Sudah Benar-Benar Pulih (Has Yazid Benefit Really Recovered?),” *Berita Harian*, 20 October 2019. <https://www.bhplus.com.my/berita/kes/2019/10/619767/apakah-yazid-sufaat-sudah-benar-benar-pulih>

A local militant, Yazid Sufaat, must prove he no longer supports the terrorist ideology before a decision is made to release him next month. If there is still a threat to the country and the public, then his release will need to be re-evaluated by the Terrorism Prevention Board. Regarding that, former Chief of Police, Tan Sri Musa Hassan, said “The board will need to conduct a thorough review and evaluation before deciding whether to release or extend Yazid’s detention. “For me, it is not wrong to give him a chance if he is fully recovered, but the examination of Yazid must be done very carefully,” he said. When it comes to issues of ideology, Musa explains, the important thing to know is whether Yazid is willing to change something about his past or is he still trying to perpetuate elements of violence within himself. If he is fully aware and recovered, it is not wrong for the government to release him because it concerns the rights of every individual in our country. In the past, Communist detainees under the Internal Security Act were also released after they were fully recovered, he said.

Source: Ali Nufael, “Police: Malaysian Terrorist Linked to 9/11 Attacks is Set to be Freed Next Month,” *Benar News*, 23 October 2019. <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/sentence-done-10232019163232.html>

Yazid Sufaat, the only Malaysian directly involved in the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States, is set to be released from prison next month, but police will continue to monitor him, the nation’s police chief says.

...

Yazid, a U.S. trained bio-chemist, was detained under the now-defunct Internal Security Act (ISA) in December 2001 for his alleged involvement with bin Laden’s al-Qaeda. He was released in 2008 but re-arrested five years later and again in 2017 after a brief release.

Yazid was arrested in 2013 under SOSMA [the Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act] and sentenced to four years for recruiting new members for the Islamic State.

Following his release, Yazid was detained in December 2017 after authorities discovered that he had been recruiting fellow inmates for al-Qaeda while in jail. He is finishing up his two-year sentence and is to be released, according to officials.

...

A bio-chemistry graduate from the University of Sacramento in California, Yazid joined Jemaah Islamiyah terror group shortly after its founding in 1993. He was tasked with developing anthrax as a bio-terror weapon for al-Qaeda, investigators said.

In January 2000 key al-Qaeda members met at Yazid’s home in Kuala Lumpur to discuss terror plans, according to reports. He also allegedly provided lodging to two Sept. 11 hijackers, Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi.

Yazid was flown to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2001 under the command of Ayman al-Zawahiri to spend several months attempting to cultivate anthrax in a laboratory he helped set up near the Kandahar airport, according to the 9/11 commission report.

He was in Afghanistan during the Sept. 11 attack and later fled through Pakistan to Malaysia where he was caught by authorities and jailed under ISA at the Kamunting Camp prison, which housed convicted terrorists and political detainees.

Home Minister Muhyiddin Yassin told reporters the government would wait for the Prevention of Terrorism Board to decide Yazid’s fate.

Muhyiddin said the board would meet next month to examine details of Yazid’s detention.

“I have not come to the final decision, I just reviewed the matter and the two-year detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) is likely to end soon,” Muhyiddin said, according to state news agency Bernama.

“Regardless, there is a procedure before the final decision is made through a single board where it will look at circumstances during the detention period and how he (Yazid) has behaved, whether he has improved or not,” he said. “This will be looked at and then the decision will be made.”



Indonesia: JAD Poses Renewed Threat to Bali

OE Watch Commentary: Indonesia’s popular tourist island of Bali suffered two of the country’s most severe terrorist attacks in 2002 and 2005, but has since been relatively peaceful. However, according to the excerpted article from the local *Tribun News*, a recent terrorist threat to the island was thwarted after two members of Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD) were arrested in Bali, for planning to carry out attacks. The arrest of the two JAD members, who were a father and son pair, followed an earlier attack in October by a radicalized JAD member who stabbed a high-level government official. Therefore, the article indicates the security services devoted extra attention to this Bali-based duo.

While the 2002 and 2005 Bali bombings involved sophistication and caused numerous deaths, the article’s description of the arrested individuals suggests terrorists in Indonesia are no longer capable of the same scale of attacks as more than a decade ago. The stabbing of the government official earlier in October involved only a knife; and in this case the suspects only held arrows and a modified gun. Therefore, they would have been incapable of a large-scale operation even if they carried out their mission. According to a source interviewed by *Tribun News*, there was, however, additional information the security services had not yet released.

Finally, the article also demonstrates linkages between terrorist networks in Indonesia. The individual who stabbed the high-level government official, for example, claimed his teacher in JAD was called Abu Zee. The article then notes it is suspected that this teacher, Abu Zee, was also a relative of the latest two arrested suspects in Bali. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



The Bali bombing memorial.

Source: Jorge Láscar from Melbourne, Australiavia Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Bali_bombing_memorial_\(16702974500\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Bali_bombing_memorial_(16702974500).jpg), CC BY 2.0

“It is suspected that the perpetrators were affiliated with the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) in Indonesia and the network is spreading in various regions, including in Bali.”

Source: “Densus 88 Tangkap 2 Terduga Teroris di Bali (Two members of the Anshorut Daulah (JAD) network were arrested in Bali),” *Bali Tribun News*, 11 October 2019. <https://bali.tribunnews.com/2019/10/11/breaking-news-densus-88-tangkap-2-terduga-teroris-di-bali-terkait-kasus-penyerangan-wiranto>

Two members of the Jamaah Anshorut Daulah (JAD) network were arrested in Bali region. This was stated by the Head of Bali Police Public Relations, Senior Commissioner Hengky Widjaja. It is known that the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, Wiranto, was stabbed by Syahril Alamsyah alias Abu Rara suspected of being exposed to radical understanding. It is suspected that these perpetrators were affiliated with JAD in Indonesia and the network is spreading in various regions, including in Bali. Meanwhile, a source from the Bali Tribune at the Bali Regional Police said that both of them had prepared materials to carry out terrorist acts in Bali. “Lots of evidence exists. There were arrows and modified guns. The information is a lot,” said a source of the Bali Tribune. Previously, details have not been provided since the time of arrest about these two suspected terrorists. However, the terrorist suspects are related to Fazri Pahlawan alias Abu Zee Ghuroba, leader of JAD Bekasi.



A New Domestically Produced Service Rifle in Pakistan?

OE Watch Commentary: The government of Pakistan has been looking to replace the current service rifle for its armed forces for the past few years and as the accompanying excerpted article reports, it may have taken a step forward in this process. The article from *Quwa.org*, a website with defense news on Pakistan, reports how “Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) revealed three new firearms in its product catalogue,” including the PK18 and PK21. The author notes several aspects of the PK18 and points out how POF is marketing the rifle as “ergonomic, modular, accurate and highly reliable in most difficult operational conditions.” The article does not mention it, but if chosen, the PK18 would apparently replace the Heckler & Koch G3 currently in service.

The author also points out how the PK21 appears to be a “Kalashnikov variant” and that while POF labeled it as an “AK-103 in parenthesis” during a recent exhibition, “no licensed production agreement is in place between the Kalashnikov Concern and POF.” The announcement of the development of the PK18 and PK21 comes a few months after the Pakistani government failed to reach an agreement with Kalashnikov Concern for the purchase of a modern variant of a Kalashnikov rifle, partly due to the efforts of the Indian government to block the deal (see: “India and Pakistan: Deal or No Deal for Russian Rifles,” *OE Watch*, September 2019). The PK21 would presumably replace the Type 56 rifle currently in service.

Lastly, the author mentions that in order to produce the amount of rifles needed to replace the G3 and/or the Type 56, “POF will need access to polymers and other materials as well as a highly precise machining equipment.” The author also notes how a few years ago POF “requested \$250 million US (spread over five years) to modernize its facilities, especially as 58% of its machinery is now over 30 years of age.” It is not mentioned if this budget request was granted, but the appearance of the PK18 and PK21 could indicate the Pakistani government put some effort toward this. While it is unknown when a decision on selecting a new service rifle will be made, the article shows that the government appears to be trying to move forward to produce a rifle on its own. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



Pakistani soldier carrying the G3A4 variant after Swat Operation at the highest point in the Swat valley on May 12, 2009.
Source: Al Jazeera English via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raising_the_flag_in_Swat_-_Flickr_-_Al_Jazeera_English.jpg, CC BY-SA 2.0

“It is unclear if the Pakistan Army will opt for the PK18 and/or PK21 for its standard-issue firearms requirements.”

Source: Bilal Khan, “Pakistan Ordnance Factories Reveals New PK18 and PK21 Assault Rifles,” *Quwa*, 31 October 2019.
<https://quwa.org/2019/10/31/pakistan-ordnance-factories-reveals-new-pk18-and-pk21-assault-rifles/>

Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) revealed three new firearms in its product catalogue: the PK18 assault rifle, PK21 submachine gun (SMG), and POF-10 pistol.

POF is marketing the PK18 as a 7.62×51 mm gas operated assault rifle...the PK18 has a total weight of 3.8 kg and effective range of 400 m to 600 m. It has a muzzle velocity of 780-820 m/second, and each of the PK18’s magazines can carry 20 rounds.

POF states that the PK18 is “ergonomic, modular, accurate and highly reliable in most difficult operational conditions.”...

The PK21 is a 7.62×39 mm assault rifle.

It appears that the PK21 is a Kalashnikov variant, and though POF labels it as an AK-103 in parenthesis, no licensed production agreement is in place between the Kalashnikov Concern and POF...

The PK18 appears to be based on the AR-platform and, given the availability of marketing materials, the closest to availability. It is unclear if the Pakistan Army will opt for the PK18 and/or PK21 for its standard-issue firearms requirements...

For full-scale production, POF will need access to polymers and other materials as well as a highly precise machining equipment. In fact, in November 2017 POF requested \$250 million US (spread over five years) to modernize its facilities, especially as 58% of its machinery is now over 30 years of age.

These constraints have likely affected its sharp drop in exports in 2018-2019, which stood at \$7.13 million US (from \$58.15 million US in 2017-2018 and \$67.80 million US in 2016-2017).



Russia's Increasing Military Presence in Libya

OE Watch Commentary: Libya has been in turmoil since 2011, when Gaddafi was overthrown and killed in an uprising after four decades in power. Since then, two rival centers of power have emerged in the country: one in Tobruk in eastern Libya, and one in Tripoli in western Libya. In the east, Khalifa Haftar heads what he calls the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), formerly the Libyan National Army (LNA), with support from the UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In the west, the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) enjoys UN support as well as military backing from Turkey.

In this conflict, Russia's position has generally been to maintain contacts with authorities in both Tripoli and Tobruk, while staying in the background in providing covert support to Haftar but refraining from any official military support. According to the accompanying passages, recent developments suggest a departure from Russia's previous approach, while still maintaining some level of ambiguity for deniability.

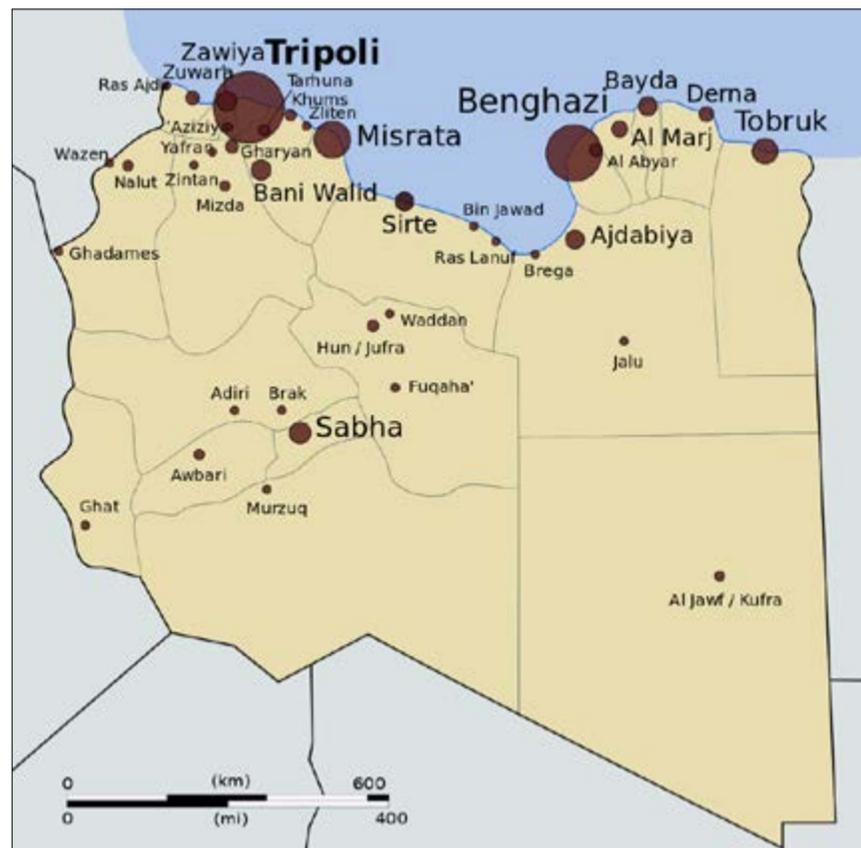
The first two accompanying passages discuss reports that, in recent months, Moscow-linked paramilitaries belonging to the Wagner Group have appeared in the frontlines of the Libyan conflict, apparently to support Haftar's stalled assault on Tripoli. According to the passages, Russia's help includes skilled snipers, Sukhoi jets and precision-guided artillery, as well as around 200 fighters. While some draw parallels between this and Russia's strategy in Syria, the third passage contrasts Russia's use of mercenaries in Libya and Syria. The author notes, "In Syria, the private military companies have frequently acted as land assault formations within the Russian troop contingent — a non-traditional role for such structures. In Libya, they are not bearing these functions as Russia does not have an actual military presence there."

Russia's use of private security companies and the fact that they don't wear uniforms, allows Russia deniability, as seen in the fourth passage from *The Moscow Times*, where Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabov rejects these allegations and says, "We're acting in the interest of Libyan [conflict] settlement. We support the appropriate efforts [to achieve this], including through the UN. We're in dialogue with those who... influence the situation."

The fifth passage, from *Middle East Eye* features comments by an official in the Tripoli-based GNA, who claims that "Russia [is] fuelling the country's civil war" and providing the local chapter of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) an opportunity to regroup.

Russia's ultimate goals in this strategy, according to the passages, likely include access to oil reserves and permanent access to a North African port or base, with influence over sea routes to the entrance to the Suez. In addition, the final passage from a Turkish source notes that Russia eventually aims to install a friendly Minister of Defense in Libya, to increase its military and political influence in the region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“Around 200 Russians who have entered the conflict in recent weeks likely belong to the Wagner Group, a private military contracting firm with links to the Kremlin...”



Map of Libya.

Source: Rafy, en:User:Interchange88 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Libyan_Uprising.svg, Public Domain.

Source: Jack Detsch, "Congress moves to sanction Russians for mercenary surge in Libya," *Al Monitor*, 18 November 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/11/congress-move-sanction-russia-mercenary-surge-libya.html>

The proposed sanctions come amid reports that Russia has begun to add mercenaries to the front lines of the conflict to support eastern Libya warlord Khalifa Hifter's stalled offensive to take Tripoli; the help reportedly includes snipers, Sukhoi jets and precision-guided artillery. Around 200 Russians who have entered the conflict in recent weeks likely belong to the Wagner Group, a private military contracting firm with links to the Kremlin; some believe the move is linked to corralling the country's oil supplies.

"Russia is very interested in oil reserves, it is very interested in restoring previous contracts, it will be interested in supporting the side that can deliver that," said Nikolay Kozhanov of St. Petersburg, Russia, who is a senior research fellow at the Moscow-based Institute of World Economy and International Relations. "It maintains good contacts with this camp and that camp trying to decide where the situation is going."



Continued: Russia's Increasing Military Presence in Libya

Source: Guma el-Gamaty, "Militias and mercenaries: Haftar's army in Libya," *Middle East Eye*, 7 November 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/militias-and-mercenaries-haftars-army-libya>

But the most significant addition to Haftar's list of mercenaries comprises fighters belonging to the Russian Wagner Group, the Kremlin-linked private security company that was also involved in Russia's intervention in Syria. Some 200 highly professional Wagner fighters are believed to have arrived in Libya in recent months to support Haftar's assault on Tripoli.

According to the Moscow Times, between 10 and 35 Russian mercenaries might have died while fighting in Libya recently. Photographs of what appear to be Russian fighters in areas of combat south of Tripoli have been shared widely on social media.

Source: Kirill Semenov, "Sarraj visit to Sochi exposes rival Russian factions on Libya policy," *Al Monitor*, 28 October 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/russia-libya-sarraj-hifter-tripoli-pmes.html>

The scope of their [Russian private military companies'] activities in Libya and Syria is substantially different. In Syria, the private military companies has frequently acted as land assault formations within the Russian troop contingent — a non-traditional role for such structures.

In Libya, they are not bearing these functions as Russia does not have an actual military presence there. Thus, some private military companies came to Libya under contract for specific jobs — for instance, the RSB-Group was responsible for mine removal. There were other covert, but traditional actions, of private military companies, such as providing security for oil facilities, guarding high-level government officials and training personnel.

Moreover, Russian specialists repair damaged weapons and equipment of the Libyan National Army troops; transport aircraft belonging to semi-legal corporations deliver goods for this structure.

Source: "Russia Denies Military Presence in Libya," *The Moscow Times*, 7 November 2019. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/11/07/russia-denies-military-presence-in-libya-a68073>

"I categorically reject speculation of this kind ... "We're acting in the interest of Libyan [conflict] settlement. We support the appropriate efforts [to achieve this], including through the UN. We're in dialogue with those who in one way or another influence the situation," he [Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov] added.

Source: "Wherever Wagner goes destruction happens': Libya's GNA slams Russian role in conflict," *Middle East Eye*, 10 November 2019. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/wherever-wagner-goes-destruction-happens-libyan-govt-slams-russian-role-conflict>

Libya's UN-recognised government has accused Russia of fuelling the country's civil war by sending mercenaries to back eastern commander Khalifa Haftar.

Fathi Bashagha, the interior minister of the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), called on the US to help resolve the conflict, adding that the unrest was providing the local chapter of the Islamic State group (IS) an opportunity to regroup.

"The Russians have intervened to pour fuel on the fire and enhance the crisis rather than find a solution," Bashagha told Bloomberg on Saturday.

"The proof is their deployment of Wagner to Libya. They had sent it to Syria before, and central Africa, and wherever Wagner goes destruction happens," he added.

Source: "Rusya'nin Libya'daki stratejisi askeri varligin ötesine mi geçiyor? (Is Russia's strategy in Libya going beyond a military presence?)," *Anadolu Ajansi*, 26 October 2018. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/rusyanin-libya-stratejisi-askeri-varligin-otesine-mi-geciyor/1294145#!>

Russia's military presence in Libya cannot be expressed in certain terms. Moscow's military activities are not clear. This uncertainty is due to Russia's use of private security companies and the fact that they don't wear uniforms.

...

What's behind the Moscow government's inclusion in the international community's efforts to bring peace to Libya is its goal to install Hifter or someone close to Hifter as Defense Minister in the new Libya government expected to be established after elections. Russia's close ally Hifter is also allied with Egypt and the UAE. Thus, these two countries would support an increase in Russia's military and political influence in Libya.



AI-Powered Surveillance: All Eyes on Dubai and Abu Dhabi

OE Watch Commentary: To great domestic fanfare, the UAE recently announced the launch of the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) in Abu Dhabi. MBZUAI will be “the first graduate-level, research-based artificial intelligence (AI) university in the world.” With its first cohort set to enroll in the fall of 2020, the university will offer master’s and doctoral degrees in machine learning, computer vision and natural language processing. It will also provide “full scholarships, monthly stipends, health insurance and accommodation to all students.” Over 3,200 prospective students applied in the first week, mostly “from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt, India and China.” The university’s applied partner is an Abu Dhabi-based research lab called the Inception Institute of Artificial Intelligence (IIAI), which will “serve as a principal partner for collaborative research.” One of the IIAI’s specialties is video understanding, which its website explains as a technology that “can be deployed for face detection and annotation, object identification and tracking, scene analysis and tagging, human behavior analysis and content enhancement” (<http://www.inceptioniai.org/about>).



Dubai Police Cars.

Source: Abdullah AlBargan via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/albargan/10706671516>, CC BY-ND 2.0

Abu Dhabi is not the only emirate interested in AI-powered surveillance technology. The neighboring emirate of Dubai is rapidly increasing its own capabilities in this domain, as it seeks to be fully retrofitted as a “smart city” by 2021. Dubai’s police force has embraced AI with enthusiasm, establishing an internal AI department and unveiling its own strategic AI plan, which stipulates that “by 2031, artificial intelligence (AI) methods will be used 100 per cent in all areas of police.” To that end, last summer it began a “smart patrol” program that includes “installing vehicle panel recognition, panel control, contact chip, fingerprint recognition, electronic tracking devices, road monitoring systems, driver recognition readers and smart screens” on “2,000 civil, service and military patrols.” According to the plan, “by the end of 2020, all vehicles, motorcycles and boats” will have this technology installed, and the data they gather will be transferred “to special operations rooms to be processed using AI technology.” An even larger data source for Dubai’s AI-powered police force comes through a program called “Oyoon” (eyes), consisting of thousands of cameras that “relay live images of security breaches to the Central Command Centre” and which last year led to 319 arrests using “automatic facial recognition technology.” The program, according to the final accompanying passage, gives police “the ability to digitally track criminals around the city just by uploading their mugshot into a database.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“... AI will give surveillance cameras digital brains to match their eyes, letting them analyze live video with no human intervention...”

Source: “World’s first artificial intelligence university to open in Abu Dhabi,” *The National*, 16 October 2019. <https://www.thenational.ae/business/technology/world-s-first-artificial-intelligence-university-to-open-in-abu-dhabi-1.924350>

The Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), a new graduate-level AI research institution in Abu Dhabi, is accepting applications for its first masters and PhD programmes this month, with classes scheduled to begin in September 2020... To compete with more than a hundred graduate degree programmes in AI – mainly in North America, China and the UK – MBZUAI is offering full scholarships, monthly stipends, health insurance and accommodation to all students... MBZUAI has partnered with the Abu Dhabi-based Inception Institute of Artificial Intelligence (IIAI), an applied research lab, to supervise PhD students and curriculum development. IIAI will also serve as a principal partner for collaborative research. The university will offer master of science and PhD programmes in three of the fastest-growing areas of AI: machine learning, computer vision and natural language processing.

Source: “Over 3,200 students apply to world’s first AI university,” *Khaleej Times*, 27 October 2019. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/abu-dhabi/over-3200-students-apply-to-worlds-first-ai-university>

Over 3,200 graduate students have applied to the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI) within the first week since its launch on October 16... The majority of applications were received from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Egypt, India and China.

Source: “Dubai Police Reveals Strategic AI Plan,” *Dubai Police*, 21 December 2017. <https://preview.tinyurl.com/t2nmsom>

As per the strategic plan, by 2031, artificial intelligence (AI) methods will be used 100 per cent in all areas of police including security, forecasting of crime, traffic accidents and developing the best techniques and AI tools that serve the needs of the people, locally and globally.

Source: “Dubai Police to develop 2,000 smart patrols,” *Gulf News*, 22 June 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/dubai-police-to-develop-2000-smart-patrols-1.64775696>

The Smart Patrols project includes installing vehicle panel recognition, panel control, contact chip, fingerprint recognition, electronic tracking devices, road monitoring systems, driver recognition readers and smart screens... The project will be implemented in two phases. The first one will cover 2,000 civil, service and military patrols and will be completed this year while the second phase will cover all vehicles, motorcycles and boats, which is due to be completed by 2020.

Source: “How Dubai’s AI cameras helped arrest 319 suspects last year,” *Gulf News*, 18 March 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/how-dubais-ai-cameras-helped-arrest-319-suspects-last-year-1.62750675>

Thousands of CCTV cameras in Dubai helped in the arrest of 319 suspects last year under the Oyoon (Eyes) project that employs artificial intelligence (AI), a Dubai Police official said on Monday... Dubai Police said AI will give surveillance cameras digital brains to match their eyes, letting them analyse live video with no human intervention... The Oyoon committee includes strategic partners from the government sector such as the State Security Agency, Security Industry Regulatory Agency, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, Dubai Municipality, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, Roads and Transport Authority, Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre, Dubai Smart Office, among other entities.



Saudi Arabia and the UAE: Space Ambitions in the Arabian Peninsula

OE Watch Commentary: UAE media was recently abuzz with reporting on Emirati astronaut Hazzaa al-Mansoori's weeklong trip to the International Space Station (ISS), the first of its kind by an Arab astronaut. Since establishing a government space agency in 2014, the UAE has worked hard to promote its space ambitions. Its National Space Policy, published in 2016, calls for building a "strong and sustainable UAE space sector that supports and protects national interests and vital industries." The country's signature ambition, called the "Mars 2117" project, "aims to build the knowledge and scientific capabilities that will enable the UAE to realize humankind's universal dream of the very first sustainable colony on the red planet within the next 100 years." Some of the knowledge and capabilities needed to colonize Mars, such as atmospheric manipulation and 3-D printing, have more mundane applications and can be used to "address the challenges of food, water and energy security on Earth." Next year, the UAE intends to launch a probe to Mars (the "Hope Probe") that will gather sufficient information to "draw a clear and comprehensive picture of the Martian climate." (<https://www.mbrsc.ae/mars-2117>; <https://www.mbrsc.ae/emirates-mars-mission>).

The UAE is hardly the only Arab country with space ambitions. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria and Morocco all have relatively developed programs, at least in terms of orbital satellites. In March 2019, the UAE established an "Arab Space Cooperation Group," which, in addition to the aforementioned countries, includes Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon and Sudan. The group's first project is a collaboration to build a satellite in the UAE. The satellite is to be called "813," in reference to the first year of the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun, who presided over a golden era of the Muslim Empire. Already last year, Dubai's Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center (MBRSC) claims to have fully developed and assembled a remote sensing satellite – "100% Made in the UAE" per a tweet by the ruler of Dubai. The satellite, called "KhalifaSat," was successfully launched from Japan's Tanegashima Space Center in October 2018.

Saudi Arabia's national space agency, the Saudi Arabian Space Commission, was only established late last year. It is led by Sultan bin Salman, the son of the current Saudi king and half-brother of the kingdom's de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman. Sultan bin Salman is famous for being the first Arab astronaut in space, having served as a crew member on a weeklong mission aboard the Discovery Space Shuttle back in 1985.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's mid-October visit to Saudi Arabia gave a boost to the burgeoning relationship between the Saudi Space Commission and its Russian counterpart (Roscosmos). During the visit, the two agencies signed a "statement of intent" to cooperate in the fields of "manned space flights" and "satellite navigation systems." The accompanying article from *Sputnik* cites the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) as saying there have also been talks of a project to "launch a satellite from Saudi Arabia into orbit using interesting Russian technologies." According to the article, Roscosmos and Saudi Arabia's King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) have been collaborating on using the GLONASS navigation system. Perhaps most interestingly, it claims that "Moscow has also considered the possibility of using the territory of the Kingdom as a potential location to host an optical station for an automated warning system that would track possible dangers in near-Earth space." **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

"...Moscow has also considered the possibility of using the territory of the Kingdom as a potential location to host an optical station for an automated warning system that would track possible dangers in near-Earth space..."

Source: "National Space Policy of the United Arab Emirates." *UAE Government*, September 2016. https://space.gov.ae/Documents/PublicationPDFFiles/UAE_National_Space_Policy_English.pdf

The Ultimate Goal of the National Space Policy

To build a strong and sustainable UAE space sector that supports and protects national interests and vital industries, contributes to the diversification and growth of the economy, boosts UAE specialized competencies, develops scientific and technological capabilities, engrains the culture of innovation and national pride, and strengthens UAE's status and role regionally and globally.

Source: "UAE launches Arab Space Collaboration Group," *Khaleej Times*, 19 March 2019. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae-launches-arab-space-collaboration-group>

The UAE has launched a regional space collaboration programme that aims to empower the Arab world in the global space industry... "The group's first project will be a satellite built by Arab scientists in the UAE. I personally believe in Arab talents," Sheikh Mohammed tweeted. The satellite will be called '813' and has been given that name to highlight an important year in the Arab history. "We called the new satellite '813' in reference to the date that marked the beginning of prosperity for the House of Wisdom in Baghdad under the reign of Al Ma'mun. Resembling our region, the House embraced scientists, translated notable texts and produced scientific capabilities," Sheikh Mohammed said in a tweet.

Source: "As it happened: Launch of UAE KhalifaSat," *Gulf News*, 29 October 2019. <https://gulfnews.com/going-out/society/as-it-happened-launch-of-uae-khalifasat-1.2294850>

Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, said in a tweet: "A new historic day for the UAE. The launch of 'KhalifaSat' is the first Arabic satellite 100% Emirati-made. A milestone for UAE as Emiratis proved their ability, maturity, knowledge and ambition, joining the global race with our heads up."

Source: "Ad Astra: Russian Fund Eyes Launching Satellite Into Orbit From Saudi Arabia," *Sputnik*, 14 October 2019. <https://sputniknews.com/world/201910141077042849-ad-astra-russian-fund-eyes-launching-satellite-into-orbit-from-saudi-arabia/>

Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, said in a tweet: "A new historic day for the UAE. The launch of 'KhalifaSat' is the first Arabic satellite 100% Emirati-made. A milestone for UAE as Emiratis proved their ability, maturity, knowledge and ambition, joining the global race with our heads up."



Commerce, Rail and Electricity Returning to Syria's Euphrates River Valley with Help from Iraq and Iran

OE Watch Commentary: The governments of Iran, Syria and Iraq are all seeking to grow their economies through increased trade. The accompanying passages from local Arabic-language news sources suggest that trilateral efforts are underway to revitalize the Syrian-Iraqi Euphrates borderlands, which are a key node in the strategic land corridor linking Iran to Syria via Iraq. They also shed light on some local-level efforts.

In late September 2019, the border crossing between al-Bukamal and al-Qa'im, linking Syria and Iraq along the Euphrates River was reopened. Formerly under ISIS control, the area was captured by the Syrian and Iraqi militaries in November 2017, in a coordinated campaign that relied heavily on Syrian loyalist militias and Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). The first accompanying article, from the news website *al-Modon*, reports that commercial traffic has been minimal in the first month of operation. Although Syrian customs personnel has been deployed to the crossing, the article claims that the al-Tafuf Brigade, an Iraqi PMF formation (PMF Brigade 13) affiliated with the Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala, is in de-facto control.

In the meantime, Syrian government efforts to re-electrify al-Bukamal and surrounding villages are underway. The Syrian Middle Euphrates River Valley (MERV) has been cut off from the national grid for much of the conflict. Portions of the provincial capital Deir ez-Zor were reconnected earlier this year, and the article describes how in al-Bukamal, the state-run electrical company “faces great difficulties in its work due to the magnitude of the destruction in the area.”

At the 19th International Electricity Exhibition held in Tehran last November, the Syrian and Iranian ministers of electricity signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) granting Iran broad control over the rebuilding and upgrading of the Syrian electricity sector. Syrian officials have previously stated that over half of the country's electrical production and distribution infrastructure was affected by the conflict. Aleppo and the MERV were hardest hit, as the accompanying images attest. MAPNA Group, an Iranian industrial construction conglomerate, recently began building a 540-megawatt gas-fired combined-cycle power plant in Lattakia. Plans are in place for Iranian entities to build several smaller plants along the coast and rehabilitate or replace existing plants in Aleppo, Homs and Deir ez-Zor. The recently signed Syrian-Iranian MoU also stipulated plans “to create a trilateral electrical link between Syria, Iran and Iraq, through a joint partnership that conducts the necessary studies and technical preparations.” Iraq has recently become a major importer of Iranian electricity, and the two countries signed their own bilateral agreement at the Tehran electricity exhibition, in this case to synchronize their power grids.

According to a recent study published by the Syrian Ministry of Transport and cited in the passage from the daily newspaper *al-Watan*, work is also moving ahead on rebuilding the railway connecting the Syrian city of Deir ez-Zor to al-Bukamal. The broader goal, as the article notes, is to lay tracks for a “strategic transit corridor for Syria and Iraq,” linking Iran's Imam Khomeini Port on the Persian Gulf to the Iranian-controlled Syrian port of Lattakia on the Mediterranean Sea. **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...The rail line is part of an international east-west transportation axis from Syria's ports via Aleppo to Iraq, Iran and East Asia. It represents a strategic transit corridor for Syria and Iraq...”



Middle East at Night (2012), NASA.

Source: Allameh https://eoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/90000/90100/middleeast_vir_2012_lrg.jpg, Public Domain.



Middle East at Night (2016), NASA.

Source: https://eoimages.gsfc.nasa.gov/images/imagerecords/90000/90100/middleeast_vir_2016_lrg.jpg, Public Domain



Continued: Commerce, Rail and Electricity Returning to Syria's Euphrates River Valley with Help from Iraq and Iran

Source: بعد شهر من افتتاحه: معبر البوكمال..للحجاج والمليشيات الإيرانية
 "A Month After Opening, the al-Bukamal Crossing... for Pilgrims and Iranian Militias," *al-Modon*, 13 November 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/vxsjsnl>

Al-Modon's sources revealed that only 10 trucks had crossed from Iraq in the month since the crossing was opened. The sources were unable to determine the cargo of the trucks and whether they were of a purely commercial nature or military equipment. Despite the cancellation of so-called entry cards required of Syrian vehicles entering Iraq prior to 2011, Syrian merchants have not been encouraged to export their goods through this crossing... A source at Syrian customs recently discussed the assignment of 148 employees to support work at the crossing, mostly as patrolmen and squad chiefs. They were sent outside of the normal schedule of deployments to support customs work, in the expectation of improved traffic and transport of goods and materials. However, al-Modon's sources indicated that the Al-Tafuf Brigade of the Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala controls the Syrian side of the crossing. The Imam Hussein Shrine here refers to an "institution" focused on pilgrimage to the holy shrines, and is responsible for the spread of Shi'ism in Syria and Iraq.

Source: وصول معدات كهربائية إلى البوكمال تمهيداً لعودة "التيار" إليها
 "Arrival of Electrical Machinery to Albu Kamal Preparing for the Return of Electricity," *Snack Syrian*, 27 October 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/wkad4of>

According to Engineer Khaled Lotfi, the director of the Deir ez-Zor General Company for Electricity, some of the electrical equipment and transformers needed to restore electricity to the city of al-Bukamal and its countryside have arrived at the company in conjunction with electricity projects and workshops in the city, currently focused on the village of Sabikhan. According to Lotfi, the company's work and workshops are going as planned, but it faces great difficulties in its work due to the magnitude of the destruction in the area, which has been without electricity for seven years. In a call with Snack Syrian, he refused to disclose the numbers and types of equipment that the company had obtained, merely indicating that the costs are under study. State electricity reached government facilities in the city of Deir ez-Zor in March of this year, and has returned to select neighborhoods, including al-Qusur, al-Muaziffin and al-Joura. In terms of whether al-Bukamal and its outskirts will be the new recipients of government electricity, he said "God Willing."

Source: سورية وإيران توقعان مذكرة تفاهم لتوطين التكنولوجيا وصناعة التجهيزات الكهربائية في سورية
 "Syria and Iran Sign a Memorandum of Understanding to Localize Technology and Build Electrical Equipment in Syria," *Syrian News Agency (SANA)*, 2 November 2019. <https://sana.sy/?p=1046439>

The Memorandum of Understanding... includes work to rebuild Syria's electrical grid and to localize the manufacture of electrical equipment. It also includes building power plants, transmission and distribution networks and rebuilding and reducing the damage to the distribution grid in terms of engineering, operation and customer services. The Memorandum of Understanding provides for joint investment and the exchange of technical information for power plant construction and renewable energy, as well as the reconstruction, rehabilitation and upgrading of power plants. It also includes operation and maintenance, securing spare parts for plants, repairing electrical transformers and producing electrical products and devices, giving priority to the production of smart equipment, transformers and cables. The memorandum also included the work to create a trilateral electrical link between Syria, Iran and Iraq, through a joint partnership that conducts the necessary studies and technical preparations.

Source: إنشاء خط حديدي بين دير الزور والبوكمال مواصفات عالمية ... دراسة لربط ميناء الإمام الخميني بميناء اللاذقية
 "Building of a Railway Line Between Deir ez-Zor and Albu Kamal," *al-Watan*, 3 November 2019. <http://alwatan.sy/archives/218971>

The Ministry of Transport revealed that the 142.8-kilometer long railway linking Deir ez-Zor - al-Tabiyyah - al-Bukamal is under construction using modern technical specifications in terms of speed and infrastructure. It noted that the railway is designed as a double line, with investment and execution completed for the 30 kilometers to the al-Tabiyyah station. The groundwork and industrial work all the way to al-Bukamal is 96% complete and there are 6 main stations on this line... The report noted that the rail line is part of an international east-west transportation axis from Syria's ports via Aleppo to Iraq, Iran and East Asia. It represents a strategic transit corridor for Syria and Iraq... The ministry revealed the discussion of a project linking the Imam Khomeini Port, located on the Iranian side of Gulf, with the port of Latakia on the Mediterranean Sea, in addition to a 32-kilometer project linking the Iranian city of Shalmagh with the Iraqi city of Basra, to be implemented and funded by Iran, and which will end by linking the Imam Khomeini Port with Basra and Latakia.



Russia's Position on Syrian Kurds

OE Watch Commentary: Recent statements by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have led some analysts to wonder whether the new protector of the Kurds in Syria will be Russia. While two of the accompanying articles argue that Russia might push for granting legal status to the Kurds in Syria, the final article looks at Russia's position on the Kurds in a historical context.

The author of the first accompanying article from pro-government Turkish daily *Hürriyet* predicts that Russia will be advocating for Kurdish rights in the near future, and this should not come as a surprise. The author reaches this conclusion by analyzing President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov's recent statements. On 22 October, President Putin



Meeting on Russia's Armed Forces actions in Syria.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meeting_on_Russia%E2%80%99s_Armed_Forces_actions_in_Syria_\(03\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meeting_on_Russia%E2%80%99s_Armed_Forces_actions_in_Syria_(03).jpg), CC BY 4.0

said, “an extensive dialogue between the Syrian government and the Kurds living in northeastern Syria should be initiated. Obviously, the rights and interests of the Kurds who are an integral part of the multi-ethnic Syrian nation can only be addressed through an inclusive dialogue.” President Putin has also previously made a statement pointing out that “the Kurds in Syria have the right to participate in all political processes and find their own place in the future of Syria.” Similarly, on 21 October, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stated Russia's objective is the legalization of all Kurdish groups in Syria in accordance with the Syrian constitution. He stated that “a dialogue between the Kurds and Damascus is necessary.” He continued saying Russia believes “this is the best way to resolve the current situation.”

The second article from *Kurdistan24*, a news portal broadcasting from the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq provides a Kurdish view on the Russian position regarding the situation of the Kurds in Syria. The article provides analysis from two Kurdish academics, both of whom share a view similar to that of the first article which states that Russia is likely to push for legal status and rights for Kurds in Syria. According to one of the Kurdish academics, Russian support for the Kurds to find a solution with Assad will further loosen the Kurdish alliance with the United States, and strengthen Russia's position in Syria.

The final excerpted passage from Turkish daily *Ahval* states that Russian support for the Kurds to obtain legal status and their rights is tactical rather than being based on a long-term Russian strategy to support the Kurds within Syria. The author provides the example of the short-lived Republic of Mahabad that was established by the Kurds with the support of Russians in 1946 in Iran. As the article states, Russian intent was to support the Kurds in carving away territory from Iran by declaring independence first and then incorporating this territory into the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. He claims that the ultimate goal was not to support Kurds in their struggle to obtain rights and sovereignty, rather it was purely to advance Russian interests. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“...the Kurds in Syria have the right to participate in all political processes and find their own place in the future of Syria.”

-Russian President Vladimir Putin



Continued: Russia's Position on Syrian Kurds

Source: Sedat Ergin, "Suriyeli Kürtlerin yeni hamisi Putin mi? (Is Putin the new protector of the Syrian Kurds?)," *Hürriyet*, 24 October 2019. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/sedat-ergin/suriyeli-kurtlerin-yeni-hamisi-putin-mi-41357683>

...another framework in which the status of Syrian Kurds will be shaped in the new period will be the negotiation process between the Assad regime and the PYD/YPG with the encouragement of Russia. Russia has already played a decisive role in the dialogue between the regime, Syrian Kurds and the PYD/YPG in this context, as it did between Ankara and Damascus.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, a day before the Sochi summit announced the official position of his country as follows: "For us, the target should be: A threat should not come from Syrian territories to neither Turkey nor to any other countries... For this reason, to ensure there are no illegal armed groups in Syria, all Kurdish structures should be legalized in accordance with the Syrian constitution. To achieve this goal, dialogue between the Kurds and Damascus is necessary. We believe this is the right way to resolve the current situation.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin said...an extensive dialogue between the Syrian government and the Kurds living in northeastern Syria should be initiated. Obviously, the rights and interests of the Kurds who are an integral part of the multi-ethnic Syrian nation can only be addressed through an inclusive dialogue.

Putin stated that... the Kurds in Syria have the right to participate in all political processes and find their own place in the future of Syria.

As a result, it is understood that the Kremlin will encourage the Assad regime and Kurdish groups to reach a consensus in parallel with the Constitutional Committee.

In the new era, we should be ready to find a Putin that also advocates for the rights of Syrian Kurds.

Source: Cesim İlhan, "Rusya Kürtlere statü verilmesi hakkında ne düşünüyor? (What does Russia think about granting status to Kurds?)," *Kurdistan24.net*, 29 October 2019. https://www.kurdistan24.net/tr/news/39d1c8da-d2d2-4233-8d13-bd62d30e8e82?fbclid=IwAR1vpMTsaNt_TZsXd2oJl3iFQEHRLAmXau6bycL952wcc4rOQS5I1pMOS7M

Experts say Russia will recognize the status of Kurds in Syria.

Kurdish politician and scholar Iqbal Durra, said Russia is trying to persuade the Syrian regime and Turkey to grant political status to the Kurds...

The reason is that if Russia is unable to broker an agreement between al-Assad and the Kurds, it will create an environment for a permanent US presence in the region. Russia thinks a [United States presence] will harm its own interests.

Source: Çetin Gürer, "Mahabad'dan Rojava'ya Rus oyunu (A Russian game from Mahabad to Rojava)," *ahvalnews.com*, 06 November 2019. <https://ahvalnews.com/tr/rusya/mahabaddan-rojavaya-rus-oyunu>

Looking back at the period of the Republic of Mahabad, we can see that Russia's current policy is no different than that of that period. In other words, Russia does not appear before the Kurds with a brand new policy today.

We can list the prominent points of the policies of the period for the Kurds as follows:

Russia seems to support the demand of the Kurds for [a legal] status tactically, but it does not support the demands of the Kurds strategically in the long run...

Russia does not support a unified Kurdish political structure, creating cliques such as "radicals" and "moderates" among the Kurdish parties.



Russia Facilitating Dialogue between Syrian Kurds and Damascus

OE Watch Commentary: The Turkish offensive into northern Syria led the Syrian Kurds to seek protection from the Assad regime and Russia. On 13 October, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced a Russian-brokered agreement with Damascus. Under the agreement, Assad's forces would move into major cities to support the Kurds against the attacks of the Turkish military and allied rebel groups that Turkey refers to as the Syrian National Army (SNA) and re-establish the Syrian government's authority in Kurdish areas. The accompanying excerpted articles discuss the Russian-facilitated dialogue between Syrian Kurds and Damascus.



Vladimir Putin's visit to Khmeimim Air Base in Syria, 11 December 2017.

Source: Mil.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_visited_Khmeimim_Air_Base_in_Syria_\(2017-12-11\)_37.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_visited_Khmeimim_Air_Base_in_Syria_(2017-12-11)_37.jpg), CC BY 4.0

The first excerpted article from *Kurdistan24*, a news portal broadcasting from the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq, argues that despite reaching an agreement with Damascus, the SDF

continues to reject “plans by President Bashar al-Assad to bring autonomous Kurdish-controlled areas under his authority, or demands by Damascus to have the SDF join the Syrian army.” The article quotes Russian Ambassador to Iraq Maksim Maksimov as saying Russia always “encourages dialogue between Kurdish parties and Damascus.” The ambassador further notes that Russia supports the rights of Syrian Kurds and the terms of their rights to co-exist within Syria are “subject to the negotiations with the Syrian Government.” While Russia facilitates and encourages Kurds to continue to engage in a dialogue with Damascus, it has also acquiesced to Turkish pressure to exclude the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) from ongoing peace talks.

The second article discusses comments by Russia's special envoy to Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev who also said that Russia mediated a deal between the Kurds and the Assad regime. Apparently, the negotiations took place at the Russian Khmeimim Air Base in Syria.

The third article from left-leaning Turkish *Yeni Yaşam* newspaper discusses the SDC's willingness to engage in a dialogue with the Assad regime. As the article states, SDC perceives the Russian-facilitated military agreement between the SDF and the Assad regime as a good faith effort to build trust between the sides for further negotiations. Syria's President Bashar al-Assad already announced that while he wants to establish his government's authority in Kurdish areas, he would respect the realities on the ground. While Kurds have agreed to allow Syrian regime soldiers to enter cities in their self-declared autonomous region, the negotiations over the status of this region is ongoing. The article also quotes Aslambek Mozloyev from the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation as saying that Russia initially supported Turkey's efforts to exclude the Kurds from negotiations in Geneva to get the negotiations started as soon as possible. The next step will be finding a “resolution to the Kurdish problem.” Whatever Russia's real intent is regarding Syrian Kurds, it has strengthened its position in Syria and emerged as the main power broker on the ground. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“We always encourage the authorities in Damascus, and we met very often with the representatives of the Syrian Kurds in Moscow, discussed and informed them about our projects about this issue.”

- Maksim Maksimov, Russian Ambassador to Iraq



Continued: Russia Facilitating Dialogue between Syrian Kurds and Damascus

Source: Wladimir van Wilgenburg, “Ambassador: Moscow encouraged dialogue between Damascus and Syrian Kurdish parties,” *kurdistan24.net*, 06 November 2019. <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/5eadc334-f8ae-4271-9b22-f90e48d46c1e>

In early October, the SDF reached a deal with Damascus for national troops to counter the recent Turkish military incursion into northern Syria.

However, top Kurdish officials continue to reject plans by President Bashar al-Assad to bring autonomous Kurdish-controlled areas under his authority, or demands by Damascus to have the SDF join the Syrian army.

Ambassador Maksimov, however, said there is no other way to continue dialogue. “We always encourage the authorities in Damascus, and we met very often with the representatives of the Syrian Kurds in Moscow, discussed and informed them about our projects about this issue.”

Moreover, while the Kurdish National Council (KNC) was always part of the peace talks, and also the recently formed constitutional committee, the SDF-linked Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), and the Democratic Union Party (PYD), were always blocked from participation due to opposition from Turkey.

The Russian official added that there are already several Kurdish representatives in the constitutional committee formed in late September, referring to the KNC, which is part of the Turkish-backed Syrian opposition.

Source: “Rusya: Şam’la Kürtler arasında arabuluculuğu biz yaptık (Russia: We mediated between Damascus and Kurds),” *Gazeteduvar.com.tr*, 15 October 2019. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/dunya/2019/10/15/rusya-samla-kurtler-arasinda-arabuluculugu-biz-yaptik/>

Regarding Turkey’s operation into Syria, Russia issued statements back to back...

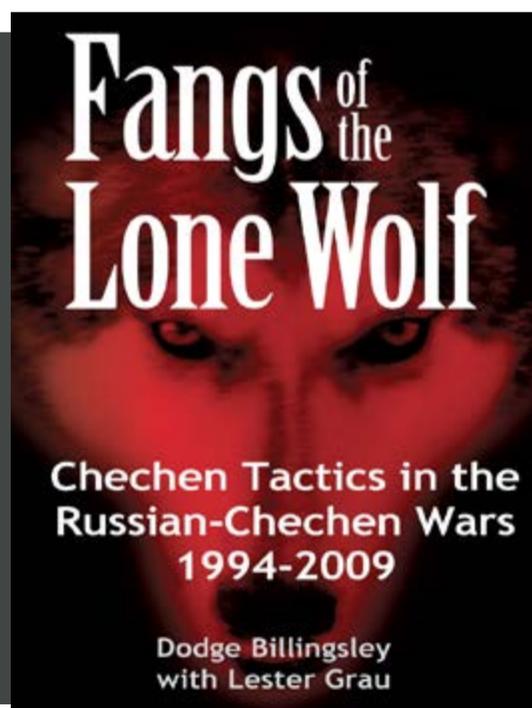
Russian leader Vladimir Putin’s Special Representative to Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, announced that they mediated the agreement between the Damascus administration and the Kurds.

Source: “DSM’den Esad’a ‘olumlu’ yanıt (A ‘positive’ response from SDC to Assad),” *Yeni Yaşam*, 30 October 2019. <http://yeniyasamgazetesil.com/dsm-den-esada-olumlu-yanit/>

The Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) issued a written statement on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s statements, saying that they were open to dialogue...

In an interview with state television, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said that his ultimate goal was re-establishment of state authority in Kurdish-controlled areas, but said that the new reality on the ground would be respected...

Aslambek Mozloyev, “As is known, during the initial process, Turkey was strongly opposed to the Kurds joining as a political party and Russia supported Turkey. Because the important thing was to organize the Geneva meeting. But the next process will be the resolution process of the Kurdish problem.”



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>



Turkey and the Question of Foreign ISIS Fighters

OE Watch Commentary: Turkey recently stepped up its operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) cells and captured hundreds of ISIS militants and their family members concurrently with its offensive against Kurdish militias in northern Syria. While some of these ISIS militants are Turkish citizens, a significant number of them are nationals of European countries. The issue of what to do with the foreign fighters has lingered for some time as thousands of them remain in detention centers or prisons across the Middle East including in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. The accompanying passages from two articles in *Al Monitor* provide insight into the future of ISIS fighters and sympathizers and Turkey's fight against them.



Al-Hol Camp, March 2019.

Source: VOA via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al-Hol_camp_March_2019.jpg, Public domain

According to the first article, Turkey faces challenges in repatriating foreign fighters to their countries of nationality because “most European nations do not want the fighters and some have even revoked citizenship for a handful of militants.” Recently Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu lambasted European countries for their reluctance to repatriate their nationals held in Turkish prisons regardless of being stripped of their citizenship. He noted that Turkey is “not a hotel for IS[IS] members” of any country. The article states that the reasons European countries are unwilling to repatriate their nationals are lack of resources of intelligence agencies and “a high burden of proof in European courts and relatively lenient sentencing” which is unlikely to keep those foreign fighters behind bars for a prolonged period of time.

Besides noting the recent Turkish operations against ISIS, the second article provides insights into why Turkey was not aware of the whereabouts of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi despite his geographic proximity to the Turkish border and Turkish controlled territories in Syria. Contrary to the argument that Turkey might have been aware of al-Baghdadi's “presence across the border,” and had chosen not to take any action against him “due to ideological affinities and support,” the author believes that “Ankara was really unaware, and its inadequate efforts against [ISIS] both inside Turkey and Syria stem from capacity problems rather than unwillingness.” The author further argues that fighting Kurdish militants-- the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Protection Units (YPG) is the top priority for the Turkish government. The author claims that the second priority is to wage war on the Gülen Movement, which the Turkish government blames for the failed coup d'état attempt in July 2016. These factors put the fight against ISIS at priority number three. In light of these factors, the author argues that Ankara failed to track down al-Baghdadi because of its “overstretched military and intelligence capabilities in northwestern Syria” against Kurdish militants.

Furthermore, the second article recounts the story of two female Dutch ISIS sympathizers and their three children who were able to make the journey from al-Hol camp, where Syrian Kurdish militias held ISIS family members, to Ankara. The fact that these ISIS sympathizers were able to smuggle themselves from Syria all the way to Ankara show “the human-smuggling networks between Syria, Turkey and Europe, which IS[IS] frequently uses, remain active and efficient despite all security measures along the route.” Also, it seems “a new crisis is brewing between Turkey and Europe” over repatriating ISIS militants and their relatives. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

“In Ankara's perception of threats... the fight against IS-linked networks [is] in third place at best.”

“We're not a hotel for IS[IS] members...”
- Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu



Continued: Turkey and the Question of Foreign ISIS Fighters

Source: Ayla Jean Yackley, “Turkey to send foreign Islamic State fighters home,” *Al Monitor*, 04 November 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/11/turkey-send-islamic-state-foreign-fighters-back.html>

Turkey wants to send Islamic State fighters and their families back to their countries of origin after capturing parts of northeast Syria from the Kurdish forces who have held the prisoners since toppling the so-called caliphate earlier this year.

...

Turkey says it has captured hundreds of IS militants and their family members since entering Syria on Oct. 9. It has urged Western governments to take responsibility for their citizens who went to Syria and Iraq to wage jihad beginning in 2014. But most European nations do not want the fighters and some have even revoked citizenship for a handful of militants.

Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu told reporters called the citizenship revocation an “unacceptable” attempt to subvert international law. “We’re not a hotel for IS members...”

The EU is loath to take back IS suspects because domestic intelligence agencies are already strained tracking thousands of threats. Insufficient legal safeguards, including a high burden of proof in European courts and relatively lenient sentencing, won’t keep extremists locked up for long, analysts say. Diplomats have told Al-Monitor the fighters should be tried and punished where they committed the crimes.

...

Erdogan told reporters at an Oct. 18 briefing that Turkish nationals will be brought home for prosecution. “As for the others, we will speak with their countries and undertake the work to send them to their own countries, which will decide” their fate, he said.

Source: Metin Gürcan, “Turkey-Europe ties brace for fresh rift over stateless IS militants,” *Al Monitor*, 08 November 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/11/turkey-syria-ties-fresh-rift-with-west-over-isis-militants.html>

An oft-asked question over Baghdadi’s death concerns Turkey: Was Turkey not aware that Baghdadi was hiding right under its nose, apparently for many days? It is a pertinent question indeed. The answers “no” and “yes” would both be a problem for Ankara for different reasons.

Some say it is impossible for Turkey to have been unaware of Baghdadi’s presence across the border, arguing that Ankara has never truly fought the group and has even offered it protection and safe haven due to ideological affinities.

In my opinion, however, Ankara was really unaware, and its inadequate efforts against IS both inside Turkey and Syria stem from capacity problems rather than unwillingness.

In Ankara’s perception of threats — inside Turkey as well as Syria and Iraq — the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and... the People’s Protection Units (YPG), have top priority. Second comes the Gulenist network, which Ankara has designated a terrorist group and holds responsible for the deadly coup attempt in July 2016. This leaves the fight against IS-linked networks in third place at best. In this context, the likely answer to why Ankara failed to get wind of Baghdadi’s presence in a village a few kilometers from its border appears to lie in its overstretched military and intelligence capabilities in northwestern Syria, with the bulk of surveillance drones, human intelligence, electronic and signal intelligence efforts employed in the campaign against the YPG to the east of the Euphrates.

...

On Nov. 2, the Turkish media reported the detention of two Dutch female IS sympathizers who were trying to go to the Netherlands after fleeing the al-Hol camp in northern Syria. According to local sources, the women and their three children managed to reach Ankara in late October after paying about \$4,000 per person to human traffickers but were turned down by the Dutch Embassy...

The group’s journey from al-Hol to Ankara puts the spotlight on two crucial facts. First, the human-smuggling networks between Syria, Turkey and Europe, which IS frequently uses, remain active and efficient despite all security measures along the route. Second, a new crisis is brewing between Turkey and Europe over IS militants and their relatives in Turkish custody who have been stripped of their citizenships by European governments.



Egypt and the Arab League Condemn Turkey's Operation in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The accompanying passages from local sources discuss reactions from Egypt and the Arab League to Turkey's latest military operation into Syria. These countries are calling for Turkey's immediate withdrawal from Syria, and considering various actions to punish Turkey.

The first passage from *The Arab Weekly* outlines Egypt's heightened support for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). On 12 October, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry met with a delegation from the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC), the political arm of the SDF. Shoukry stated, "resisting Turkish aggression is a legitimate right," while also emphasizing his support for the territorial integrity of Syria.

The second passage by Amr Eltohamy from *Al-Monitor* provides statements from Egypt's permanent representative to the UN, Mohammad Idriss at a meeting of the UN General Assembly: "Erdogan's policies sponsor terrorism in Syria" while "he also commits crimes against his people and Kurds." The article also provides statements from Egyptian Foreign Minister Shoukry during a meeting with the UN Special envoy to Syria where he said, "there should not be any kind of tolerance in dealing with countries that support terrorism and terrorist groups in Syria."

The Egyptian-SDC talks occurred immediately before an Arab League meeting called by Shoukry on 12 October. Members of the Arab League except for Qatar, the Government of National Accord in Libya, and Somalia called for increased economic pressure on Turkey, including boycotting it as a tourist haven and downgrading its diplomatic representation. As the passage from the news site *Egypt Independent* discusses, foreign ministries of the Arab League called for Turkey's immediate withdrawal from Syria. The ministries also called for a reduction in military aid and support to Turkey while the Egyptian Foreign Minister referred to Turkey's actions as an "unacceptable occupation."

It is not just Arab countries that are condemning Turkey's actions. As the fourth passage from the Greek newspaper *Kathimerini* details, during a tripartite summit between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, the three countries issued a joint declaration denouncing "any Turkish attempt to undermine... Syrian territorial integrity." **End OE Watch Commentary (Fesen)**



Arab League (orthographic projection).
Source: Shadi Kabajah via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arab_League_\(orthographic_projection\).PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arab_League_(orthographic_projection).PNG), Public Domain

“There should not be any kind of tolerance in dealing with countries that support terrorism and terrorist groups in Syria.”

Source: Hassan Abdel Zaher, "Egypt steps up support for Syrian Kurds, increases political pressure on Turkey," *The Arab Weekly*, 19 October, 2019. <https://the arabweekly.com/egypt-steps-support-syrian-kurds-increases-political-pressure-turkey>

“Resisting this Turkish aggression is a legitimate right,” Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said during a meeting October 12 in Cairo with a delegation of the Syrian Democratic Council, the political arm of the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Arab countries, except for Turkish allies Qatar, Somalia and the western Libya government, signalled intentions to ramp up pressure on Istanbul through curtailing economic cooperation, boycotting Turkey as a tourist destination and downgrading diplomatic representation.

Source: Amr Eltohamy, "Egypt escalates campaign against Turkey's Erdogan," *Al Monitor*, 28 October 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/egypt-un-complaint-turkey-erdogan-criticism-terrorism.html>

...Recep Tayyip Erdogan blasted Egypt during his September 24 address of the UNGA session, Mohammad Idriss, Egypt's permanent representative to the UN, lodged an official complaint Sept. 25 with General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad Bande...

“Erdogan's policies sponsor terrorism in Syria and support extremist armed militias in Libya,” Idriss said. “He also commits crimes against his people and Kurds.”

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, who met with UN special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen on the sidelines of the General Assembly, said then, “There should not be any kind of tolerance in dealing with countries that support terrorism and terrorist groups in Syria.”

Source: "Arab League condemns Turkish incursion to Syria," *Egypt Independent*, 13 October 2019. <https://www.egyptindependent.com/arab-league-condemns-turkish-incursion-to-syria/>

During an emergency meeting of the Arab League called by Egypt, the ministries saw the incursion as a direct threat to Arab national security and international peace and security, demanding an immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Syria.

The ministries asserted that Arab League rejects the Turkish government's attempts to impose demographic changes in Syrian territories, urging the international community to stop providing Turkey with military and intelligence support.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said on Saturday that the Turkish aggression against Syria is an unacceptable “occupation” towards a brotherly Arab country.

Source: "Egypt, Cyprus, Greece condemn gas exploration by Turkey," *Ekathimerini*, 18 October 2019. <http://www.ekathimerini.com/245292/article/ekathimerini/news/egypt-cyprus-greece-condemn-gas-exploration-by-turkey>

The three leaders [of Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece]... condemned Turkey's planned military offensive into northeastern Syria



China's Increasing Investment Projects in Turkey



Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

Source: 陈少举 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:INDUSTRIAL_AND_COMMERCIAL_BANK_OF_CHINA.jpg#/media/File:INDUSTRIAL_AND_COMMERCIAL_BANK_OF_CHINA.jpg, Public Domain.

OE Watch Commentary: Cooperation between Turkey and China has resulted in several Chinese investment projects in Turkey both in the public and private sectors. The accompanying article from *Al-Monitor* highlights the increasing economic cooperation between Turkey and China, discussing each side's interests in this cooperation.

Turkey is part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a Chinese infrastructure and trade project spanning from China to more than 100 African and European countries. BRI seems to be a tool to strengthen China's position on the global stage through investment and trade without entangling itself in regional politics. According to the article, various initiatives indicate Turkey's dependence on China is growing in many sectors as China steps up its efforts to double its direct investment in Turkey by the end of 2019. China's first effort to boost bilateral trade and direct investment seems to be diversifying investment in several sectors "including infrastructure, energy, mining, telecommunication, information technologies, agriculture and health" as the Chinese consul general in Istanbul noted for Turkish media. Second, Chinese banks are also pouring money into Turkish markets

during this time of economic slowdown and getting licenses to operate in Turkey. The Chinese Central Bank "transferred \$1 billion worth of funds to Turkey in August" under the lira-yuan swap agreement with China. Also, "Turkey's Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency granted operation licenses to the Bank of China and [the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC)] for their activities in Turkey." Third, the author states that China has extended its investment in Turkish "ports, power plants and terminals" as indicated by the Chinese purchase of 65 percent of shares in the Turkish container terminal Kumport in Istanbul. Additionally, in July 2018, "the ICBC issued a \$3.6 billion finance package for Turkey's energy and transportation sectors" to expand Turkish-Chinese cooperation in the energy sector. The largest direct investment by China has been the construction of a coal plant in Turkey's Adana province. Turkey finds Chinese investment and involvement in Turkish markets beneficial because it boosts the Turkish economy.

The author states that three key factors contribute to Turkey's significance in OBOR. First, Turkey's proximity to Europe incentivizes China's investment as it creates a non-stop trade route to Europe. The second is a "qualified workforce" in Turkey. The final factor is "a geostrategic location facilitating access to the Middle East and North Africa." The author cautions Turkey "not to fall into 'debt trap diplomacy' ... which some small Pacific debtor countries have already fallen [prey to] by borrowing sky-high sums from China." **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

"Direct Chinese investments in Turkey are expected to double by the end of 2019 and exceed \$4 billion."

Source: Metin Gürçan, "Turkey-China economic cooperation on rise," *Al Monitor*, 23 October 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/turkey-united-states-turkish-chinese-ties-rapidly-grow.html>

Direct Chinese investments in Turkey are expected to double by the end of 2019 and exceed \$4 billion. Cui Wei, the Chinese consul general in Istanbul, affirmed the trend, telling the Turkish media there will be a huge leap in mutual trade.

As part of efforts to boost bilateral trade, Wei said Chinese companies will continue their investments in several areas, including infrastructure, energy, mining, telecommunication, information technologies, agriculture and health. The current trade volume between the two countries is more than \$23 billion, with Chinese exports to Turkey totaling \$21 billion.

Chinese banks are also gaining sway in the Turkish financial system. China's central bank transferred \$1 billion worth of funds to Turkey in August... This represents the largest amount Turkey has gotten from China under the lira-yuan swap agreement with Beijing...

In March, Turkey's Eximbank signed a credit deal worth \$350 million with the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC). In September, China's Eximbank issued a \$140 million loan to Turkey's state lender Vakifbank to be used in bilateral trade.

China also eyes crucial facilities in Turkey, such as ports, power plants and terminals. A Chinese consortium paid a little less than \$1 billion to buy a 65% stake in a Turkish container terminal, Kumport, in Istanbul, in 2015. The terminal will serve as a door to Turkish markets for Chinese goods.

After this step, the flow of Chinese infrastructure loans in Turkey also sped up. Turkey's Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency granted operation licenses to Bank of China and ICBC for their activities in Turkey...

The ICBC issued a \$3.6 billion finance package for Turkey's energy and transportation sectors; \$1.2 billion of the loan was used to expand the capacity of two underground natural gas storage facilities in Turkey.

Energy is another realm where cooperation grows. A Chinese enterprise paid \$1.7 billion to finance the construction of a coal plant near Turkey's Mediterranean province of Adana. The plant, which is currently under construction, represents China's largest direct investment in Turkey...

...
But what significance does Turkey have for China's Belt and Road initiative? According to experts, there are three key factors: Turkey's proximity to Europe, a qualified workforce and a geostrategic location facilitating access to the Middle East and North Africa...

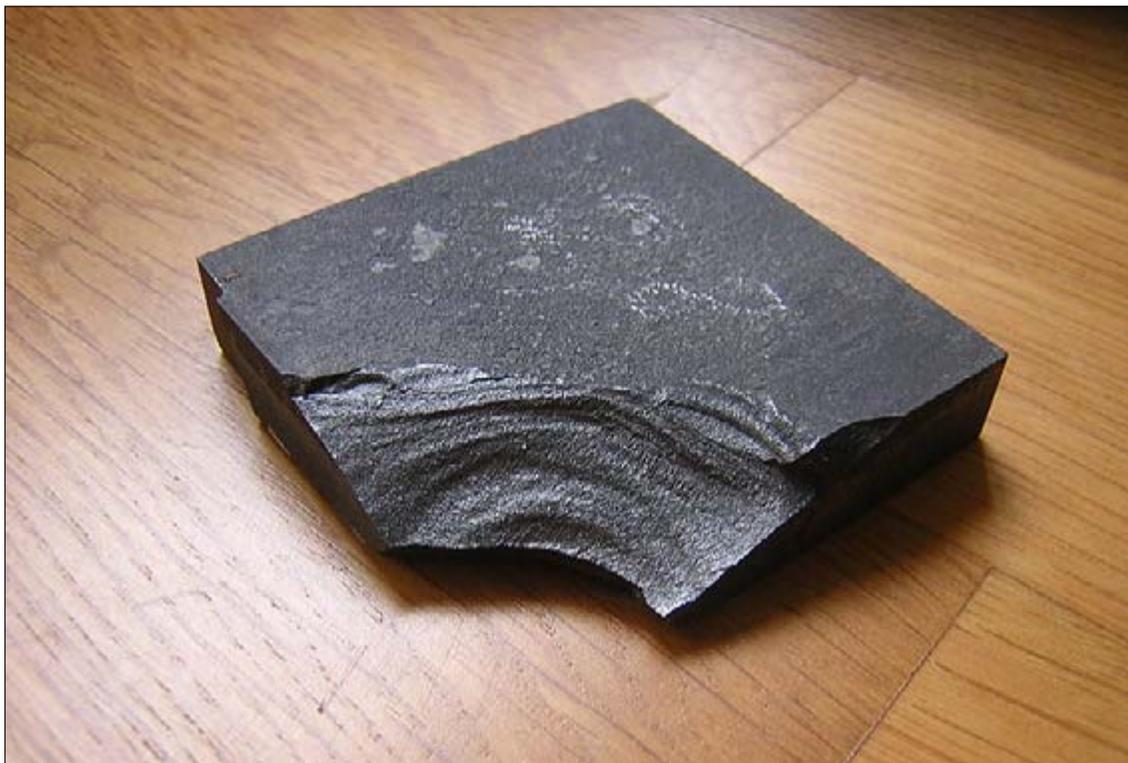
...Being a recipient of huge sums from Chinese lenders also poses some risks. Turkey has to be careful not to fall in the so-called "debt trap diplomacy" into which some small Pacific debtor countries have already fallen by borrowing sky-high sums from China.



China to Build Boron Carbide Plant in Turkey to Boost Defense Industry

OE Watch Commentary: Boron carbide (B₄C) is one of the hardest synthetic substances known and is used in tank armor, helicopters, aircraft, and bullet-proof vests. Turkey is home to 73% of the world's boron reserves, and is now planning to refine and process this natural resource to develop boron carbide with a view to strengthen its defense industry. On 25 October, construction started on a new boron carbide plant in Turkey, to be built by the Chinese Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) over the next two years. The accompanying passages from Turkish and Chinese sources discuss the significance of this project.

According to the passages, the plant will produce around 1000-1500 tons of boron carbide annually, worth some \$25-30 million; and is expected to be completed in 24 months. The project will employ 250 people and cost \$70 million. Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony of the facility, Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources said that



A piece of Boron carbide (B₄C).

Source: Preslav via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Boron_carbide.JPG, Public domain

the boron carbide that will be produced would have low density, and a high level of resilience to high temperatures, making it ideal for military use such as helicopters, aircraft, armored vehicles, tanks and artillery tubes.

As the passages discuss, China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) will build the facility. CMEC and TRBOR Boron Technologies Inc of Turkey signed a deal on the plant in June. The second passage notes that CMEC would be collaborating with its Turkish counterpart in the fields of know-how and technology, and would continue to invest in Turkey. According to the second passage, China currently leads the global production of boron carbide, with Germany, India, Japan, the US, Ukraine, South Korea and England also on the list. With this new facility, Turkey is looking to join this list in two years.

This is part of a greater goal for the Turkish defense industry- to become more self-sufficient through increased indigenous production. This is why CMEC's promise to share know-how and technology is critical for Turkey. Currently, the rate at which the equipment needs of the Turkish Armed Forces are domestically produced is at 70%, with a declared a goal to become fully indigenous by 2023, the centennial of the Republic. (Also see: "Trends in the Turkish Military Industry," *OE Watch*, June 2017) **End OE Watch Commentary (Kaya)**

“We want to make energy the new defense industry of Turkey...”
- Energy and Natural Resources Minister of Turkey, Fatih Dönmez

“Boron carbide will be used mostly in military items such as tactical vehicles, helicopters, planes, artillery tubes, bullet-proof vests that require a high level of resistance and density.”



Continued: China to Build Boron Carbide Plant in Turkey to Boost Defense Industry

Source: “Bor Karbür Üretim Tesisi’nin temeli Bandırma’da atıldı (Construction Starts in Bandırma for Boron Carbide Production Plant),” *Petroturk.com.tr*, 25 October 2019. <http://petroturk.com/yenilenebilir/bor-karbur-uretim-tesisinin-temeli-bandirmada-atildi>

Turkey breaks ground on first Boron Carbide Production Facility today at the town of Bandırma in the province of Balıkesir.

Turkey, which is home to 73% of the world’s boron reserves, is launching an important project to take the treasure it has and use it for value-added production. The groundbreaking ceremony for the Boron Carbide Production Facility took place today, with the attendance of Fatih Dönmez, Turkey’s Minister for Energy and Natural Resources. The facility will contribute to the defense industry once it starts production.

Dönmez... who spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony, highlighted that boron has a strategic place in the world market and is used in fields ranging from the defense industry to the glass sector, from ceramics to agriculture and cleaning materials, saying, “It is an area ripe for development and growth for us. With increased value-added production, we will use technology to solidify our leading place in the boron market. This is why indigenous production, which makes up one of the three pillars of our National Energy and Mineral Policy, is so important. We’ve taken important steps to create this indigenous transformation in energy technologies. We’ve built the cornerstones of our energy and mineral [policy] around national human resources, national technology and national products.

“National Energy will Strengthen National Security”

Minister Dönmez, who expressed that this was proof of what Turkey could accomplish when it uses its domestic resources to take advantage of the technological transformation taking place in the defense sector, said, “Today, we are demonstrating the best example of what we can achieve with domestic and national technology. Indigenous production in the defense industry has reached 70%. It has become an important export industry. We want to make energy Turkey’s new defense industry in technology.”

Dönmez, who said that the new facility was the first step in the production of advanced-technology boron production noted, “...The boron carbide that we will produce at our facility in Bandırma, with its low density and resilience to high temperatures, will greatly contribute to our level of indigenous production in our defense industry. Boron carbide will be used mostly in military items such as tactical vehicles, helicopters, planes, artillery tubes, bullet-proof vests that require a high level of hardness and density.”

Dönmez, who also noted that the boron carbide would be used in the production of heavy machinery and ceramic pieces along with nuclear applications, said “With this strategic transformation, the value-added to our country will be multiplied by 150 for products like boron carbide, by 500 for the production of armored vehicles and by 2000 in sectors like the nuclear sector.”

One Thousand Tons will be Produced Annually

According to data, there are between 12-15 thousand tons of boron carbide produced in the world [annually]. In this market, where China takes the lead as the main producer country, Germany, India, Japan, the US, Ukraine, South Korea and England also produce this mineral. Turkey is now joining this list, with the Bandırma Boron Carbide Facility, which will produce one thousand tons of boron carbide annually, worth some \$25-30 million. ...

A Chinese Company will Build It

The boron carbide production facility will be built by Chinese company China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC) and will cost \$70 million. It is estimated that the facility will be complete within 24 months.

General Manager of Eti Maden, owner of a 33% stake in the project, Serkan Keleşer, also spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony, saying... “This facility is extremely important for our country. Boron carbide is the world’s hardest and most resilient substance after diamond.

Keleşer, also highlighted that CMEC, which Turkey will be collaborating in the fields of know-how and technology, would continue to invest in Turkey...

The facility is expected to be completed in 24 months. The facility will provide employment to 250 people and produce items that contain

Source: “New boron carbide plant to strengthen Turkey’s defense industry: minister,” *Xinhuanet.com*, 25 October 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/25/c_138503382.htm

Turkey is preparing to strengthen its national defense industry through a boron carbide plant to be built by a Chinese company and operational in 2021 in the northwestern province of Balıkesir, Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Fatih Donmez said Friday.

The groundbreaking ceremony of the plant, undertaken by China Machinery Engineering Corporation, was held in the district of Bandırma.

Speaking at the ceremony, Donmez said the plant would make Turkey’s defense sector more “powerful, dynamic and active” by increasing the ratio of the production of domestic goods.

“We will be able to use boron carbide in the production of military equipment, such as steel shells, protective vests, helicopters and tanks which require high hardness and strength,” said the minister.

He said Turkey has a total of 3.3 billion tons of boron, accounting for 73 percent of the world reserves and 59 percent of the world market.

... China Machinery Engineering Corporation and the TRBOR Boron Technologies Inc of Turkey signed a deal on the plant in June, which shall have an annual production capacity of 1,500 tons of boron carbide, one of the hardest synthetic substances known.



Iran: Khamenei Speaks on America

OE Watch Commentary: Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader for over 30 years, delivers numerous speeches each year. There are weekly Friday sermons, for example, sometimes delivered by Khamenei himself and other times by a substitute prayer leader in his name. When it comes to relations with the United States, the most important speech is often on or around the anniversary of the 4 November 1979 seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran. This year, Khamenei used the occasion to address both high school and university students, a symbolic audience given the primary role of students in seizing the embassy four decades ago.

Khamenei's overview of US-Iran relations is as uncompromising as it is at times inaccurate. The leader glosses over the World War II-era US occupation of a supply route through Iran—a largely uneventful affair—by suggesting that the friendliness of US forces toward Iranian ones at the time



Students greeting Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, 3 November 2019.
Source: Khamenei.ir, http://idc0-cdn0.khamenei.ir/ndata/news/43880/C/13980812_2143880.jpg

was purposeful deception. He is at his most inaccurate when describing the 1953 coup against Iranian premier Mohammad Mosaddegh: Firstly, that event did not install the shah's regime. The alleged Nazi sympathies of the shah's father and predecessor Reza Pahlavi led to his 1941 exile to South Africa and the installation of the young Mohammed Reza Shah, who was ultimately overthrown in 1979. Growing street violence instigated by Mosaddegh who had refused to step down upon his government's dismissal, had led the shah to leave temporarily, though he returned upon what at the time was described as a "countercoup" (this was also the title of Kermit Roosevelt's book on the episode). At the time of the 1953 coup, the clergy—including those or the teachers of those who now dominate the Islamic Republic—largely supported the ouster of Mosaddegh whom they saw as too close to the Soviet Union and anti-religious. At the time, this was described as 'the red versus the black,' with the former being the pro-Soviet Mosaddegh backers and the latter referring to the clergy, whose turbans were often black. Khamenei therefore downplays and revises the role of the clergy in the 1953 coup in order to exaggerate grievance against the United States.

That Khamenei emphasizes the 1964 exile of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—who 15 years later would lead the Islamic Revolution—shows the exile's importance in the mindset of Iran's revolutionary leaders. Its context is also important, as it came against the context of the shah's largely progressive 'White Revolution,' a series of reforms which included granting religious minorities equality under the law and women's enfranchisement. Khomeini rallied against such reforms, calling them an assault on religion. For Khamenei, then, to suggest the exile of Khomeini is as great a grievance as the 1953 coup, which regardless of accuracy has become original sin in popular imagination, is to condemn fundamentally much of the reformist or liberal platform within the Islamic Republic.

More broadly speaking, however, at the beginning of the Islamic Republic's fifth decade, Khamenei asserts that reconciliation with the United States is as impossible today as it was at the time of the embassy seizure. This, too, is a message for any Iranians or Iranian diplomats engaged in Track II dialogue with Americans or advocating renewed negotiations not only the nuclear file but also on Iran's ballistic missile work and regional activities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Negotiations with the United States [are] 100 percent wrong.”



Continued: Iran: Khamenei Speaks on America

Source: “Biyanat dar Didar Daneshamuzan va Daneshjuyan (A Statement for High School and University Students),” *Khamenei.ir*, 3 November 2019. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/speech-content?id=43896>

Khamenei Speaks on U.S.-Iran Relations

Today, I will raise a point about America – because the occasion of our gathering and our meeting is related to America – and if there is time God willing, I will raise another point about our domestic issues and the issues of the country. As for America, I will tell you that America has not changed in any way since November 1964 – during which time, the regime installed by America, drove our dear Imam [Khomeini] into exile - until November 2019 which is the present time. America is the same America. The same wolfish qualities, which existed in those days, exist in the America in the present time as well. The same global and international dictatorship exists in the United States today as well. That day, America was an international dictator who had certain gendarmes in different parts of the world. Its regional gendarme and mercenary was Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In other parts of the world, there were other individuals. Today, the same dictatorship exists, but with newer methods and tools. There is the same wolfish quality, the same international dictatorship, the same malevolence and the same desire for having no limits – it has no limits and borders. America is the same America. Of course, it has weakened today. The United States has become weaker compared to the year 1964, but it has also become wilder and more brazen. This is what America is.

America showed enmity towards Iran. Throughout the history of U.S.-Iran relations, the United States has always shown enmity towards Iran. This even happened during the time of the heathen regime. Its enmity towards Iran before the Revolution involved overthrowing the national government in the year 1953. An American agent came to Tehran with a suitcase full of dollars and he went and hid in the British Embassy. From there, he began spreading money and distributing dollars in order to employ certain individuals, launch a coup and overthrow the national government.

Of course, that administration was to blame too. Its mistake was that it placed too much trust in America, but the Americans did that anyway and they installed a corrupt administration which was dependent on them. There is no worse form of enmity. They dominated our armed forces, our oil, the policies of our country and our culture: it was a complete domination. This continued from 1953 – when the coup d'état of 19 August took place – to the victory of the Revolution in the year 1979. Such was its enmity towards the Iranian nation and our country at that time.

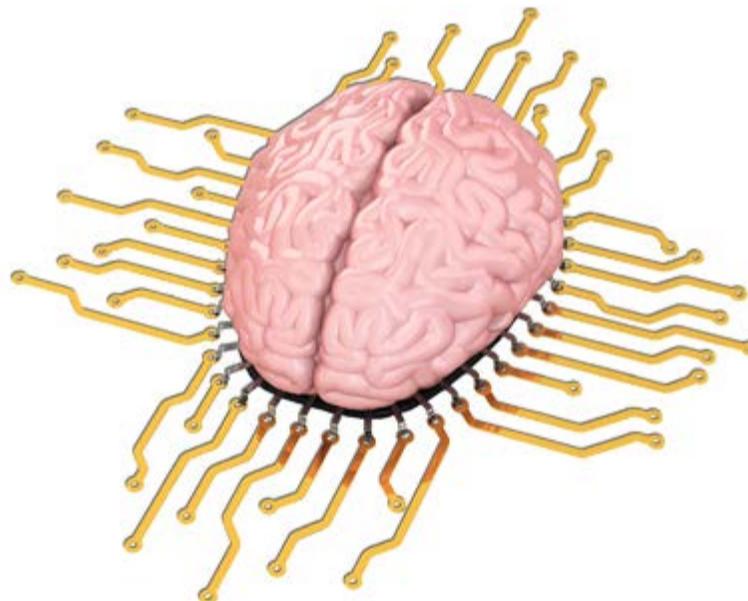
And after the Revolution, it is clear how it has shown enmity. Until today, it either issues threats and imposes sanctions or utters hostile words, creates problems and tries to infiltrate the country. They have always been on bad terms towards Iran and the Iranians....

Some people think that negotiating with America solves the problems of the country. This is a grave mistake. They are one hundred percent wrong! The other side considers Iran's accepting and sitting at the negotiating table as bringing the Islamic Republic to its knees. It wants to say that they have finally managed to bring Iran to its knees with severe sanctions until it agreed to sit at the negotiating table with them. It wants to say this to the whole world. It wants to prove that the “maximum pressure” policy is a correct policy that has worked because it has succeeded in bringing the Islamic Republic to the negotiating table.

THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

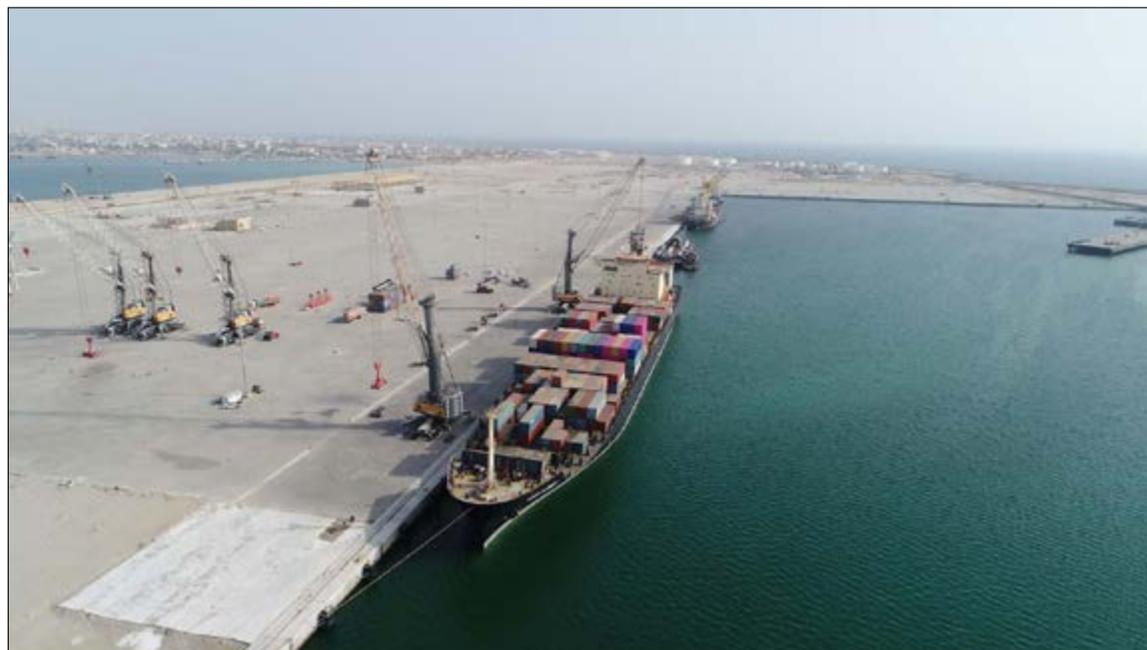
<https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil/>

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





Iran: Chahbahar Port Developments



An aerial view of Shahid Beheshti Port, Chahbahar.
Source: General Authority of Sistan & Balochistan, <https://chahbaharport.pmo.ir/fa/album/1537>

OE Watch Commentary: Across the Middle East (and, indeed, in other regions of the world), cities often grew alongside coasts or rivers. Ancient Persia—and later Iran—was an exception to this. There is only one navigable river in Iran—the Karun river—and it is small, roughly equivalent in length and discharge to the Susquehanna river which flows through Pennsylvania and Maryland. Because Iran is a large plateau hemmed in by mountains, swamps, and badlands, most of the cities were in the interior. The ports they did have initially were historically minor, either along the Persian Gulf (Bandar Abbas and Bushehr) or the Caspian (Bandar Anzali). The Caspian Sea is, of course, landlocked and the Persian Gulf is narrow, shallow, and constrained by the Strait of Hormuz. For the Islamic Republic, this has become

a strategic liability as the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint makes Iran vulnerable to blockades: Not only does Iranian oil trade remain dependent upon the ability of its tankers to sail out through the Strait of Hormuz, but Iran also remains dependent upon the import of refined gasoline shipped through the Strait.

In order to alleviate this strategic vulnerability, Iran has built up two ports on its southern coast in recent years: Jask, just outside the Strait where Iran now maintains an increasingly large navy and submarine base; and Chahbahar, where Iran is rapidly expanding commercial capacity. In the excerpted article, the head of the Chahbahar Free Zone outlines plans to build petrochemical plants around Chahbahar, in effect, transforming the port into a major industrial center. While the quoted official Mehdi Kohi is correct about the strategic location of the port and its greater proximity both to the Indian and Chinese markets, either he or the Fars News Agency correspondent exaggerate the water depth data (the maximum depth of the Persian Gulf is less than 300 feet), although Chahbahar's greater depth is accurate.

China's involvement in financing Chahbahar is also significant, as is the Iranian port leadership's insistence that US sanctions have not hampered the Chinese investment. Given that Chahbahar is the largest port in the northern Indian Ocean west of the (Chinese-financed and reconstructed) Pakistani port of Gwadar, suggests greater Iranian involvement in China's 'Belt-and-Road' initiative. It also signals greater competition with India, which in recent years has sought to increase its trade through Chahbahar, especially for imports to and exports from Afghanistan. While, Behrouz Aghaei, director general of the Sistan va Balochestan Ports and Maritime Department, in a separate article reported a 63 percent increase in the loading of oil and non-oil goods between March and November 2019 over the same period in 2018, both Indian and Iranian diplomats involved in trade negotiations suggest that diplomatic bottlenecks have retarded the potential benefits of the port.

End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)

“China would finance phases two and three...despite American sanctions.”

Source: “Ejraye 18 Tarh-e petroshimi dar montagheh-e azad Chahbahar (Implication of 18 Petrochemical Projects in Chahbahar Free Zone),” *Fars News Agency*, 11 November 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980820001096>

Chahbahar Port Developments

According to the *Fars News Agency's* economic correspondent, Chahbahar Free Zone infrastructure director Mehdi Kohi told reporters visiting the Chahbahar Free Zone, There are 17 [sic] petrochemical projects to be implemented in three phases of Chahbahar Free Zone. Phase 1 consists of six units which were begun two years ago, and are 30 percent complete. He said the capacity of each unit is 1.6 million tons and they should come online beginning in 2022. The director of the Chahbahar Free Zone said that one unit would come online each year after 2022. He said China would finance phases two and three, and that this was agreed to during the president's visit to Beijing. According to Morteza Bank, president of the Free Zone Secretariat [and deputy chief-of-staff to President Rouhani], the latest legal mechanisms are being developed by China, and they are being funded despite American sanctions. Kohi also mentioned construction of a methane pipeline and said 38 kilometers [23.6 miles] of the project have been completed.... The head of the Chahbahar Free Zone said, the Chahbahar Port route is about 1,400 miles closer to the target markets of China and India, and so it is closer and also our sea depth in Chahbahar is between 1,600 and 8,000 feet, but at Bandar Abbas is only between 500 to 600 feet, and so large ships can easily sail in the area. He added that 18 petrochemical projects, each creating about 400 jobs will complete the design, with even more indirect jobs benefiting the area.



Iran Establishes Official VPN Operators



Abolhassan Firouzabadi, secretary of Iran's Supreme Council of Cyberspace.

Source: Allameh Tabataba'i News Agency, <https://www.atna-news.ir/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/bazdid-fazaye-majazi-ertebatat-8.jpg>

OE Watch Commentary: Within the Middle East, Iranians are among the most internet savvy populations, an irony given official state controls and bans on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube. Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), used by Iranians to bypass restrictions and government censorship, have long frustrated the Iranian regime. While Iranian authorities have talked for years about creating a national intranet to better control Iranian behavior online, they have yet to be able to implement their project. Social media companies have ignored Iranian government demands that they host servers inside Iran as a prerequisite for allowing Iranians onto their platforms. Regime efforts to slow internet connections have also largely failed to rein in social media growth. While the Islamic Republic has demonstrated the ability to shut down the internet entirely in times of crisis

as last month, creating VPNs it can control while banning foreign VPNs may enable it to avoid taking that dramatic step of internet shutdowns which negatively impact Iranian business and commerce.

In the excerpted article, Abolhassan Firouzabadi, the secretary of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, a body created by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in 2012, has announced a new approach by which the Iranian government would try to regulate and limit VPNs via official VPN operators. It is unclear why Iranians would utilize 'official' VPNs if their goals remain to bypass Iranian government restrictions. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

“Legal VPN operators will be launched in the country.”

Source: “Operatorhay-e VPN-e rasmi dar keshavar ijad mishavand (Official VPN Operators have been established in the country),” Mehr News Agency, 11 November 2019. <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4768865>

Official VPN Operators to be established in the country

The secretary of the Supreme Council of Cyberspace announced in the filtering working group guidelines to determine different levels of internet access for individuals and said, “Soon official VPN operators will be established in the country.”

Abolhassan Firouzabadi on Monday morning [11 November] said on the sidelines of a breakfast meeting at the Computer Trade Organization, “We agree that different accessibility levels should be defined for different types of internet for users and for this purpose, we have tasked the Working Group to come up with a specific guideline regarding internet accessibility.”

Firouzabadi said, “We wanted these rules to be in place three months ago, but unfortunately the meetings of this working group were delayed, and we are seeing slowness in reaching decisions.”

Referring to the legal issues of the VPNs, he added, “This issue had been long discussed, but it came to nothing. Since many organizations and people now use VPNs, and it has grown into quite a lucrative economy, we are hoping that legal VPN operators will be launched in the country in cooperation with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (ICT).” That is to say that the VPNs will be delegated according to predefined rules and regulations through official operators,” he stressed.

Although internet penetration is high in Iran compared to its neighbors, many of the world’s most popular sites are blocked, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and others. This has fueled a multi-million Dollar market for VPN and proxy providers.



Al-Shabaab Looks to Launch Attacks in Ethiopia



“One reason al-Shabaab is attempting to target Ethiopia is to punish it for sending troops, such as the Ethiopian soldier pictured here serving with AMISOM, to fight against them in Somalia.”

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/61765479@N08/27550154106/>, Public Domain

OE Watch Commentary: Al-Shabaab appears unafraid to launch attacks beyond its home base in Somalia. Neighboring Kenya, a particularly popular target, has been struck at least 20 times by the terrorist group. However, as the accompanying excerpted article from Somalia’s *Radio Dalsan* points out, Ethiopia has largely been spared from the group’s attacks, even though it also shares a border with Somalia and has fought al-Shabaab there. However, there are signs that this may be changing.

In September, Ethiopian security officials arrested about a dozen al-Shabaab suspects who had allegedly planned to attack hotels, religious festivities, and other events. These were to happen at specific locations over a fairly wide geographical area, including the capital, Addis Ababa, and Ethiopia’s Somali region in the east. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia is clearly concerned, warning that the terrorist group is trying to make inroads into his country. Deputy Chief of

Ethiopia’s military, Berhanu Jula, said there is evidence al-Shabaab “has recruited, trained and armed some Ethiopians.”

Although it is difficult to say for certain what factor or factors may be responsible for al-Shabaab’s increased activity in Ethiopia, the article notes that the enormous reforms the Prime Minister has undertaken since coming into office in 2018 might be playing a part. Prior to that time, Ethiopia’s strong security apparatus helped prevent attacks from al-Shabaab. However, the reforms have resulted in significant turnover in many government agencies, including those in the security sector, resulting in less experienced people managing them. Al-Shabaab possibly saw an opportunity during this transition period and decided to increase their activity while new government agency heads were learning how to run their organizations.

Another possible reason al-Shabaab is gaining, or at least attempting to gain, a larger foothold in Ethiopia is the rapid social change that is coming with the reforms. There has been an increase in interethnic violence since they were first introduced, which might be causing some Ethiopians to turn to the terrorist group.

Whatever the reasons for the uptick of al-Shabaab activity in Ethiopia, Ethiopians are rightly concerned. In 2013, in response to Ethiopia sending troops to Somalia to join AMISOM, al-Shabaab declared “jihad” against the nation. Six years later they appear to be trying harder to make that happen. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Al-Shabab could be benefiting from increasing ethnic violence and the fraught political transition sweeping the country since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ushered in a series of reforms when he came to power in April 2018.”

Source: “Why Al-Shabab is eyeing Ethiopia,” *Radio Dalsan (Somalia)*, 17 October 2019. <https://www.radiodalsan.com/en/2019/10/17/why-al-shabab-is-eyeing-ethiopia/>

Ethiopia, backed by the United States, invaded Somalia in December 2006, capturing the capital Mogadishu and helping the Somali interim government drive out the loose-knit Union of Islamic Courts, which controlled the capital and much of southern Somalia.

Six years ago, Ethiopia was spared bloodshed when two Somali suicide bombers accidentally blew themselves up in central Addis Ababa. Security officials assume they were preparing to kill football fans during Ethiopia’s World Cup qualifying match against Nigeria that was to take place later that day. Back then, the country’s vulnerability to extremists’ attacks even became the subject of a written question in the European Parliament.

Al-Shabab could be benefiting from increasing ethnic violence and the fraught political transition sweeping the country since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ushered in a series of reforms when he came to power in April 2018.



Somalia: How Climate Change Impacts Security



"Pictured here is the devastating 2011 East Africa drought. Ongoing droughts in Somalia have made the already fragile state-building even more precarious,"

Source: OXFAM East Africa/Wikipedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Oxfam_East_Africa_-_A_family_gathers_sticks_and_branches_for_firewood.jpg, CC BY 2.0

get warmer. Thus, drought and floods, already significant problems in Somalia that tend to displace large numbers of people, are expected to become even worse in the years to come. These displaced people sometimes end up in camps where radical groups such as al-Shabaab can recruit them.

The droughts in particular have made the already fragile state-building process even more difficult. Scarce resources have to be diverted to emergency responses instead of more long-term programs such as education, health, and better governance. Additionally, power sharing agreements falter as the displacement of people results in changes to the "demographic composition on the ground."

The article emphasizes that evidence of the adverse effects of climate change is not something that people have to wait to see years from now. There are already significant impacts in Somalia, and they are quite devastating. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying excerpted article from the Somali website *Radio Dalsan* explains, climate change is exacerbating the conflicts already underway in Somalia and threatens to create new ones.

Much of the article is based on a report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which examined how conflicts as well as peacekeeping efforts are affected by climate change. The findings essentially show that the security landscape changes as climate change occurs. For example, with the change in the seasons and weather over the past few decades, herding nomads have had to adjust their routes. Conflict sometimes ensues as rural farmers want to protect their crops from the grazing animals.

While weather is a short-term phenomenon and climate a long-term one, over time as the climate gets warmer, the weather, despite some fluctuations, also tends to

"Climate change poses serious challenges to current and future peacebuilding efforts and can amplify conflicts..."

Source: "Climate change poses serious challenges to current and future peace-building efforts in Somalia –Report," *Radio Dalsan (Somalia)*, 23 October 2019. <https://www.radiodalsan.com/en/2019/10/23/climate-change-poses-serious-challenges-to-current-and-future-peace-building-efforts-in-somalia-report/>

Climate change poses serious challenges to current and future peacebuilding efforts and can amplify conflicts, according to a report on years of devastating violence and drought in Somalia released Wednesday.

On a positive note, the growing impact of climate change has meant that UNSOM has had to adapt its peacebuilding efforts by thinking outside the box and adopting new approaches, which may prove useful in future peacebuilding operations.

These include the establishment of coordination centres for drought operations and the appointment of an environmental security advisor.

The report however stressed that some of these novel approaches are difficult to implement under the current funding structure, since much of the money is siloed and earmarked for specific and isolated approaches, "thereby inhibiting integrated responses".



Will Baghdadi's Death Impact Terrorism in Africa?



"Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi from when he was detained at Camp Bucca, Iraq, in 2004. It is suspected that even with his recent death, ISIS will continue to focus on Africa,"

Source: US Army/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mugshot_of_Abu_Bakr_al-Baghdadi,_2004.jpg, Public Domain

OE Watch Commentary: He was the leader of what many consider the world's deadliest terror group, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), but a recent US-led operation led to his fatal demise. According to the accompanying excerpted article from the South African *Institute for Security Studies*, the end of Baghdadi does not mean the end of terrorism in Africa. It is not even certain if his death will lead to any decrease in terrorism on the continent.

While his death brings hope to many that a more peaceful future could be in store for Africa, the pessimism expressed in the article is rooted in several factors. First, while ISIS, also known as Daesh, has suffered losses in Africa over the past few years, it remains active and has adapted itself to local dynamics, thus continuing to pose a threat in the Sahara, Sahel, Lake Chad Basin, and central and eastern parts of the continent. This adaptability could appeal to the new leadership, who are likely to keep focused on the continent given Africa's strategic value to the terrorist group's goals of "remain and expand."

Second, the rivalry between al-Qaeda and ISIS that has played out across the continent will likely continue. The article explains that al-Qaeda might even try to capitalize on Baghdadi's death as it attempts to re-attract fighters who left it for the appeal of ISIS's caliphate.

The most compelling case that ISIS in Africa will continue is the third factor-- the history of deaths of leaders of other terrorist groups. For example, when Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Harm's first leader, was killed, his followers regrouped under Abubakar Shekau. As for the 2014 drone strike that killed al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Godane, it did not reduce the group's deadly attacks. One could also look beyond Africa to see removing a leader does not always

translate to the death of a movement, such as al-Qaeda's survival following the 2011 death of bin Laden.

Finally, causes of why people join terrorist groups, such as poverty and social injustice, are not diminished with the death of a leader. Thus, while the operation that led to Baghdadi's demise was a significant accomplishment, the article points out that additional steps are needed to truly make a dent in terrorist activities, including increased regional and international cooperation on counterterrorism, and improved socioeconomic factors as well as governance. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

"Terror groups have remained resilient despite their leaders' deaths, and Daesh is unlikely to be any different."

Source: Akinola Olojo and Martin Ewi, "What does al-Baghdadi's death mean for Africa?" *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 5 November 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/what-does-al-baghdadis-exit-mean-for-africa>

Eliminating their leaders sets terror groups back, but isn't a measure of success in the struggle against terrorism. Targeted killings of leaders should not outweigh the more important task of addressing root causes and enhancing counter-terrorism responses in affected countries.

In Africa, Daesh affiliates abound with sympathizers from North Africa to the Sahel and from the Lake Chad Basin to the Horn. Daesh has lauded attacks in the northeastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Mozambique.

Terror groups have remained resilient despite their leaders' deaths, and Daesh is unlikely to be any different.

Before al-Baghdadi's death, Africa was already of high strategic importance and became a platform for Daesh's expansion and rebuilding after its demise in Iraq and Syria. The continent's significance was further demonstrated in the number of foreign terrorist fighters who travelled to Iraq and Syria – an estimated 10 000 from North Africa alone.



The Roots of Violent Extremism in Northern Mozambique

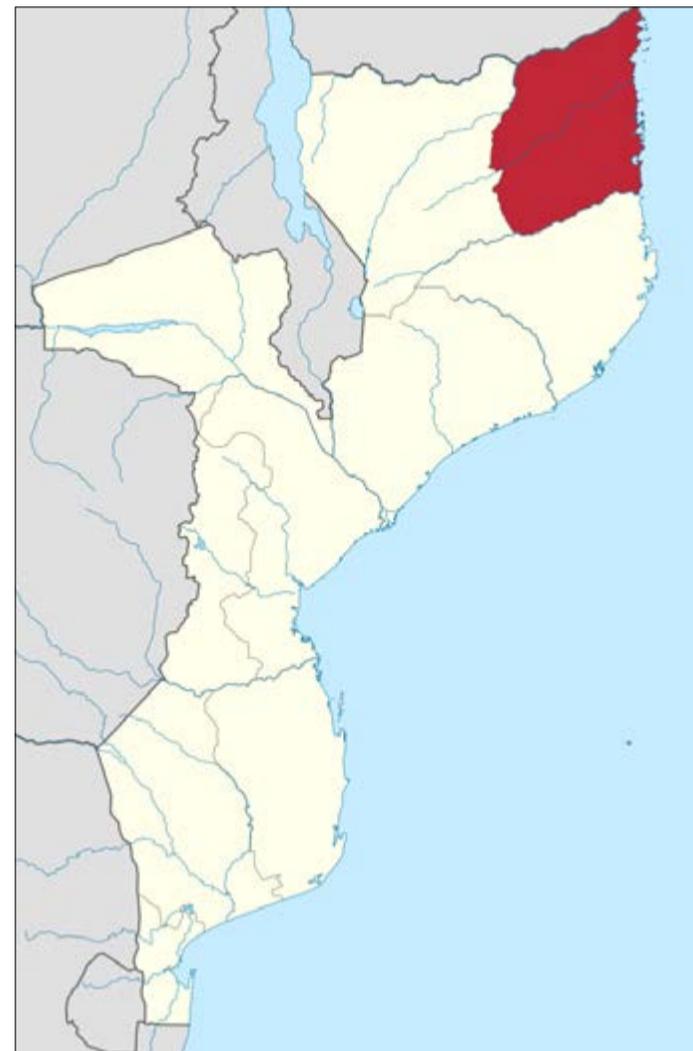
OE Watch Commentary: It is probably no coincidence that Mozambique's poorest province, Cabo Delgado, is also the one that has seen tremendous growth in violent extremism. With high unemployment, low literacy rates, and the few jobs in the gas and oil industry there often going to men from other provinces, many of Cabo Delgado's residents are poor and in despair. As the accompanying excerpted report from the South African website *Institute for Security Studies* notes, the province's Muslim youth are becoming increasingly radicalized. This is possibly due in part from foreign fighters who crossed over from Tanzania. The government ignored the signs of this radicalization; that is until the attacks began.

It was 17 October 2017 when assailants armed with machine guns and machetes began attacking police stations and other government buildings in a northern part of the province. The following day, 14 of the attackers, two police officers, and a civilian lay dead.

The government response to the attacks has been criticized. Besides sending in the military, it has suspended human rights in the affected area and shut down reporting so that little information is leaking out. A spiraling cycle of violence between government forces and the insurgents has ensued, including beheadings and torture.

Although it is difficult to give an exact number of how many have been killed in the escalating violence, one estimate is that since the beginning of the attacks through January 2019, at least 150 people have been killed. According to another estimate, the number is double that.

The report describes several possible interventions that may help mitigate the violence. Long-term investments in infrastructure, especially roads and telecommunications, would be particularly beneficial, as they would help integrate the province's people with the rest of Mozambique. Additional investments could also be made in education and jobs, so that the youth see a future besides turning to extremism. The report also suggests that the government pursue the prosecution of human rights violations and lift the ban on the movement of journalists to allow for more transparency regarding the situation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



"Cabo Delgado Province, seen here in red, has seen a rise in Islamic extremism."

Source: Profoss/Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mozambique_-_Cabo_Delgado.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0

“The government has responded by sending in the military to stamp out the assailants, using ‘whatever it takes’, amid suspicions that foreign fighters from Tanzania have radicalized local youth who are behind the violence.”

Source: David M. Matsinhe and Estacio Valoi, “The Genesis of Insurgency in Northern Mozambique,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, October 2019. <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/sar-27.pdf>

Insurgents have attacked towns and villages in Cabo Delgado, the poorest province in Mozambique. The government has responded by sending in the military to stamp out the assailants, using ‘whatever it takes’, amid suspicions that foreign fighters from Tanzania have radicalized local youth who are behind the violence. Other measures to counter the violence include an extra-judicial state of emergency and the suppression of information.

They appear to consist of local youth who have devised a deviant form of Islam, to the distress of local imams, who have denounced it and ejected the youth from local mosques.

When asked how safe and secure they felt, the villagers praised the soldiers for protecting them. At the same time, they said they could not venture out of the village because it was not safe. In terms of what the residents could and could not say to us, this was a limitation. However, it was also clear evidence of the heavy military presence in the village.

The state has created a tight military cordon and fomented a culture of fear in the area.

The extremists proceeded to burn the vehicle and behead the driver and six passengers, most of whom were women.



Zimbabwe: An Economic Crisis and Sinking Army Morale

OE Watch Commentary: The 2017 overthrow of long-sitting Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe (who was Prime Minister from 1980 to 1987; and President from 1987 to 2017) and the subsequent controversial election that brought Emmerson Mnangagwa to power were supposed to improve the lives of the country's citizens. But marked economic difficulties have put a severe damper on that prospect. As the accompanying excerpted article from *The Zimbabwe Independent* notes, the fiscal difficulties are adversely impacting soldiers, who are openly expressing their unhappiness. The situation has reached the point that the government is looking to avert a security crisis.

The country's finance minister Mthuli Ncube said he was aware of the prospect of instability and is looking for resources to placate the disgruntled soldiers. However, it is unknown where those resources may come from, as the country's deteriorating economic situation has left little to no extra money for the military.



"A Zimbabwean soldier during a protest. Because of low pay and high prices, many in the Zimbabwean military are disgruntled."

Source: PublicDomainPictures.net, <https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=235638&picture=zimbabwean-soldier-during-protest>, Public Domain

Interestingly, it was not long ago that the soldiers had actually been doing fairly well. After the coup that toppled Mugabe, the military took over some of the roles previously reserved for the civilian intelligence service and police. Additionally, during this time it received certain privileges and trappings of comfort. However, after Mnangagwa's victory, many of the agencies run by the army after the coup reverted back to their previous non-military control, and the privileges and trappings enjoyed by the soldiers went away.

Thus, high prices and low salaries have made life extremely difficult for soldiers, with reports of hunger in the ranks. Unkept promises made by politicians further aggravate the condition. The situation reports, or sitreps in military parlance, explain it succinctly... army morale is the lowest it has ever been. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“There is growing disquiet within the rank and file of the military over the rising cost of living, poor salaries and difficult working conditions, with government now desperate for solutions to avert a security crisis.”

Source: “Hungry soldiers spark government fears,” *Independent (Zimbabwe)*, 8 November 2019. <https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2019/11/08/hungry-soldiers-spark-govt-fears/>

There is growing disquiet within the rank and file of the military over the rising cost of living, poor salaries and difficult working conditions, with government now desperate for solutions to avert a security crisis.

“On the security cluster, let me tell you, if you do not have peace, you will have (instability). There is need to get them a decent three meals a day; a decent uniform and then there is housing. I know the issues well. I am well briefed on their issues. We want to deal with that,” Ncube said.

Army officers who spoke to the Zimbabwe Independent revealed disgruntlement was at an all-time high in the armed service, particularly within the junior ranks.

They said junior officers are unhappy about the unfulfilled promises made by the authorities in the aftermath of the military coup which toppled the late former president Robert Mugabe in November 2017.



Russia's Rosoboronexport Looks to Sell More Military Hardware to Africa

OE Watch Commentary: South Africa, which has the most robust military industry in Africa, has lately attracted strong interest from Russia. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African website *DefenceWeb* reports, Dmitry Shugaev, head of the Russian Federal Service of Military-Technical Cooperation, stated there are some promising projects they could cooperate on related to the joint development and production of military hardware. This equipment would be for the South African and Russian armed forces as well as for export.

South Africa is not the only African nation Russia is eyeing for military hardware deals. Alexander Mikheev, Head of Rosoboronexport, the Russian state arms exporter, said his company had sideline meetings with leaders of 15 African nations during the Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi in late October.

To entice sales at the summit, Rosoboronexport displayed a wide variety of equipment. These included scale models of the “Yak-130 combat training aircraft, the Pantsir-S1 anti-aircraft gun/missile system, the Tor-M2KM SAM system and the Mi-171SH military transport helicopter.” Of course, no Russian arms display would be complete without Kalashnikov assault rifles and its variants, including the latest K-200-series, GP-34 grenade launcher, and Vityaz-SN submachine gun. The full-scale models, such as the BPK-Ural and Typhoon protected vehicles were displayed outdoors.

Africa is already responsible for about a third of Rosoboronexport's exports, and in the years to come the company intends to increase this amount. Part of the company's sales pitch is its claim of offering solutions to many of Africa's problems, including terrorism, smuggling, and drug trafficking.

Mikheev added that Rosoboronexport appreciates Africa's “reserved attitude” towards the various sanctions that have been imposed on Russia. Based on sales of Russian military hardware to Africa, both in the recent past as well as those presently being negotiated, that “reserved attitude” of some African nations is paying off quite handsomely for Rosoboronexport. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

“Rosoboronexport appreciates the reserved attitude of its African partners towards various anti-Russian sanctions, which makes the continent open to fair competition, said Alexander Mikheev, Rosoboronexport's Director General.”



“The Pantsir-S1 anti-aircraft gun/missile system is just one of many items Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport had on display at the Russia-Africa Summit in Sochi”

Source: Vitaly V. Kuzman/Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantsir_missile_system#/media/File:MAKS_Airshow_2013_\(Ramenskoye_Airport,_Russia\)_521-05.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantsir_missile_system#/media/File:MAKS_Airshow_2013_(Ramenskoye_Airport,_Russia)_521-05.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: “Russia keen to manufacture military hardware with South Africa, *DefenceWeb (South Africa)*, 25 October 2019. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/russia-keen-to-manufacture-military-hardware-with-south-africa/>

In a strong signal of its willingness to engage with South Africa, the Russian Air Force on Wednesday sent two Tu-160 strategic bombers to Air Force Base Waterkloof in the type's first visit to the continent. They flew non-stop from Engels air base in Russia.

Before the summit, Cameroon indicated that it was interested in acquiring Pantsir-S1 air defence systems, with negotiations still underway, while Ethiopia recently agreed to by a Pantsir system and Russia and Egypt were holding talks regarding the delivery of weapons and Ka-52 combat helicopters for the Egyptian Navy's Mistral class amphibious assault ships.

Rosoboronexport appreciates the reserved attitude of its African partners towards various anti-Russian sanctions, which makes the continent open to fair competition, said Alexander Mikheev, Rosoboronexport's Director General.



The Revival of Mali-Russia Relations

OE Watch Commentary: On 22 October, Mali's French-language publication *Mali Actualites* discussed a meeting between Mali's president and Russia's ambassador to Mali in which Mali's president sought help from Russia regarding the country's national security crises. The article notes there have been several other contacts between the two countries' leaders, including one in June in Moscow. The latest meeting took place against the backdrop of the continued insurgency in Mali, despite French-led military support to the country. Now Russia is seeking to compensate by increasing its support to Mali.

The article points out that Russia is taking advantage of the perception that France has interfered in Malian politics and accusing France of neocolonialism, while evoking memories of Malian-Russian cooperation during the Cold War era to revitalize a "golden age" between the countries. At the same time, the article

questions how optimistic Malians should be about the partnership with Russia. While recognizing Mali and Russia have a common heritage through their former partnership, the article also indicates Russia has its own military and economic interests in Africa.

The article concludes by emphasizing the predicament Mali faces militarily, including multiple instances of ambushes that have led to large numbers of casualties. Thus Mali is searching for new partners to stem the tide of terrorism, including Russia. As the article demonstrates, Russia is an old partner from the Cold War but it is a new partner in terms of Mali's battle against terrorist groups. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



General Keba Sangaré during the review of troops, Mali, September 8, 2019.

Source: Kassim Traoré via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_G%C3%A9n%C3%A9ral_Keba_Sangar%C3%A9_lors_de_la_revue_des_troupes_au_Mali_le_8_septembre_2019.jpg, Public domain

“It is easy for the new Russia to reconnect with its ‘golden age’ of Russian-Malian cooperation and point the finger at neocolonialism and the mistakes of Franco-Malian cooperation.”

Source: “Rapprochement Bamako-Moscou: Pourquoi les FAMA doivent redoubler de vigilance (Bamako-Moscow Rapprochement: Why FAMA must redouble the vigilance),” *Mali Actualites*, 22 October 2019. <https://maliactu.net/mali-rapprochement-bamako-moscou-pourquoi-les-fama-doivent-redoubler-de-vigilance/>

Faced with a multidimensional crisis, Mali is forming relations with the world's major powers in order to end the suffering of Malians. It is in this context that the Russian track is becoming more and more defined. There have been several contacts, the most official of which were meetings between the Minister of Defense of Mali and his Russian counterpart and followed by that of the President of the Republic, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, and the Russian Ambassador to Mali.

With the growing rejection of French politics in Mali, it is easy for the new Russia to reconnect with its “golden age” of Russian-Malian cooperation and point the finger at neocolonialism and the mistakes of Franco-Malian cooperation. Today, Operation Serval, which is supposed to fight against terrorism, is the subject of harsh criticism to the extent that the expected results are slow to be realized. The massacres succeed one another on the side of the Fulani, and sometimes on the other side of the Tuareg or the Dogon, while the fight against the jihadists looks long and uncertain.

Should we fear after the meeting between [Keïta] and Igor Anatolyevich Gromyko? After the meeting of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta with the Russian ambassador to Mali, vigilance [is necessary] in order to prevent us from yet more destruction. At the center of the exchanges is the revitalization of historical relations between the two countries, which have a common heritage.



Russia Shows Up at Public Demonstrations in Mali

OE Watch Commentary: Mali is reeling from a series of violent attacks against its armed forces in which over 100 servicemen have died and more than a dozen remain missing and assumed to have been taken prisoner. On 12 and 26 October, protestors demonstrated in Bamako demanding an end to the French military mission and MINISMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stability Mission in Mali). Demonstrations like this are on the rise, with a number of them in Sévaré as well, where the G-5 Sahel Counterterrorism Force is headquartered. But now there is a new wrinkle. According to multiple local press sources, ‘Russia to the rescue’ seems to be a common theme of the recent protests.

According to *Journal du Mali*, which covered the 12 October demonstrations, “the accentuation of requests for Russian intervention” began in 2017 and currently “over six million Malians favor a Russian intervention.” There is no source material suggesting how the number of “six million” is reached. Speaking to dozens of Malians while on a recent trip to Mali, this author could not find one Malian who was pro-Russian intervention, or anyone who knew of one.

However, it is not totally surprising that Malians might be searching for an alternative considering that the four armed force components operating in the country; the Mali Armed Forces, G5-Sahel Counterterrorism Force, French Army and MINUSMA have not been able to stop the conflict and bring peace and stability.

It seems a little out of the blue and abrupt that Russia is the answer according to a small but vocal group of protestors. Yet Putin has fostered an image of strength from the time he took the reigns of leadership in the aftermath of the first Chechen war. Russia’s record of putting down the Chechen Islamist insurgency, its currently evolving role in Syria as peacemaker, and recent revelations of military intrigue in Libya, could add to the credibility of the messaging now imploring Malians to get behind a Russian answer to the country’s security woes.

But there may be other forces at work as well. There is strong suspicion in local press that a Russian solution in Mali is more likely the work of Russian information operations being carried out not only in Mali but also across the African continent. Mali press outlets list two organizations specifically behind the pro-Russian protests, Faso Ko and Group of Patriots of Mali (GPM). GPM’s Facebook page leads with the call, “the Group of Patriots of Mali is the initiator of the movement for petition so that Russia can return to Mali and help us recover all our territory.” Yet, it is unclear how much Malians know about these groups—or where they come from.

The demonstrations in Bamako were small compared to those taking place in Sévaré. However, according to an AFP correspondent at the demonstration on 12 October, GPM called for “Russian intervention to help the Malian army recover territorial integrity.”

There is very little background on either organization readily available and many Malians do not know either entity or their origins. All of this circumstantial evidence suggests that Russia is likely complicit with much of the pro-Russian rhetoric on display at the recent public protests. With the current cycle of violence in the country escalating, there will likely be additional pressure for alternative solutions, i.e., Russia to the rescue **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**



Source: GPM's Public Facebook Page

“...We want the intervention of Russia...”

Source: “Crise sécuritaire au Mali: La Russie à la rescousse? (Security crisis in Mali: Russia to the rescue?),” *Journal du Mali*, 17 October 2019. <https://www.journaldumali.com/2019/10/17/crise-securitaire-mali-russie-a-rescousse/>

Anger—the word sums up the state of mind of the protestors in Sévaré, which on Wednesday, 9 October, committed “body and soul for the unconditional departure of France, MINUSMA and all foreign forces” from Mali. At the call of the “Faso Ko” platform, at least a thousand people had arrived with slogans hostile to the international forces intervening in the area. On the sidelines, the messages of solicitation of Russia multiplied, especially through posters brandished by young protestors.

Source: “Du matériel de la mission de l’ONU pillé par des manifestants à Sévaré (UN mission equipment looted by protestors in Sévaré),” *Voice of Africa*, 12 October 2019. <https://www.voafrique.com/a/du-materiel-de-la-mission-de-l-onu-pille-par-des-manifestants-a-sevaré/5121446.html>

“We have no problem with France and MINUSMA, but they have proved their limit, that’s why we want the intervention of Russia,” said protester, Clement Dembele.

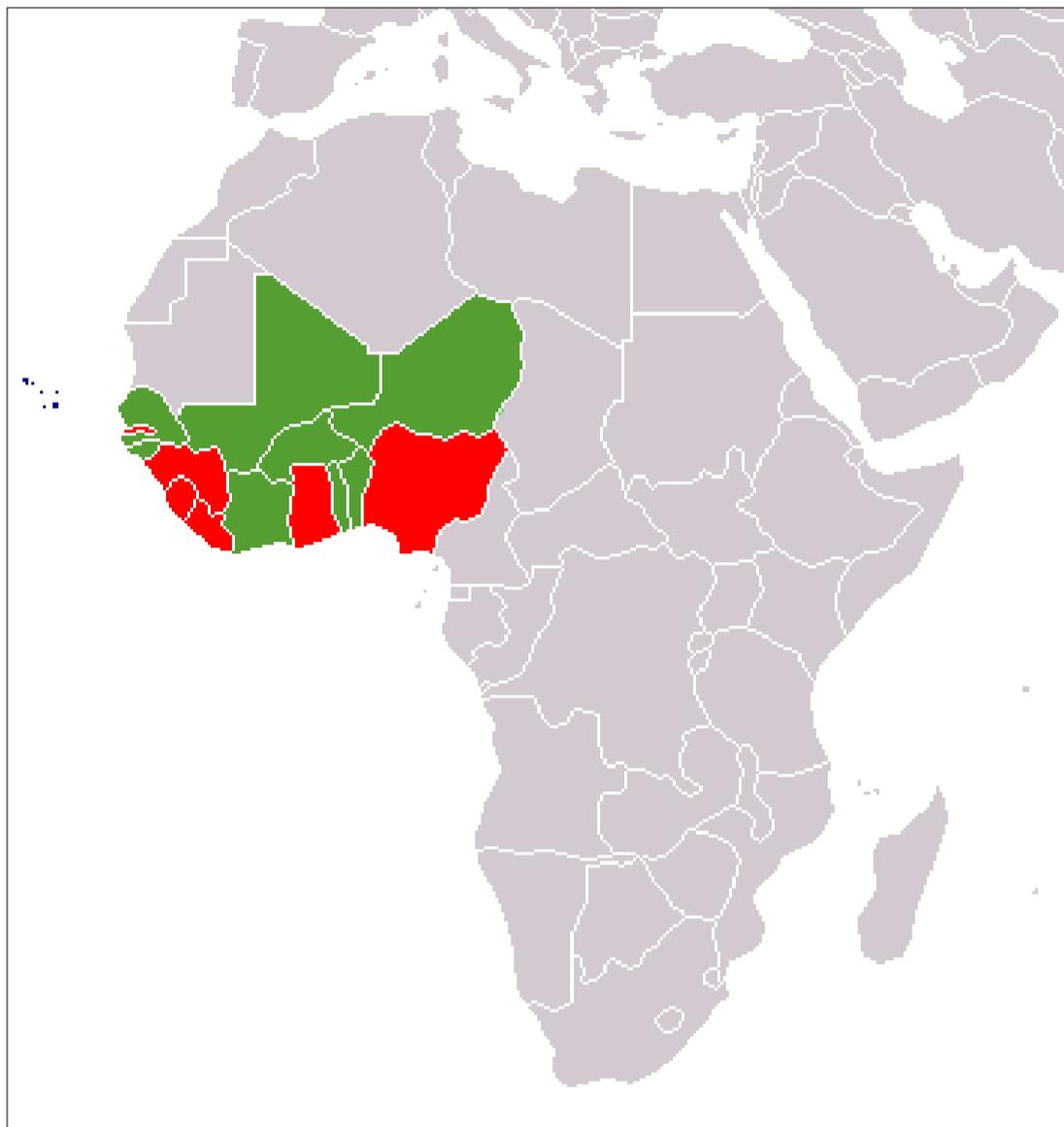


West African Troops to Deploy to Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso

OE Watch Commentary: The excerpted 25 October article in *Jeune Afrique* emphasizes how the focal point of counter-terrorism in West Africa is increasingly becoming the Mali-Niger-Burkina Faso border region. The article mentions the upcoming West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) military leaders' meeting, which will occur later in 2019 or in 2020 to "plan troops in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to fight against jihadist groups." The battalions being relocated to those three countries' border regions will include Ivorians and Senegalese. Their counter-terrorism operations are urgent because the jihadist groups are conducting daily attacks in those regions.

The decision to concentrate troops in the border regions of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso was made after the summit of heads of state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in September 2019 in Burkina Faso. At the summit it was agreed that West African states should coordinate because the jihadists' pattern of operations are elusive and any country in the region could be the next target. For example, while Mali was originally the main operational area for jihadists, they later expanded to Niger and Burkina Faso.

A further reason for urgency mentioned in the article is that not only have jihadist attacks led to 11,500 deaths, but also thousands wounded, millions displaced, and dwindling economic vitality. Once the new deployment of forces is made to Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, it will be seen whether the surge in troops there contributes to military success and a reduction of jihadist activities. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Economic Community of West African States.

Source: Alinor via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:UEMOA_and_Eco_in_ECOWAS.PNG, CC BY 3.0

“If we... do not integrate, if there is no synergy of action, they [jihadists] will always be one step ahead of us.”

Source: “Lutte contre le terrorisme au Sahel: l’Uemoa projette de mobiliser des troupes dans les zones frontalières (Fight against terrorism in the Sahel: Waemu plans to mobilize troops in border areas),” *Jeune Afrique*, 25 October 2019. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/847528/politique/lutte-contre-le-terrorisme-des-troupes-ouest-africaines-bientot-au-mali-au-niger-et-au-burkina/>

The military leaders of the countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) will meet in in late 2019 or early 2020 to plan troops in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to fight against jihadist groups, the Ivorian Minister of Defense, Hamed Bakayoko, announced. The joint operations will involve battalions of Senegalese, Ivorians, and others in theaters in Mali, Burkina Faso and elsewhere. “It’s an urgent operation. We want to identify areas, like the three-border zone (Mali / Burkina / Niger), where we will do joint maneuvers,” he said. These operations come in the wake of the summit of heads of state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in September in Ouagadougou. “If we states we do not integrate, and if there is no synergy of action, they (jihadists) will always be one step ahead of us. There is a progression. Yesterday it was Mali. (Today) Niger and Burkina.” At the Ouagadougou summit, the president of the ECOWAS commission, Jean-Claude Brou, recalled that there had been in these last four years “2,200 attacks, 11,500 dead, thousands of wounded, millions of displaced people, and significantly affected economic activity” in the Sahel.



Nigerian Committee Finds Officials Complicit in Banditry

OE Watch Commentary: Nigeria's northwestern Zamfara State has witnessed an increase in banditry and other forms of criminality, especially kidnappings, in recent months. As a result, the state's government designated a committee to investigate the causes of insecurity. The subsequently released report, which is discussed in the excerpted article in Nigeria's *New Telegraph*, revealed that some military officers and traditional rulers were involved in banditry themselves. This finding resulted in the dismissal of 10 military officers and the dethroning of over 30 traditional rulers and local village heads.

According to the article, the Zamfara governor recognizes that recommendations from committees to investigate social problems in Nigeria have seldom been implemented. The article nevertheless notes that the current governor's efforts should be welcome because Zamfara's past governor had nearly resigned his role as chief security officer as a result of his inability to bring change. The article also states the report itself has had an impact already. This is because military officers and traditional rulers are concerned they might find themselves on the list.



Zamfara State Nigeria.

Source: Jaimz height-field via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zamfara_State_Nigeria.png, CC BY 3.0

The article recommends that the governors of Zamfara's neighboring states also clamp down on banditry like the Zamfara governor is attempting. Given banditry's cross-border nature, that could help reduce the insecurity in Zamfara itself. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“We believe very strongly that the submission of the report is a necessary step in getting to the root of the security situation in the state.”

Source: “Fuelling insecurity in Zamfara,” *New Telegraph*, 22 October 2019. newtelegraphng.com/2019/10/fuelling-insecurity-in-zamfara/

Governor Bello Matawalle of Zamfara State may have ventured into an area that is dreaded by many. Two weeks ago, a committee he set up to look into insecurity and banditry that have become the lot of the state in the past 10 years submitted its report. The report was as damning as it could be, indicting top military officers and traditional rulers as being responsible for the banditry in the state. The committee, set up in July this year, had a former Inspector-General of Police, Muhammad Abubakar, as the chairman. At the end, Abubakar and his committee recommended the dismissal of some military officers and dethroning of the culpable traditional rulers. Abubakar said “five emirs, 33 district heads and several village heads were confirmed to be complicit in the banditry activities, which has lasted for about a decade.” He went on to say that some 10 military and police officers and civilians were “supporting the bandits, who have killed hundreds of innocent persons, burnt villages, destroyed farmlands, foodstuff and livestock.”

The immediate past governor of the state, Abdulaziz Yari, spent his eight-year tenure, lamenting on his powerlessness in the face of the daunting security challenges. He even vowed to drop his tag as the chief security officer of the state, owing to his inability to have a control of the security apparatus in the state.

We believe very strongly that the submission of the report is a necessary step in getting to the root of the security situation in the state. We also believe that such actions from other governors in the area might put a stop to the banditry that has taken over the North-West region of the country. At least, if not for anything, there is a fear now in the air in Zamfara among the traditional rulers, the army, police and even prominent civilians on the indictment list.



Nigeria Implements ID Regulations to Curb Boko Haram

OE Watch Commentary: Since the Boko Haram insurgency began in 2010, Nigeria has attempted numerous military offensives to counter the group. According to the excerpted article in *Premium Times*, the Nigerian military is now planning a new nationwide operation intended to address criminality generally, and to combat Boko Haram in the northeast of the country specifically. “Operation Positive Identification” requires all Nigerian citizens to obtain national identification documents and subjects them to random stops where they would have to show those documents to the military.

The article states that the military had previously been implementing this in the northeast part of the country where Boko Haram is present; but now they are expanding it nationwide. The military apparently believes that this policy has separated terrorists from civilians in Boko Haram-affected areas, especially because Boko Haram members are ideologically opposed to holding documents from a government they consider illegitimate and do not want to enter government facilities to obtain such documents. It is hoped that taking this operation nationwide separate criminals and bandits from civilians all over the country. However, criminals and bandits might not have the same reticence to obtain national documents as Boko Haram.

The article also highlights numerous reasons why this policy may be impractical besides that it has not been in effect long enough to conclude whether it is even aiding the war against Boko Haram. For example, it points out that even in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja, half of the population lacks national documents, and it will take time to obtain them. In the meantime, these civilians may be accosted by the military and be unfairly suspected of being a criminal or terrorist.

Furthermore, the article notes previous such attempts to implement similar campaigns in Nigeria, that were held up by bureaucracy. There is concern, therefore, that if the government does not deliver the national identification documents promptly to civilians, then it is the civilians who will bear the burden of the military’s policy. While the military has urged citizens not to panic about the new policy and is optimistic about its potential, the article does raise relevant concerns about how the policy’s implementation will proceed. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



A section of seventy Nigeria Formed Police Unit officers who were rotating into Mogadishu on 6 January 2014.

Source: AMISOM via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014_01_06_Nigeria_Formed_Police_Unit_Police_Replacement_and_Rotation_24_\(11798525496\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2014_01_06_Nigeria_Formed_Police_Unit_Police_Replacement_and_Rotation_24_(11798525496).jpg), Public Domain.

“Soldiers had been taking similar measures to separate citizens from terrorists in the Boko Haram-ravaged northeastern part of Nigeria.”

Source: “Nigerian military plans operation to demand ID cards from citizens,” *Premium Times*, 27 October 2019. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/359720-nigerian-military-plans-operation-to-demand-id-cards-from-citizens.html>

The Nigerian military has planned a nationwide operation to demand identity cards from citizens across the country. ‘Operation Positive Identification’ would see soldiers accosting citizens on the streets or highways and asking them to produce means of identification on the spot. Soldiers had been taking similar measures to separate citizens from terrorists in the Boko Haram-ravaged northeastern part of Nigeria. The military claimed last month that citizens in the North-east had been cooperating with troops to make the exercise successful by carrying with them valid identity documents. But the military announced on September 25 that the exercise will be extended nationwide to “checkmate bandits, kidnappers, armed robbers, ethnic militia, cattle rustlers as well as other sundry crimes across the various regions of Nigeria.”

Citizens have been warned to carry a valid means of identification, especially voter’s card, national identity card, driver’s license, international passport, whenever they are going out to avoid being seen as criminally-minded by soldiers. Kennedy Angbo, a human rights activist in Abuja, said “If law enforcement agencies have a reason to suspect a citizen, they should go after that citizen and not subject the whole country to fear. More than half of Nigerians do not have identity cards, so what do you expect them to carry around,” the activist said. Nigeria has long faced challenges in compiling a unified database of its citizens. In 2007, a commission was created to register and issue ID cards to all citizens above 16. But over a decade later, only a few million people have enrolled and even fewer number of people had been issued the plastic identity cards.

Nigerian Army spokesperson, Sagir Musa, and Defence Headquarters spokesperson, Onyema Nwachukwu, urged citizens “not to panic on seeing an increased presence of military personnel.” He said the military would continue to secure the country, protect lives and properties of all Nigerians through multiple exercises, including the ‘Operation Positive Identification.’



Chile Under Attack

OE Watch Commentary: As the accompanying references attest, Chile, fell under attack in October. Major, extensive destruction of public facilities and services occurred in this country known for having among the best economic performances in the hemisphere, and for taking pride in an orderly and respectful social habit.

The first accompanying reference is of an in-depth interview with Chilean Andrés Barrientos, co-founder of the think-tank *Ciudadano Austral*. Mr. Barrientos puts the events into some context, and dispels the standard assertion that the rioting had something to do with a rise in subway fares. The fares were not raised much, and did not apply to students or the elderly. The subway fare was, according to many informed Chileans including Mr. Barrientos, a thin pretext.

The second and third articles provide a revealing snapshot of the situation on 13 November, the first about the level of violence, and the second about its political consequences. Communists and other leftist parties in the legislature have called for the resignation of the President. He has rejected that, but has had to leave the presidential offices, evidently for reasons of personal safety. He has agreed to begin a process for re-writing the national Constitution. Subsequently, how to go about doing that quickly became the question.

The fourth accompanying source offers one perspective about how and why this is happening. It features comments by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, who claims, “all of goals planted in the Forum of Sao Paulo are being realized.” Noteworthy is that the massive marches and demonstrations in Venezuela did not result in extensive destruction to infrastructure or private property. They also didn’t result in any significant political change. They were also not inspired, organized and funded by the violent left. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Palacio de La Moneda, the seat of the President of the Republic of Chile, in Santiago, Chile.

Source: Miguel Hernandez via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palacio_de_La_Moned_-_miguelreflex.jpg, CC BY 2.0

“...This has been gestating for years...”

Source: Mamela Fiallo Flor, “Los destrozos en Santiago no son vandalismo, es guerra subversiva (The heavy damage in Santiago is not vandalism, it is subversive war),” *Panam Post*, 19 October 2019. <https://es.panampost.com/mamela-fiallo/2019/10/18/los-destrozos-en-santiago-no-son-vandalismo-es-guerra-subversiva/>

A superficial analysis would focus on a rise of less than 4% in the ticket price on the subway train. My judgement is that this has been gestating for years by way of the whole cultural, labor, educational and ideological narrative show, ceded by the right to our country's left. Underestimating the power of ideas and theoretical-practical action that is behind the constant fight in what we tend to call politics, there has been an ideological abandonment on the part of the political elites regarding the ideas of liberty...[Just] during the course of this interview, more than eight metro stations have been burned, in addition to part of a building of an energy company.

Source: Tomás Molina J. ed., “Gobierno: Hubo más de mil personas detenidas y 347 policías lesionados en las últimas 24 horas (Government: There were more than a thousand persons detained and 347 policemen wounded in the last 24 hours),” *EMOL.com*, 13 November 2019. <https://www.emol.com/noticias/Nacional/2019/11/13/967054/Mas-de-mil-detenidos.html>

As it stands, up to 0900 today, the department registered '398 events reported to the Carabineros', of which '198 correspond to serious events', 139 more than what was recorded in Tuesday morning's assessment.....1,020 persons detained, close to 200% [sic] more than counted in yesterday's report, when 342 were registered. As for wounded, Interior [office] expressed that there were 347 police officers wounded and 46 wounded civilians...

Source: María Cristina Morero, “La cronología de las tensas horas que derivaron en el anuncio del Presidente de avanzar en tres acuerdos nacionales (The chronology of the tense hours flowing from the announcement of the President to proceed with three national agreements),” *EMOL.com*, 13 November 2019. <https://www.emol.com/noticias/Nacional/2019/11/13/967056/Cronologia-de-anuncio-de-Pinera.html>

...President Sebastián Pinera called on all the actors to attain three great national accords: for peace, for justice and a new Constitution...all of the parties of the center-left...signed a declaration that ratified their support for the realization of an initiating plebiscite and a Constituent Assembly as the mechanism for changing the Fundamental Charter. [That] position got the attention of the government supporters, given that, up to that moment, from the government standpoint, negotiations with the opposition block had been going well...

Source: Staff, “El continente americano paga el alto precio de no haber detenido a tiempo al monstruo rojo (The American Continent pays a high price for not having detained the red monster on time),” *PanAm Post*, 21 October 2019. <https://es.panampost.com/panam-staff/2019/10/21/editorial-la-region-paga-el-alto-precio-de-no-haber-detenido-a-tiempo-al-monstruo-rojo/>

One would have to be very innocent to not realize that we Latin Americans are witnessing a dangerous reordering of the great threats that the region has lived in the last seventy years. 'The plan is going perfectly. You know what I'm talking about. All of the goals that we had planted in the Forum of Sao Paulo are being realized. It is going much better than we had thought', Nicolás Maduro said while the whole region burns in riots and sackings...But it is nothing new...



What is the Puebla Group?

OE Watch Commentary: A new organization has appeared in the firmament of activist left regional entities. It is called the Puebla Group, and its first meeting is reported to have been in Puebla, Mexico this July. The accompanying references provide insight into this organization.

Fortuitous for the new entity is that one of its founders, Alberto Fernández, was just elected President of Argentina. He will take the reins of that country's government in early December, and before that, in November, Fernández will lead the second plenary of the Puebla Group in Buenos Aires. The first accompanying reference offers an opinion as to what this organization is and does. The second reference names names. It is a list of high-level progressivist personalities. According to the source, there are thirty-six members, including the following sixteen: Evo Morales, Álvaro García Linera, Alberto Fernández, Martín Torrijos, Alicia Bárcena, Verónica Mendoza, Inacio Lula da Silva, Dilma Rousseff, José "Pepe" Mujica, Marco Enríquez-Ominami, Aloizio Mercadante, Fernando Lugo, Ernesto Samper, Leonel Fernández, Rafael Correa and José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The list includes ten ex-presidents. The organization seems to be a holding pen of leading leftist politicians, an obvious intention being to return them to power. The same reference ties the new organization to the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC (<http://celacinternational.org/>).

The third reference offers an informed opinion about what the Forum of Sao Paulo (FSP) is and does. It is included here because of the likely relationship of the new organization to the FSP, as asserted in the fourth reference. The fourth reference especially ties the organizations to the current violence sweeping the region. None of the three mentioned, interlocked organizations, the Puebla Group, CELAC, or the FSP is friendly to the United States. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...A new international organization has begun to gain strength in the region in the service of Latin-American progressive leaders...”

“...In its declaration of intentions, the Puebla Group asserts the necessity to regain power ...”

Source: La Nación, “Qué es el Grupo de Puebla, el nuevo eje progresista de América Latina al que apunta Alberto Fernández (What is the Puebla Group, the new Latin American progressive axis directed by Alberto Fernández?),” *La Nación* and *Rueters*, 1 November 2019. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/el-mundo/que-es-grupo-puebla-nuevo-eje-progresista-nid2302810>

“...A new international organization has begun to gain strength in the region in the service of Latin-American progressive leaders, who will meet for the second time this coming November between the 8th and the 10th in Buenos Aires, in which president-elect Alberto Fernández will participate with the aim of planning regional integration... Between the 12th and 14th of July, more than 30 of the regions progressive leaders met for the first time in the city of Puebla, Mexico determined to form the Latin American Progressive's Group, 'a space for reflection and political interchange in Latin America', according to its declaration... According to its members, this new progressive axis arose as a necessity to contain the 'advance of the conservative right'...”

Source: Ramón Jara A, “A pocos días de renunciar, Evo Morales y Álvaro García Linera se incorporan al Grupo de Puebla (Just a few days after resigning, Evo Morales y Álvaro García Linera join the Puebla Group),” *EMOL.com*, 13 November 2019. <https://www.emol.com/noticias/Internacional/2019/11/13/967072/Morales-Garcia-Linera-Grupo-Puebla.html>

“Both new memberships add to those of ex-president of Panama Martin Torrijos, of the Peruvian ex-candidate Verónica Mendoza and the executive secretary of CEPAL, Mexican Alicia Bárcena...the last to join were the ex-chiefs of State of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva y Dilma Rousseff, and on the part of Uruguay, José "Pepe" Mujica...”

Source: Federico Boccanera, “El Foro de Sao Paulo: ¿qué es? (The Forum of Sao Paulo: What is It?),” *La Patilla*, 23 October 2019. <https://www.lapatilla.com/2019/10/23/federico-boccanera-el-foro-de-sao-paulo-que-es/>

“As a consequence of the convulsions that are presenting themselves in countries such as Ecuador, Chile and Bolivia, the media clergy for the formation of public opinion has frequently mentioned the Forum of Sao Paulo as an important factor, including as the fundamental factor. Much is said of the 'Forum of Sao Paulo', but, What is it?...a hint – it is not a political organization.

The FSP in not a 'socialist international', its function is analogous to the Logia P2, a degenerated masonic lodge that connected civil and military powers of the Italian State with private legal and criminal powers (bank, Company, mafia) both national and international... The FSP is therefore a system of power that coordinates powers, recruits operators, organizes operations and most importantly: occupies itself finding and channeling financing. That 'political organization' thing is a front. Fort he P2 the front was 'masonic lodge'.”

Source: Luis García Planchart, “El grotesco Halloween de las manifestaciones foro-paulistas (The grotesque Halloween of the foro-paulist demonstrations),” *Opinático sin oficio*, 21 October 2019. <https://opinaticosinoficio.blogspot.com>

“It was not a coincidence that all these social grievances rose along with the launching of the Puebla Group in Mexico – during the first half of July 2019 – by the defeated candidate for the presidency of Chile, Marco Enríquez-Ominami and the founder of the Workers Party and ex- Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Brazil, Aloizio Mercadante, supported by the foundations Center for Strategic Studies and International Relations (CEERI), of Argentina, and Progresa, or Chile; and the meeting of the Forum of Sao Paulo in Caracas – carried out during the last week of July of this year... In its declaration of intentions, the Puebla Group asserts the necessity to regain power...”



Colombia Collapsing Left?

OE Watch Commentary: Foreign reportage and opinion about Colombia in October was disheartening to those who prefer not to see the radical left take control of that country as they have Venezuela. The first accompanying reference is by Eduardo Mackenzie, a highly regarded journalist and author from Paris. He is commenting on a recent event in southern Colombia in which a number of minors were perhaps killed in a government bombardment of a FARC encampment. The victims were apparently underage recruits of the guerrilla, but the public narrative, successfully advanced by a pro-FARC faction within the Colombian legislature (whose presence there is a result of the 2016 negotiation between the FARC and the government) blamed it on an alleged moral lapse of the military. Leftist opposition in the legislature and media demanded that the Minister of Defense resign, which he did. According to Mackenzie, the president, Iván Duque, did little to counter the charge. Mackenzie laments that the president's surrender to the left's deployment of lawfare was just an invitation to another attack. As outlined in the second accompanying reference, that feared attack was pre-announced as a nation-wide demonstration to begin on 21 November. Especially in the context of a recent surge of urban violence in several South American countries, the prospects may indeed appear lamentable, especially in Bogotá. The destruction being wrought in Santiago is a stark reminder of what is known in Latin America as the “*Bogotazo*,” the 1948 immolation of the city and folkloric beginning of decades of uncivil violence. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Their [a number of minors] presence and their death in that place... was and is the responsibility of the FARC and... not the Military Forces...”



Cartoon that tells and illustrates the events of Bogotazo.
Source: Miguel Olaya via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/juglardelzipa/2398542897/in/photostream/>, CC BY 2.0

Source: Eduardo Mackenzie, “Colombie: comment la subversion a fait tomber le ministre de la Défense (Colombia: How the subversives caused the Minister of Defense to fall),” *Dreuz Info*, 10 November 2019. <https://www.dreuz.info/2019/11/10/colombie-comment-la-subversion-a-fait-tomber-le-ministre-de-la-defense/>

“...the public force did not have knowledge of the presence of minors at the attacked encampment...their presence and their death in that place, this past September 2, was and is the responsibility of the FARC and only them and not the Military Forces... If the chief executive had allowed him [the Defense Minister] to make an effort to face public opinion to clear it up, combating and dismantling, as was possible, each point in the rosary of lies...they [the accusers] would have been unmasked and isolated...The country is presently seeing how the fragility of Colombian institutions, and the absence of State counterintelligence services, make it once again possible for thrill-seekers and extremists to come together to take out, without much effort, a Minister of Defense. Since the government let them have that goal, they are already preparing another...”

Source: Editors, Organizaciones plantean huelga nacional el 21 de noviembre en Colombia (Organizations plan a national strike in Colombia the 21st of November),” *El Telégrafo and EFE*, 6 November 2019, <https://www.eltelgrafo.com.ec/noticias/mundo/8/huelga-colombia-21noviembre>

The objective of the PDETs is to achieve structural transformation in the countryside and rural ambit, and an equitable [relationship making] between the countryside and the city... The transformation of the 170 Colombian counties most affected by violence, the presence of illicit crops, poverty and abandonment by the State, has already begun...



Bolivia: Evo Morales Out

OE Watch Commentary: From Bolivia come reports of an interesting counter-current to the leftist wave of violence and electoral victories in other Latin American countries. On 20 October, the country held presidential elections, which Evo Morales claimed to have won with a sufficient margin to avoid a second round run-off. Not everyone in Bolivia was convinced. At first came curious reports that in an outlying department, a statue of Hugo Chávez was torn down in public, followed by reports of a seemingly indifferent response from police authority. Within a couple of weeks, reportage emerged of police mutinies, which quickly extended to at least five of the nine departments. President Morales called it a coup d'état, and indeed it seemed to meet the standard rubric.

The possibility that the uprisings were spontaneous is all but zero. The mutineers were able to secure live television broadcasts of their demands, and unlike in Venezuela, a national armed force challenged the executive. If we call it a coup, however, it is an inside-out one in that the police did not march in and arrest the president or take over the government. They just left him with no presidential guard, and the military backed off as well. Morales (and probably his powerful vice-president, Álvaro García Linera) saw the writing on the wall. The socialist president of Mexico, André Manuel López Obrador, extended asylum to Morales and reportedly another 20 leading Bolivian political personalities. The official Mexican reasons may be revealing – that the situation endangered their lives. Morales called on both the international community and his internal supporters to see these events as an affront to and violation of democracy and the rule of law. Some categorized that assertion as a stretch, especially in light of what appeared to have been obvious election fraud on the part of Morales' administration, and that with help from the Venezuelans. The Argentinean foreign ministry, for example, stated that the situation did not meet the definition of a coup. If not for a few weeks, Morales might have sought asylum in Argentina rather than in Mexico. The Argentinean electorate just voted in a leftist leader, Alberto Fernández, but his term does not begin until 10 December. It will be of value to find out how the police were organized for a coordinated mutiny, and how the military was convinced to take a knee. At first impression, it appears that Evo Morales and Álvaro García did not accept the Cuban formula for control of those institutions (and for otherwise guarding the executive), as did Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Demonstrations in La Paz, Bolivia, 23 October 2019.
Source: Paulo Fabre via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manifestaciones_en_La_Paz,_Bolivia_en_contra_el_fraude_electoral_y_el_gobierno_de_Evo_Morales.jpg, CC BY-SA 4.0

“...Demonstrators pulled down a statue of ... Hugo Chávez...”

Source: Josué Meneses, “Técnicos venezolanos pretenden cambiar los resultados en Bolivia (Venezuelan technicians attempt to change the results in Bolivia),” *La Abeja*, 21 October 2019. <https://www.laabeja.pe/tecnicos-venezolanos-pretenden-cambiar-los-resultados-en-bolivia/>

“This 20 October, after releasing the first result of the elections carried out in Bolivia, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) suspended the transmission of results on the orders of Evo Morales, so that it would be possible to distort the numbers, with the assistance of Venezuelan technicians...”

Source: Bolivia: Manifestantes derribaron estatua de Hugo Chávez (Bolivia: Protesters take down statue of Hugo Chávez),” *El Nacional*, 22 October 2019. <https://www.elnacional.com/mundo/manifestantes-derribaron-estatua-de-hugo-chavez-en-bolivia/>

“...The night of 21 October 2019, opposition demonstrators pulled down a statue of the deceased Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chávez near Riberalta, Bolivia [in Beni Department]. According to images passed around on social media, the demonstrators tied a rope around the neck of the monument and pulled until they made it fall. They also cut off its legs with chain saws a chopped at it with machetes...The violence went through the night into Monday in Bolivia in protest against a supposed electoral fraud in favor of Evo Morales...”

Source: Editors, Morales llama a la oposición a dialogar, mientras se extienden los motines policiales por el país (Morales calls on the opposition to dialog, while the police riots extend through the country),” *ABC* and *EFE*, 9 November 2019. https://www.abc.es/internacional/abci-extienden-motines-policiales-bolivia-y-morales-habla-golpe-estado-201911091159_noticia.html

“The police riots extended yesterday in Sucre, the constitutional capital of Bolivia, after which a first group of police mutinied in the central city of Cochabamba. Apparently, according to Bolivian news sources, in other regions, such as the Andean city of Potosí, there have also been police revolts within the Bolivian Police, although there has not been an official announcement... In a live declaration on several Bolivarian television stations, the officer [a police woman speaking for the mutineers] called on the Armed Forces to not repress those in revolt, and asked the President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, that he dialog with the civic and opposition movements...Evo Morales asserted that democracy was at risk and classified the situation as a coup d'état.”

Source: Editors, “Evo Morales aceptó asilo ofrecido por México (Evo Morales accepted asylum offered by Mexico),” *El Nacional*, 11 November 2019. <https://www.elnacional.com/mundo/latinoamerica/evo-morales-acepto-asilo-ofrecido-por-mexico/>

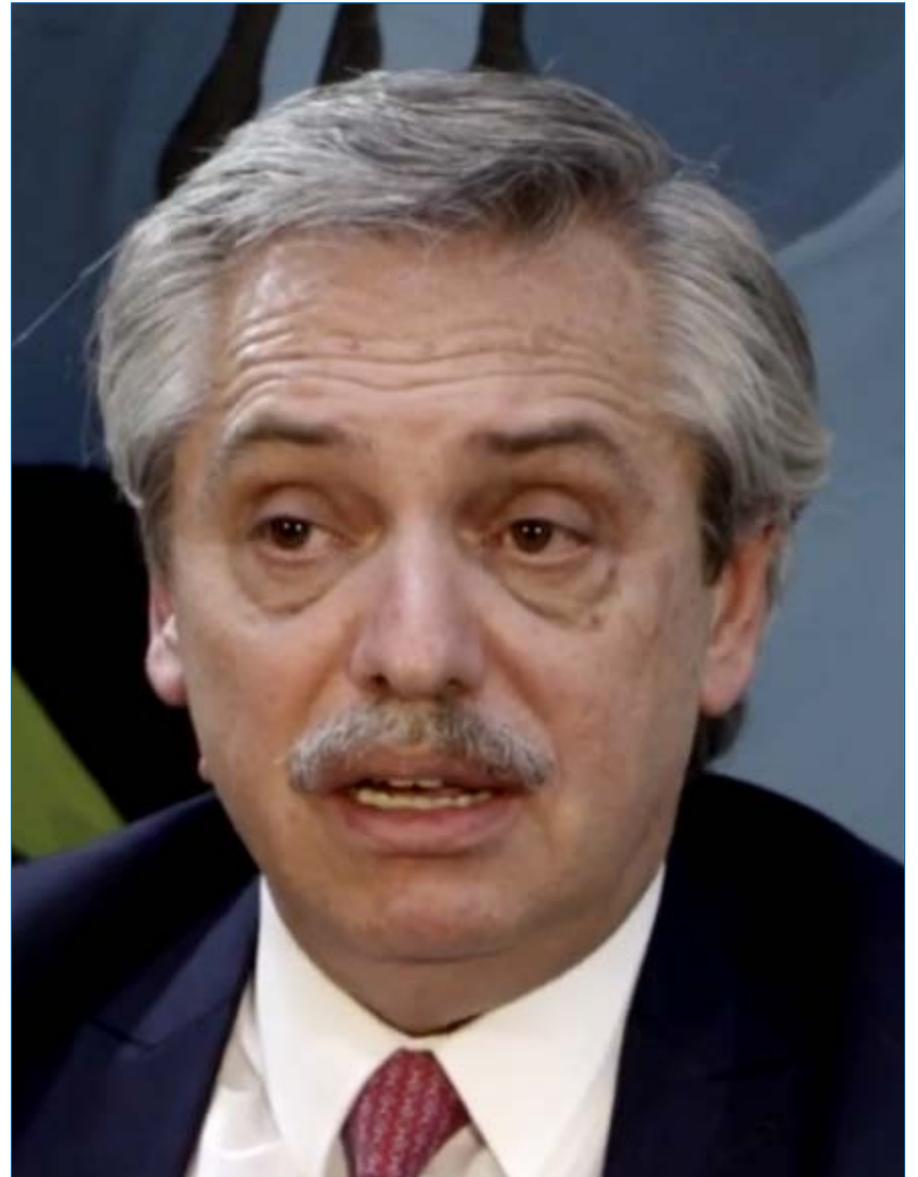
“The chancellor [Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard] informed that Morales asked for political asylum in Mexico...which he decided to give him ‘for humanitarian reasons... Additionally, the Mexican government made known its rejection of the ‘military operation under way’ in Bolivia, ‘like those tragic events that bloodied our Latin America in the past century’...”

Argentinean diplomat [Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie] indicated that the situation in Bolivia is at an ‘impasse’ and that there de not exist the elements to describe it as a ‘coup d'état’.”



Argentina Votes Left

OE Watch Commentary: Argentines went to the polls on 27 October. For president, they elected Alberto Fernández, whose term will begin on 10 December. He is a leftist, and the most consequential and clearest reaction to his victory came quickly from President Jairo Bolsonaro of Brazil, who is not a leftist. As reported in the second accompanying reference, President Bolsonaro is not happy with the result. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Alberto Fernandez.

Source: La García via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alberto_Fern%C3%A1ndez.png, CC BY 3.0

“...I think Argentina chose badly...”

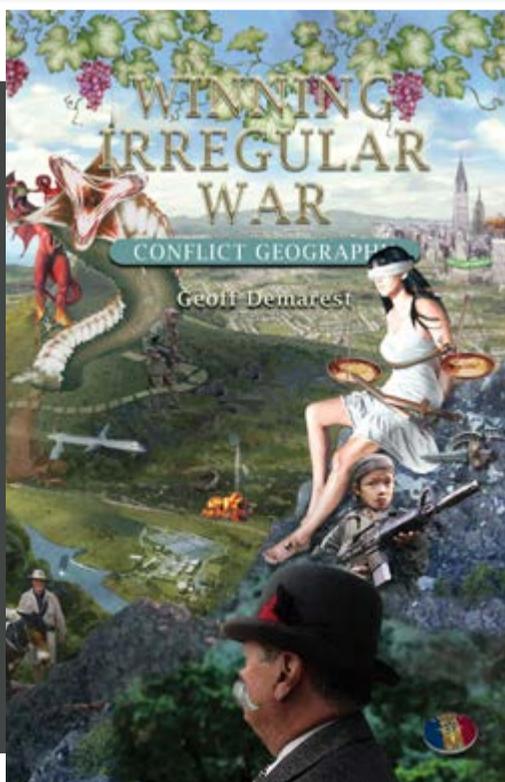
**- The President of Brazil, Jairo
Bolsonaro**

Source: Editors, “El peronista Fernández se impone con claridad en las presidenciales argentinas (Peronist Fernández clearly dominates in the Argentinean presidential elections),” *El País*, 28 November 2019. https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/10/27/argentina/1572135195_737076.html

“...the results give the victory to Alberto Fernández with 48% of the votes over 40.44% for the current president, Mauricio Macri, who has conceded defeat and announced that he invited his rival ‘to have breakfast tomorrow morning in the Casa Rosada in order to advance the transition...”

Source: Editors, “Bolsonaro critica a los electores argentinos por dar la victoria al peronista Fernández (Bolsonaro criticizes the argentinean electorate for giving peronist Fernandez the victory),” *El País*, 28 November 2019. https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/10/28/actualidad/1572273831_556456.html

“The President of Brazil...Jairo Bolsonaro...announced that for now he is not going to congratulate him [Alberto Fernández] and blames the electorate for having again raised the left to power in the neighboring country” ‘I lament it. I don’t have a crystal ball, but I think Argentina chose badly’.”



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/fmsol/m/fmsol-books/195392/download>



Propping Up Venezuelan Status Quo

OE Watch Commentary: A key platform in the Kremlin's foreign policy revolves around the assertion that the West (the US in particular) has developed a strategy of sparking "color revolutions" to remove unfriendly foreign leaders and expand its sphere of influence. Over the past several years, the Kremlin has taken measures to thwart this process in countries where it perceives that such a revolution would harm its interests (e.g. Syria, Ukraine). The accompanying three excerpts describe the measures which the Kremlin is using in Venezuela.

The first excerpt from the Russian official newspaper, *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, describes comments made "by Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs Konstantin Kosachev," who asserted "that Russia will continue to impede attempts by the United States and its allies to 'use the military option' in influencing the situation in Venezuela." Kosachev went on to claim that Venezuelans "can safely count on the support of the Russian Federation in normalizing the social and humanitarian situation."



Vladimir Putin held talks with President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela Nicolas Maduro in Moscow, December 2018.
Source: Kremlin.ru CCA 4.0 Intl

The second excerpt, from the pro-Kremlin site, *RIA Novosti*, quotes Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Storchak who stated that "Russia is considering the possibility of sending a permanent economic mission to Venezuela for a more detailed study of the situation in the economy." Curiously, Storchak claimed that "he did not rule out that one of the military advisers could become part of the economic mission," insisting that "there are good financiers among the military." Finally, the third excerpt, from the liberal weekly, *Novaya Gazeta*, asserts that "Venezuela received cash in the amount of \$315 million from Moscow." Quoting Western sources, the article claims, "to transport dollars and euros worth more than \$300 million, it took six aircraft. Cash flowed into the country from May 2018 to April 2019."

Over the past few years, Kremlin authorities have demonstrated that they are willing to use a variety of tools to prevent what they believe are Western attempts to foment revolution in certain countries where Russia has strategic interests. The Kremlin is now employing some of these tools in Venezuela. Such a strategy may work for the short term, but may prove ineffective unless the political leadership addresses the deeper domestic problems which initially prompted public protest. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

"...[Storchak] did not rule out that one of the military advisers could become part of the economic mission. "There are good financiers among the military," he said."

Source: Nikita Vyatchanin, "Косачев: Россия будет препятствовать любым попыткам оказывать военное давление на Венесуэлу (Kosachev: Russia will prevent any attempts to exert military pressure on Venezuela)," *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, 17 October 2019. <https://www.pnp.ru/politics/kosachev-rossiya-budet-prepyatstvovat-lyubym-popytkam-okazyvat-voennoe-davlenie-na-venesuelu.html>

Russia will continue to oppose Washington's efforts to exert military pressure on Caracas and condemns the introduction of unilateral sanctions against Venezuela. This was stated by Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs Konstantin Kosachev at a meeting with the head of the National Constituent Assembly of Venezuela....

The senator noted that the Russian Federation is closely following the events in Venezuela. "Our position was formulated in a special statement of the Federation Council on February 25 this year - we voted unanimously that our country will support the course that Venezuela chose as part of the actions of the country's legitimate authorities," he recalled.

...The parliamentarian added that Russia will continue to impede attempts by the United States and its allies to "use the military option" in influencing the situation in Venezuela - in his opinion, "this is unacceptable."

"Россия может направить в Венесуэлу постоянную экономическую миссию," [Russia may send a permanent economic mission to Venezuela] RIA Novosti, 24 October 2019. <https://ria.ru/20191024/1560162257.html>

Russia is considering the possibility of sending a permanent economic mission to Venezuela for a more detailed study of the situation in the economy, Deputy Finance Minister Sergei Storchak told reporters.... He did not rule out that one of the military advisers could become part of the economic mission. "There are good financiers among the military," he said.

"СМИ: Россия за год отправила в Венесуэлу наличных на 315 миллионов долларов," [Media: Russia sent \$ 315million in cash to Venezuela over the past year] Novaya Gazeta, 2 November 2019. <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/news/2019/11/02/156599-rossiya-za-god-otpravila-v-venesuelu-315-mln-dollarov-i-evro-nalichnymi>

Venezuela received cash in the amount of \$ 315 million from Moscow.... To transport dollars and euros worth more than \$ 300 million, it took six aircraft. Cash flowed into the country from May 2018 to April 2019.



China Increases its Engagement with Brazil

by Shanti Salas

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For the full article, see: <https://jamestown.org/program/looking-beyond-commodities-exports-china-increases-its-engagement-with-brazil/>

OE Watch Commentary: In June 2019, the People's Republic of China (PRC) scored a victory in its relationship with Brazil when it gained Brazil's support for its candidate to lead the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), over candidates put forward by France and Georgia. The PRC's candidate, Qu Dongyu, won 108 votes (over France's runner-up candidate with 71 votes) to become the next director-general of the FAO. The significance of Brazil's support for the PRC over France in the international body is especially striking as it was gained the same month that Brazil and the rest of the Mercosur South American trade bloc finalized a free trade agreement with the European Union.

China is Brazil's largest commodities export market and the relationship has been skewed toward low value-added commodities exports from Brazil to the PRC. However, in recent years, the PRC has emphasized infrastructure-based investment and has deepened its influence in Brazil in the cultural, diaspora, and media spheres, expanding the China-Brazil relationship.

Brazil has maintained diplomatic relations with the PRC since 1974. The two countries announced a "strategic partnership" in 1993, and by 2009 China had become Brazil's largest trading partner. The year 2009 also saw the first "BRIC" summit of the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, and China (later termed BRICS with the addition of South Africa in 2011). The 2014 BRICS summit, hosted in Fortaleza, Brazil, led to the creation of the New Development Bank, a Shanghai-headquartered multilateral development bank within which Brazil controls one-fifth of the voting rights. Brazil hosted the five-country BRICS summit in November 2019. In 2020, it is slated to host the fifth annual gathering of the New Development Bank. Without Brazil—Latin America's largest economy—the BRICS framework and its attendant New Development Bank would not have a strong anchor in the Americas.

Despite the development cooperation envisioned by BRICS, as well as certain ideological affinities between the PRC and the former governments of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, the frustrations of a Sino-Brazilian relationship predicated on low value-added commodities exports have grown more apparent. Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has made statements highly critical of China's economic relationship with Brazil. During his 2018 presidential campaign (and continuing into office), he frequently repeated the statement that China could "buy in Brazil" but "not buy Brazil." Bolsonaro has also spoken out against further privatization of Brazil's electricity sector to the PRC's State Grid Corporation of China and State Power Investment Corporation. Bolsonaro was also the first Brazilian president to visit Taiwan, although while still a candidate.

The relationship between the PRC and Brazil has never been focused solely on trade. Although the two countries are geographically distant, China's geostrategic concerns remain close to the surface; and even as the existing China-Brazil economic relationship has generated criticism, China has shifted its discourse with respect to Brazil, focusing on infrastructure development, alongside an active PRC outreach in the cultural, diaspora, and media spheres.

In 2017, with the launch of a \$20 billion China-Brazil Fund, former PRC Vice Premier Wang Yang stated that investment in Brazil would focus on infrastructure development. The same year Xi Jinping stated to former Brazilian president Michel Temer that the PRC "appreciates" Brazil's long-time adherence to a "One China" policy, and aims to "synergize" the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with Brazil's own development strategies. In 2019, PRC Vice President Wang Qishan also stressed the importance of coupling the BRI to Brazil's development.

While Chinese public discourse stresses large-scale infrastructure investment, the reality is that much of this investment reinforces the commodities export relationship. PRC companies have shown particular interest in projects that enhance Brazil's infrastructure for the purpose of agricultural and mineral exports. State-owned China Communications Construction Company has taken particular interest in railroad concessions for grain transport, and is currently building a port in the northern coastal city of São Luís to expand export cargoes.

The PRC's state television network China Central Television (CCTV) has had a presence in Brazil since 2010, and Beijing's engagement with Brazilian media has further ramped up in recent years. In 2017, CCTV inked a strategic partnership agreement with one of Brazil's largest private broadcast networks, Rede Bandeirantes.

The Bolsonaro government has recognized the need to diversify its commercial relationship with China into higher value-added activities such as services and renewable energy. Despite this, commodities exports are expected to grow. Observers of Brazil-China relations should watch for increased PRC presence in the Brazilian media, and targeted infrastructure investments in the country. Such engagements, and investments under the rubric of the BRI, are gradually expanding a relationship that continues to be skewed toward low value-added commodities exports.

End OE Watch Commentary (Salas)



Warmer Russian-Cuban Relations

OE Watch Commentary: Over the past couple of months, the Kremlin leadership has worked diligently to strengthen its relations with Cuba. The accompanying brief excerpt from the military supplement *Nezavisamoye Voennoye Obozreniye (NVO)*, describes the highlights of recent meetings between Russian and Cuban officials, suggesting possible areas of future cooperation. The article begins by recounting how “Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Cuban leader Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez on October 29 in Moscow.” While the article lacks specific details of this meeting, it does assert, “during the talks, prospects for further strengthening the Russian-Cuban partnership and current issues on the international agenda were discussed.” It also points out that “at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, the Russian president intends to visit the island soon.”

The article then describes the October 2019 visits of both Prime Minister Medvedev and Secretary of the Security Council Nikolai Patrushev to Cuba, where they discussed increased Russian investment and security assistance. The article states that “Moscow and Havana signed contracts for the modernization of the Cuban military industry through a loan of 38 million euros to Cuba for the development of the defense sector.” It also points out “in 2019, the Cuban military for the first time took part in the international army games ‘ARMI-2019,’” held in August. The article recalls, “Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu previously noted his interest in expanding cooperation in the naval area... and stated that Russian-Cuban relations in the military and military-technical sphere are developing constructively.” Perhaps most significantly, the article quotes “Anatoly Antonov, the ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States,” who suggested that should the US deploy “intermediate and shorter-range missiles on the territory of European states near the borders of Russia... Russia will have to take additional measures to ensure its security.”

As the article emphasizes, “Russia and Cuba are really close to each other,” and that after the “break in relations in post-Soviet times, Russia is returning to Cuba and bilateral economic, trade and military technology are resuming.” However, the article asserts that these ties are no longer based on a discredited ideology, but rather upon “friendly and quite pragmatic relations, bringing mutual benefits to partners.” The article concludes on a somewhat ominous note, quoting Russian Prime minister Medvedev who stated, “strictly speaking, in Soviet times we didn’t have a base here [Cuba], there was a team, but the opening of a Russian base is being discussed.” (Also see: “More Russia in Cuba,” in *OE Watch*, November 2019) **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“... After a break in relations in post-Soviet times, Russia is returning to Cuba and bilateral economic, trade and military technology are resuming...”



Vladimir Putin talks with President of Cuba Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez, Moscow, 29 October 2019.
Source: Kremlin.ru, CCA 4.0 Intl

Source: Irina Dronina, “Россия далеко, а Куба рядом (Russia is far away, and Cuba is near),” *Nezavisamoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 8 November 2019. http://nvo.ng.ru/nvo/2019-11-08/1_1069_cuba.html

Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Cuban leader Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez on October 29 in Moscow. During the talks, prospects for further strengthening the Russian-Cuban partnership and current issues on the international agenda were discussed.... The positive process of strengthening the statehood of the republic was noted by Vladimir Putin during negotiations in Moscow. At the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, the Russian president intends to visit the island soon...

...Earlier this month, Raul Castro and Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez met with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, which became the prologue to the talks between the two presidents. During Medvedev’s visit, drilling of the first oil well at the Cuban field was launched and eight agreements were signed, the largest of which concerned a ten-year program to restore the national railway infrastructure... , On October 15-16, 2019, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Patrushev visited Cuba, who also met with the first officials of the republic.

Russia and Cuba are really close to each other.... Over the years, at the invitation of the Cuban government, many Russian delegations visited the country, and unforgettable warm meetings remained forever in the memory of Russians, and gifts from the Castro family are stored as sacred relics. Many Cubans studied in the USSR... After a break in relations in post-Soviet times, Russia is returning to Cuba and bilateral economic, trade and military technology are resuming.

...Russian oil and oil products contribute to Cuba’s resource provision and its energy security. Our country is increasing investment, and the beginning of the reconstruction of almost a thousand kilometers of railways is a confirmation of this. But now this is not irrevocable help, as in the days of the Soviet Union. Now between the countries relations of modern states are established, which are based on the historical past, are friendly and quite pragmatic, bringing mutual benefits to partners.

...Moscow and Havana signed contracts for the modernization of the Cuban military industry through a loan to Cuba for the development of the defense sector of 38 million euros. All previously delivered equipment is being modernized, and assistance is being provided in the possibility of making improvements on its own, it is planned to purchase Russian aviation products. In 2019, the Cuban military for the first time took part in the international army games “ARMI-2019.” Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu previously noted his interest in expanding cooperation in the naval area and stated that Russian-Cuban relations in the military and military-technical sphere are developing constructively.

...The media continues to discuss the possibility of deploying Russian weapons in response to the appearance of American intermediate and shorter-range missiles on the territory of European states near the borders of Russia. According to Anatoly Antonov, the ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United States, who aired on Channel One in the Big Game program, if such weapons appear in Europe, Russia will have to take additional measures to ensure its security.

...Press reports that the leaders of Russia and Cuba are discussing various scenarios for the development of the international situation, Dmitry Medvedev confirmed. According to the Prime Minister, “strictly speaking, in Soviet times we didn’t have a base here, there was a team,” but the opening of a Russian base is being discussed.



Catalonia Not Well

OE Watch Commentary: Barcelona continues to be a political tinderbox. The most recent disturbances were investigated by the *Audiencia Nacional*, a tribunal with appellate and trial competence, with jurisdiction throughout Spain. It has its own investigative capacity as well. It may be a particularly Spanish institution, established in 1977 during the transition after Franco's death in 1975. It is intended to consider terrorism, drug-trafficking and other major organized criminal activities of that reach, including rebellion, while hopefully avoiding prosecutorial excesses. As the first accompanying passage notes, its report of the disturbances in Catalonia finds what some Spanish take as a flash of the obvious -- that they were the creature of a radical political organization, not just a public reaction. Understanding the order of battle of radical leftist opposition organization in Spain is a difficult task, however, given the overlap of mainstream and locally governing parties and social organizations and competing goals among those entities.

The second accompanying reference is of a completely separate yet completely related issue – Spain's central government, led by socialist Pedro Sánchez is acting to control an effort by the Catalanian government to create an independent database of Catalanian citizens for purposes of citizen identification and control. The intention is to further Catalanian independence, the contraption even being called the Catalanian Digital Republic. The Spanish government in Madrid is not having it. The tiff, however, is a clear example of the overlap of physical territoriality and cyber-struggle.

The third reference evidences another, background problem in the application of violent forms of struggle. The economy of Catalonia, which is a leading wealth producer in Spain, has been taking a beating. The litany of hits on the Barcelona economy is a long one, but the fourth referenced article was apparently intended to bring the problem home to a wider set of Spanish citizens. The author claims that most of the direct costs of the violence is going to be borne by nation-wide insurance companies, not local government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

“...Those acts of protest were organized, that is, they were not spontaneous...”

Source: Carlota Guindal and Mayka Navarro, “Los disturbios de Cataluña fueron organizados, según la investigación (According to the investigation, the Catalanian disturbances were organized),” *La Vanguardia*, 25 October 2019. <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20191025/471176431035/disturbios-cataluna-investigacion-organizacion-actuacion-policia.html>

“...The open investigation at the Audiencia Nacional of separatist groups that are the protagonists of the altercations of this past week is arriving at the conclusion that those acts of protest were organized, that is, they were not spontaneous, or out-of-control radicals, but that they were remotely controlled by an organization and have a political leadership...”

Source: Editors, “Cataluña: El Govern ve un “golpe de Estado” el decreto ley contra la República digital catalana (Catalonia: The Govern sees the legal decree opposing the digital Catalonia republic),” *El Mundo* and *Europa Press*, 31 October 2019. <https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2019/10/31/5dbad9e9fc6c83d3438b469d.html>

“...The Pedro Sánchez Executive Office is avoiding, by way of royal decree, that the Generalitat use data of the Catalonians to further independence... ‘Sánchez is announcing a digital coup d’état in Catalonia’... It [the Catalanian government] asserts that the Spanish government is afraid of Catalonia advancing digitally... ‘The socialists are demonstrating that, just like the PP [traditional rightist party], that their only interest is governing against Catalonia’...”

Source: César Urrutia and Raquel Villaécija, “La revuelta tras la sentencia del proceso sacude la economía de Cataluña (The Uprising after the trial decision shocked the Catalanian economy),” *El Mundo*, 18 October 2019. <https://www.elmundo.es/economia/2019/10/18/5da8b07c21efa0d9678b45b9.html>

“...The impact arrived in the form of a withdrawal of billions of euros in bank deposits toward entities outside Catalonia... In just three days the signals are being felt in areas such as tourism and conventions and fairs...The impact on tourism is immediate... Barcelona is also an important logistics point and the strike convoked today will generate delivery problems...”

Source: Marcos Iriarte, “La factura de los disturbios en Barcelona ya rebasa los 1,5 millones y la pagarán todos los asegurados de España (The bill for the disturbances in Barcelona is already topping 1.5 million and will be paid by all Spanish insured),” *El Mundo*, 18 October 2019. <https://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2019/10/18/5da97e2821efa079038b45b9.html>

“...the costs of the disturbances in Barcelona are beginning to accumulate. The bill grows as the nights of flames and acts of sabotage on roads and railways advance... In spite of what the majority of people might think, the bill to fix all this imperfections will not be paid from the municipal coffers or from the State. They will come from the pockets of citizens who have insurance policies, whether car, house or life...”



Spain Next to Ignite?

OE Watch Commentary: In the context of spreading politically-motivated street violence in Latin America, and recent experience of the yellow-vest demonstrations in France, some observant Spaniards are voicing concern that Spain may be on the verge. The Spanish government, currently left-socialist, exhumed the body of Francisco Franco, removing it from a place of honor and delivering it back to the Franco family for reburial. The symbolism of the move was lost on nobody. There also exist Christian religious monuments at the Valley of the Fallen where Franco had been buried. To some, that iconography is as polarizing ideologically as it is poignant spiritually. The Spanish left, emboldened by the demotion of Franco, is threatening to remove the Catholic symbols, and not just from the Valley of the Fallen. This is no small matter, as many historians hold attacks on the Church by radical leftists in the mid 1930s to be the fundamental spark of the Spanish Civil War. The accompanying references outline a reasoned Spanish fear that their country is facing a dangerous time. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**



Tomb of Francisco Franco, Valley of the Fallen, Spain.

Source: Santiago Lopez-Pastor via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/100759833@N05/14821994193>, CC BY ND 2.0

“...The violence is not limited to burning Barcelona...”

Source: Sergi Doria, “También la violencia es vuestra (The violence is yours, too),” *ABC*, 3 November 2019. https://www.abc.es/espana/catalunya/abci-tambien-violencia-vuestra-201911021837_noticia.html

“...The violence is not limited to burning Barcelona. It includes the loss of the freedom of movement of the citizenry, the appropriation of public space and coercion against those who would go to work; another distinguishing fact: the kidnappers of the right to study go around in masks. The Maoist Cultural Revolution: they dictate the system of evaluation to the rectors... At the turn of the summer, she [Elisenda Paluzie, president of the Catalan National Assembly] lamented that, ‘the current level of violence was not sufficient to get the European institutions to act’, and concluded, ‘Maybe the level of the conflict needs to be raised’...”

Source: Rosana Rivera, “España: los socialistas preparan un golpe contra la monarquía (Spain: the socialists prepare a coup against the monarchy),” *Actual*, 19 October 2019. <https://www.actuall.com/medios/el-brief-hora-de-volar-la-cruz/>

...This blow is really directed at the Monarchy and against the Religion. Once Franco is discredited, the Monarchy is discredited, because there is a Law of Succession and there is a discredited Constitution. The Law for Political Reform approved by the Franco Courts is what underpins the Transition... With their attacks on our liberties, on our principles and beliefs, they are expelling us from the system. I don’t know how much time will pass before the consequences of such political irresponsibility will manifest themselves. But I don’t doubt in the slightest that they will appear...

Source: Adrián Marina Bralo et al, “Franco ya está enterrado en Mingorrubio tras ser exhumado del Valle de los Caídos (Franco is now buried in Mingorrubio after being exhumed from the Valley of the Fallen),” *ABC*, 24 October 2019. https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-franco-esta-mingorrubio-tras-exhumado-valle-caidos-201910241520_noticia.html

“...The Francos [family of Francisco Franco] also criticized that, ‘what the government presents as a victory for democracy is no more than a shameless electoral media circus... One of the first promises of the new administration of Pedro Sánchez was to remove Franco from the Valley of the Fallen... Pedro Sánchez [said]...an end has been put to the exaltation of a dictator.”

Source: Doctor Peligro, “‘¡Fuego!’ El fusilamiento y la destrucción de Jesús (‘Fire!’ The execution and destruction of Jesus),” *Agente Provocador*, undated (accessed 8 November 2019). <http://www.agenteprovocador.es/publicaciones/fuego-el-fusilamiento-y-la-destruccion-de-jesus>

“For the Francoists and the Catholics, the ‘execution by firing squad’ and posterior destruction of the Monument to the Sacred heart of Jesus symbolized the ‘murder of God’. For others, it was performance art and the just vengeance of the people in arms.”

Source: Ricardo de la Cierva, *Historia Actualizada de la Segunda República and the Spanish War 1931-1939 (Updated History of the Second Republic and the Spanish War 1931-1936)*, Madrid: Editorial Fénix, 2003, comment, page 4 and cover jacket.

“Cover Art: The key to the Spanish Civil War – and of the Second Republic that performed fatally in that war – in this graphic, heart wrenching document that is preserved in the Archives of the diocese of Getafe (Madrid) in the same place wher the events occurred. It deals with the execution by firing squad of one image of Christ raised on the Cerro de los Angeles by a squad of red militia in July 1936. The religious motivation – persecution and Crusade –is expressed in this key...”