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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ON THE COVER:

Iran's "Dana" Destroyer, which participated in the IONS 2022 Exercises off Goa, India.

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, <https://img9.irna.ir/d/r2/2022/03/29/4/169562898.jpg?ts=1648547583599>

Chinese Observations on the Role and Impact of Social Media in Cognitive Warfare

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

Drawing lessons from the war in Ukraine, Chinese military strategists see social media as a highly effective tool in both warfare and politics. The accompanying excerpted article published in the nationalistic-leaning Chinese daily *Huanqiu Shibao* notes that cognitive warfare is playing a historic role in shaping the war, which is the first time combatants have incorporated it into a large-scale physical conflict. The author notes that cognitive warfare tactics such as “deepfakes” and “accelerationism” over social media deliberately manipulated the world’s emotions and collective consciousness to sway public opinion and exacerbate polarization. He notes that social media has elevated the role and effectiveness of cognitive warfare to new heights. It has interfered with government decisions and influenced the direction of the war.

According to the author, cognitive warfare extends beyond propaganda and psychological warfare. It can be carried out in conjunction with both the physical and information domains. It can be used in wartime or peacetime and on a daily basis. It can be waged through public diplomacy, academic exchanges, culture and art, or simply hidden in seemingly innocuous areas such as social media. The author also describes how cognitive warfare has evolved through technological advances. The digital technology available during the 1991 Gulf War allowed round-the-clock, real-time televised coverage of wartime events as they unfolded. This play-by-play coverage had a psychological impact on the entire world, which helped to shape the narrative, but not the outcome, of the war. Three decades later social media is seen as a weapon in the Ukraine conflict.

“Cognitive warfare through social media can directly interfere with relevant government decisions and influence the direction of the war.”

Source: Sun Jiashan, “俄乌冲突中认知战对我们的启示 (What Cognitive Warfare in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict Teaches Us),” *Global Times* (daily newspaper known for its nationalistic take on world affairs), 10 March 2022. <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/477wrRCvjHx>

The role and effectiveness of cognitive warfare based on social media in the Russia-Ukraine war has reached new historical heights since the 1991 Gulf War.

More than 30 years have passed since the 1991 Gulf War, but we still have a clear visual image of it because, for the first time in history, television media had followed it every step. The information technology that allowed round the clock digital broadcasting of modern warfare by the American television media had a great psychological impact on the entire world.

The 1991 Gulf War, despite near-live digital broadcasting of the war, (however), only offered a narrative of the war and had no direct impact on the war itself. The biggest difference between the role and effectiveness of the 1991 Gulf War and the Russia-Ukraine conflict is that the advent of social media has affected the media and directly impacting the war. Whether it was the so-called “Ghost of Kyiv,” in which it was eventually revealed that footage had been taken from an air combat simulation game at the beginning of the conflict... or the spreading of rumors such as the Nuclear leak of the Zaporozhye nuclear plant... “deepfake,” “accelerationism,” and other cognitive warfare tactics, which can impact cognition through social media, are now being applied in large-scale situations over the course of the war.

...cognitive warfare can no longer be simply seen as propaganda warfare and psychological warfare (as it was previously).... Cognitive warfare through social media can directly interfere with relevant government decisions and influence the direction of the war. This has been a historical wake-up call for us by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

China's PLA Increasing Use of Simulators and Simulations

By Kevin McCauley
OE Watch Commentary

Several recent articles published in the *People's Liberation Army Daily* highlight the increased use of training simulators and simulations to improve unit training, lower training costs, reduce wear on equipment during field training, and enhance unit combat capabilities. A combined brigade of the 74th Group Army in the Southern Theater Command employs simulator platforms for driver and fire-power training. The armor simulator provides training for desert, jungle, snow, and other complex environments encountered in the Southern Theater. The first article claims that using simulators accelerates the training cycle for crew members compared to field training, providing practical experience and training qualification certificates. Simulator platforms include multi-function, networked training systems for armor, artillery and other combat disciplines. The article also indicates that the increased use of simulators provides both quality training and an efficient means to rapidly generate combat power within units.

The second *People's Liberation Army Daily* article illustrates how the Southern Theater Navy uses simulations to boost the combat capability of its destroyer detachments. The destroyer formation found that use of training simulations was an efficient means to supplement actual combat training. Units can execute various operational scenarios and missions including logistics functions.

The third excerpted article from *People's Liberation Army Daily* examines standardization of military medical simulation platforms for medical support at the brigade and battalion level. The combat medical system is a pilot project by the Logistic Support Department of the Central Military Commission. The article states that the system consists of multiple pieces of equipment simulating various injuries, wound treatment, and wartime rescue. The brigade-level system provides medical training for advanced first aid and some emergency treatment. The battalion-level system provides medical training for basic treatment of battlefield casualties.

“In order to build a real training scene to the greatest extent, the brigade makes comprehensive use of photoelectric, information, audio, virtual reality and other technologies to simulate the actual feeling of equipment operation, set up a variety of combat environments and complex special situations, ensure that officers and soldiers of different specialties can be effectively tempered in a near real operating environment, and promote the rapid generation of combat effectiveness. At the same time, the simulation training platform can flexibly set the training difficulty, and automatically store the operation process, time, and other training data to further improve the training quality and efficiency. It is understood that relying on the simulation training platform, many new soldiers of the brigade have obtained work qualification certificates, and the talent training cycle has been significantly shortened.”

PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY: ARMY CAMPAIGN DOCTRINE IN TRANSITION

Kevin McCauley
September 2020

This monograph examines current People's Liberation Army (PLA) Army campaign doctrine, with a discussion of PLA theorists' vision of the evolutionary development of warfare to provide context for current doctrine as well as potential future direction. The PLA develops doctrinal joint and service campaign scenarios for possible offensive and defensive operations. PLA campaigns represent the operational level of war between strategic operations and tactical combat. The PLA's current focus on specific campaigns provides insight into Beijing's perception of potential conflict scenarios. The campaign scenarios provide commanders and staff data on command and control, coordination, combat actions, support, and other critical campaign elements for specific operational environments. The description of each campaign's operational environment and combat actions provides valuable support to operational planning and a context for staff and unit training for their specific operational mission. The Army campaigns are executed as components of a joint campaign, or as a primarily independent Army campaign with support from other services.

Continued: China's PLA Increasing Use of Simulators and Simulations

Source: “第74集团军某旅: 模拟训练平台加快人才成长 (A brigade of the 74th Group Army: Simulation training platform accelerates talent growth),” *People's Liberation Army Daily* (official news outlet of the PLA), 4 April 2022. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-04/04/content_312941.htm

The leader of the brigade said that the traditional training model has a long training cycle and slow accumulation of practical experience. It takes a long time to train a qualified combatant. In order to effectively solve this problem, they actively innovated training methods, and introduced simulation training platforms in accordance with the idea of "multi-functional training systems, networked training platforms, and practical training standards", covering armor, artillery and other major combat disciplines, officers and soldiers. You can complete a variety of equipment operation training in the virtual environment, and quickly master the basic skills of professional operation.

Source: “南部战区海军某驱逐舰支队模拟训练助推实战能力提升 (Simulation training of a Southern Theater Navy destroyer detachment enhances actual combat capability),” *People's Liberation Army Daily* (official news outlet of the PLA), 11 April 2022. http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2022-04/11/content_4908646.htm

"The combination of overseas training and indoor simulation training has effectively improved the technical and tactical level of officers and soldiers," said the leader of the detachment. Not long ago, they conducted a maritime confrontation exercise. When encountering "enemy" ships, the officers and soldiers seized the opportunity to occupy a favorable position and carried out fire strikes, successfully reversing the passive situation."

Source: “全军规范旅营卫勤战救模拟训练器材配备标准 (All army standardization of combat rescue simulation training equipment for brigade and battalion medical service),” *People's Liberation Army Daily* (official news outlet of the PLA), 10 April 2022. http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-04/10/content_313260.htm

The battlefield medical aid simulation training equipment is mainly used to simulate common injuries in wartime and provide relatively realistic training conditions for military personnel, which is of significance for the generation of wartime rescue capabilities....

The standards include 11 types of simulation training equipment for the battlefield medical aid in 6 categories, basically covering the primary first aid, advanced first aid, and some early treatment requirements as specified in the provisions on medical aid in wartime.

Among others, the military medical aid training platform at battalion level, equipped with two types of simulation training equipment for CPR and field first-aid, mainly functions to provide training for self-rescue and mutual medical aid skills for service members, including ventilation, hemostasis, bandaging, fixing, transferring, CPR, respiratory tract opening and respiratory maintenance.

The military medical aid training platform at brigade level mainly serves for advanced first aid and some emergency treatment simulation training targeting medical professionals. It is equipped with 6 types of simulation training equipment for CPR, advanced airway management, puncture training, and so on.

China's PLA Explores “Battlefield Metaverse” Training Base To Simulate Future Warfare

By Kevin McCauley
OE Watch Commentary

According to a recent article in the official *People's Liberation Army Daily* newspaper, the PLA has been reforming its training methods to enhance combat capabilities and create realistic combat environments for troops, in part to overcome a lack of combat experience. The PLA believes that a “battlefield metaverse” simulating future combat environments can be created where troops can experience a future multi-domain space approaching actual combat conditions. Such a complex, dynamic, and harsh battlefield environment requires the use of advanced technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, brain-computer interface technologies, “super bionic” technology, and the Internet of Things.

The PLA describes a metaverse as a highly technologically developed virtual world existing in parallel and reacting to the real world. The battlefield metaverse can simulate the effects of new concept weapons such as meteorological weapons creating harsh environments or an unmanned “blue army” to prepare troops in a complex immersive environment.

Creating such a battlefield metaverse to simulate future warfare would not only increase unit combat capabilities. It would also improve tactics and test emerging technologies required to prepare for and win future military struggles. The PLA currently employs Battle Labs for testing tactics and new technologies, but short of actual combat, a truly immersive experience would better prepare troops to win future conflicts.

“In the face of the surging wave of new technological revolution, military construction can continue to develop and advance only by adhering to integrity and innovation. Keeping an eye on the frontiers of scientific and technological development, constantly absorbing the latest scientific and technological achievements, and applying them to the practice of military reform and preparation for military struggle in a timely manner are the only way and effective measures to win future wars.”

Source: “Create a realistic and applicable ‘battlefield metaverse’ (打造逼真适用的“战场元宇宙”),” *PLA Daily* (official People’s Liberation Army newspaper), 14 April 2022, http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-04/14/content_313630.htm

In recent years, with the development of information network technology, various new terms, new concepts and new things emerge one after another. After big data, cloud computing, Internet of things and blockchain, the "meta universe" has attracted more and more attention.

In fact, "metaverse" is not a new term. It originated from a sci-fi concept in the novel "Avalanche" 30 years ago, and now refers to the Internet applications and social life forms that are formed by technologies such as extended reality, digital twins, blockchain, and artificial intelligence. Although it is not known how the "metaverse" will develop in the future, it at least provides us with an idea: with a series of advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things, blockchain, artificial intelligence, etc., it is possible to create a "battlefield element" that simulates future wars. "Universe" provides a super space-time environment that combines virtual reality and Internet of Things for training and preparing for war.

Russia's BARS Reserve System Inducting Cossacks

By Chuck Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from the *Southern Military District Press Service* describes Russian plans to man its new reserve system with Cossack militiamen. The Cossacks are an ethnic group mostly found in Russia and Eastern Europe. Historically, Cossack communities were allowed self-governance in exchange for military service. Cossacks are no longer self-governing, but their tradition of military service continues in two forms. First, a few Russian military units are designated as “Cossack” units. These units are usually found in Cossack areas and only differ from regular units due to the honorific, such as the 205th Motorized Rifle Brigade (Cossack) of the 49th Combined Arms Army in the Southern Military District. The second form of Cossack military service is that of the Cossack militia. These militias are authorized by the Federal Law of the Russian Federation No. 154-FZ “On State Service of the



Cossacks in Conference

Source: Russian Ministry of Defense, <https://media.nazaccent.ru/cache/7c/85/7c858ed62c45f4c7fa59106b59738547.jpg> Attribution: CC BY 4.0

fought in the Donbass. Interestingly, there has been little reporting of Cossack exploits during Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. According to the *Southern Military District Press Service* article, Cossacks from the Terek Military Cossack Host will form a separate regiment of 1,134 personnel. The inclusion of Cossacks into the reserve system could provide Russia with the capability to put many more boots on the ground in Ukraine, if needed. (See: “Russia's BARS Reserve System Takes Shape,” *OE Watch* #4, 2022; and “Developments in Russia's BARS System,” *OE Watch* #1, 2022).

“[T]his year the mobilization reserve will include 1134 Cossacks: “A separate Cossack regiment will be formed with these reservists, and they will be commanded by Cossacks and wear Cossack uniforms.

Russian Cossacks” dated 5 December 2005. In practice, these militias are not usually equipped with firearms and are often used for crowd control and event security. One exception to this was in 2014, when Cossack units

Source: “Терские Казаки Войдут в Барс (The Terek Cossacks Will Join BARS)”, *Southern Military District Press Service* (press service of the Southern Military District), 2 March 2022. <https://stavropol.bezformata.com/listnews/terskie-kazaki-voydut-v-bars/103056145/>

The Cossacks of the Stavropol District Cossack Host of the Terek Military Cossack Host will join country's reserve system (BARS) as part of a separate Cossack regiment. The Terek atamans discussed the formation of a mobilization human reserve...

The atamans of the Great Don Army, Kuban, Terek, and Black Sea Military Cossack Hosts confirmed their readiness to join BARS in mid-February by signing an agreement on attracting “members of the societies as candidates for the mobilization manpower reserve of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation” with the Ministry of Defense.

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Continued: Russia's BARS Reserve System Inducting Cossacks

“In general, territorial defense companies staffed with reservists have been actively participating in the combat training activities of the district since 2016. One of them successfully completed the tasks according to the plans of the Zapad-2021 strategic exercise, which took place in the Western Military District...”

Source Continued: “Терские Казаки Войдут в Барс (The Terek Cossacks Will Join BARS)”, *Southern Military District Press Service* (press service of the Southern Military District), 2 March 2022. <https://stavropol.bezformata.com/listnews/terskie-kazaki-voydut-v-bars/103056145/>

The document implies the provision of assistance to the military in recruiting the mobilization manpower reserve with Cossacks: “Atamans of the Cossack societies confirmed their readiness to ensure the selection of personnel to serve in the country’s reserve system (BARS)...at least 50 percent of the Cossacks will be registered with the military and meet the criteria for being in the mobilization human reserve”...

According to the press service of the Committee of the Stavropol Territory for Nationalities and Cossacks, this year the mobilization reserve will include 1134 Cossacks: “A separate Cossack regiment will be formed with these reservists, and they will be commanded by Cossacks and wear Cossack uniforms.”

Source: V Sosnitsky, “БАРС Отбирает Надежных Бойцов (BARS Selects Reliable Fighters) *Armeisky Sbornik* (monthly journal of the Russian Ministry of Defense), April 2022. <https://rucont.ru/efd/317658>

...In general, territorial defense companies staffed with reservists have been actively participating in the combat training activities of the district since 2016. One of them successfully completed the tasks according to the plans of the Zapad-2021 strategic exercise, which took place in the Western Military District...

As Colonel Igor Yegorov, military commissar of the Rostov Region, explained, the military enlistment office of the region stood at the origins of the creation of a mobilization manpower reserve in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Since 2015, he has been taking part in an experiment to introduce a new system of troop recruitment by citizens who signed a contract to stay in the mobilization manpower reserve. In connection with the decision by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to increase the size of the mobilization reserve, at present the assignment for the selection of reservists to the military commissariat of the region is almost 5,000...

According to the training curricula, the reservists will have monthly training sessions for 2-3 days and military training once a year, as a rule, for 20 days. At training sessions and military training, reserve fighters will learn how to shoot from all types of weapons and drive military equipment, and other practical actions in their combat specialties...

As for the specific use of territorial troops, in the formation of which the Southern Military District has real experience, in the event of mobilization, their task, most likely, will be the protection and defense of especially important military facilities, defending rear areas, maintaining law and order in populated areas, and providing assistance to the local population during evacuation. If reservists accomplish these tasks, active-duty personnel and subunits need not be diverted for such duties.

A Russian Strategic Assessment of Russia's 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

By Charles Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from Russian military and defense industry focused weekly *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* explains that Russian political and military leadership sees Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine as not just a local conflict between two nations, but as a front in a much larger war between Russia and the West. The author, Konstantin Sivkov, is a retired naval officer and General Staff Academy graduate that served in the Center for Military-Strategic Research of the General Staff. He is an expert on Russian military modernization and future warfare, the processes of armed struggle, the nature of modern wars and armed conflicts, and the organizational development of the Armed Forces.

Sivkov elaborates on how the Kremlin may perceive the big picture consequences for either succeeding or failing to achieve the campaign's objectives. For Russia, the success of this campaign will result not only in the imposition of its will on Ukraine, but also of its narrative on the world. In short, the Kremlin sees the current conflict furthering one of two competing and mutually exclusive narratives: that of Russia or the West.

“The result of the defeat of Nazi Ukraine will be a sharp drop in American and, in general, Western influence in the world...”

Source: Konstantin Sivkov, “Украина – только начало: Геополитическим последствием спецоперации станет изменение (Ukraine is just the beginning: The geopolitical consequences of the special operation will change the entire view of the world),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (weekly newspaper focusing on military and defense industry), 28 March 2022. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/66370>

The special operation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in Ukraine continues to develop. Serious shifts are taking place in the nature of the operational use of the Russian group of forces, indicating a qualitative change in the course of the armed struggle. Under these conditions, the question arises: what will happen next, will the West stop its pressure on Russia and start negotiations, as many Russians hope, or vice versa – will the pressure become even more fierce, will new armed conflicts arise?...

...Thus, we can safely say that Russia is currently at war with the united West. This is a war of a different nature than those that took place in the 20th century. It cannot be declared, because in essence it is a classic hybrid one, from the side of the West...The scale of this hybrid war with the West suggests that it has all the hallmarks of a world war: the presence of opposing coalitions led by global centers of power that have entered directly into a military confrontation, albeit it just in the economic and information spheres, the resoluteness of goals, the use of all possible means of confrontation, refusal to comply with peacetime legal norms with the transition to the principle of military expediency practically on a global scale, drawing most countries of the world into the conflict according to the principle "if not with us, then against us". That is, we are talking about the beginning of the third world war, which is still taking place in a refined hybrid form - the Western coalition conducts armed confrontation using its proxies — the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in a limited TVD [theater of operations] within Ukrainian territory, while conducting full-scale global economic and information warfare against our country.

...regardless of the outcome of the special operation in Ukraine, the war of the Western coalition against Russia will continue to escalate — the Western and global elites cannot stop without defeating Russia, or suffering a final defeat in this war. After all, at stake is the shape of the future world, of which there are only two variants. One proclaimed Klaus Schwab — the mouthpiece of the globalists. It has no place for states and national elites

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Continued: A Russian Strategic Assessment of Russia's 2022 Invasion of Ukraine

Source Continued: Konstantin Sivkov, “Украина – только начало: Геополитическим последствием спецоперации станет изменение (Ukraine is just the beginning: The geopolitical consequences of the special operation will change the entire view of the world),” *Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kuryer* (weekly newspaper focusing on military and defense industry), 28 March 2022. <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/66370>

— the world is controlled by transnational corporations, and is actually privatized by them. An alternative to it is the concept of a multipolar world proclaimed by our president last year at the Davos forum and subsequent key international summits, where states remain the subjects of world politics, and there is no place for the global power of transnational corporations and the corresponding elites.

These two options are mutually exclusive. The victory of one of them means the inevitable collapse, death, at least political and economic sense, and the disappearance of the bearers and beneficiaries of the alternative option into history. Therefore, the struggle has an extremely tough character, when all means are used that can be used without risking their own immediate death. For Western and global elites, the central task on this path is the defeat and subjugation of Russia...

The defeat of Nazi Ukraine will mean the collapse of the entire strategy built by the West and the globalists over the last 20 years. The consequences of this defeat could be catastrophic for the globalists and have a geopolitical scale. Signs of this are already manifesting themselves today in the emerging rapprochement between the UAE and Saudi Arabia with Russia, China's tough position on the Ukrainian issue, Venezuela's demand to recognize Maduro as the country's legitimate president as a condition for starting negotiations with the United States on oil supplies, and a number of other similar manifestations that indicate a loss of authority of the US and the West in the general world order. The result of the defeat of Nazi Ukraine will be a sharp drop in American and, in general, Western influence in the world, which will have the most severe consequences for the economy. Under these conditions, revenge for the Ukrainian defeat may become the main leitmotif of US-European geopolitics.

In turn, the termination of the special operation with the preservation of the current regime, even with a host of various treaty guarantees, will mean a military defeat for Russia. And the consequences of this will be very severe, primarily in the domestic socio-political situation. Such a step will have a negative impact on the international position and status of our country.

Therefore, further escalation of tension in the world, especially military, will increase, and we can expect the next stage of the initial period of the third world [war]...

Russian Orthodox Church Blesses “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

In early April, Patriarch Kirill of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) publicly expressed strong support for the Kremlin’s “special military operation” in Ukraine. During a service at the main military temple in Kubinka, “the head of the Russian Orthodox Church called on the military to be faithful to the oath, to defend their fatherland at all costs,” according to the excerpt from the somewhat independent source *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. The Patriarch echoed the Kremlin’s narrative regarding which country is the chief enemy today, proclaiming that “most countries of the world are under the colossal influence of one force, which today, unfortunately, has become the opposing force of our people.” He concluded his sermon by stressing that “we must be very strong. When I say ‘we,’ I mean primarily the Armed Forces... All our people today should... understand that a special time has come, on which the historical fate of our people may depend.”

When the ROC consecrated the main military cathedral two years ago, many observers remarked that the church was instilling a religious component into the Kremlin’s patriotic ideology (see “Russian Religious



Interior of Main Military Cathedral in Russia.

Source: Sergey Sebelev via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Patriot_Military_Temple_Risen_Christ.jpg Attribution: CCA-SA 4.0 Intl

Patriotism,” *OE Watch*, July 2020). The Kremlin leadership, along with a pliant ROC, understand that Russian soldiers may be reluctant to defend a corrupt political system, but they might be willing to fight and die for their religion.

“The Patriarch said that these days the historical fate of the Russian people is being decided....”

Source: Andrei Melnikov, “Патриарх Кирилл возложил на армию ответственность за судьбу русского народа (Patriarch Kirill made the army responsible for the fate of the Russian people),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (somewhat independent Russian news source), 3 April 2022. https://www.ng.ru/faith/2022-04-03/2_8407_relig.html

Patriarch Kirill celebrated the Sunday liturgy and delivered a sermon in the main church of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. The head of the Russian Orthodox Church called on the military to be faithful to the oath, to defend their fatherland at all costs. The Patriarch said that these days the historical fate of the Russian people is being decided....

...His sermon was sustained in the spirit of previous speeches on the situation in Ukraine. According to the patriarch, some powerful forces are playing off the fraternal peoples, and between Russia and the West there is, as he used to call it, a “metaphysical war.” Moreover, this time the mobilization call sounded even more clearly.

“Serving in the Armed Forces is a real feat,” said the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. It requires readiness from everyone who has taken the oath to defend their homeland, not sparing their lives. Therefore, today our special prayer is for the Armed Forces, for our soldiers, with whom the hope for security, for freedom, for the true independence of our country is associated. “Most of the countries of the world are under the colossal influence of one force, which today, unfortunately, has become the opposing force of our people,” he explained. “Because there is great strength, and we must be very strong. When I say ‘we,’ I mean the Armed Forces in the first place. But not only. All our people today should, as it were, wake up, start up, understand that a special time has come, on which the historical fate of our people may depend.”

More Wonder Weapons on Russia's Drawing Board

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Despite military setbacks in Ukraine, Russia's military industry (VPK) remains dedicated to developing military prowess, according to the excerpted article from the somewhat independent *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye*. Over the past decade, the Kremlin has focused on military modernization and improved combat capabilities, frequently demonstrating and asserting that the Russian armed forces are now a formidable power. Perceived military superiority was likely a key factor underpinning the Kremlin's decision to invade Ukraine in late February 2022. After the past couple months, however, maintaining this façade of military dominance has become more challenging.

The article describes a recent meeting between President Putin and Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov, during which they discussed the upcoming State Weapons Program. According to the article, Russia's military industry remains on the cusp of "the creation of non-traditional types of weapons, including directed energy weapons, kinetic weapons, as well as artificial intelligence control systems and robotic systems." While the article omits the possible effects of Western economic sanctions on Russia's military industry, it does provide examples of new weapons allowing Russia "to deliver massive strikes against enemy [Ukraine] infrastructure." The article also notes that "in December 2019, the world's first really working combat laser system 'Peresvet' was put on combat duty," but admits that there are questions surrounding its capabilities. The article concludes by referring to developments in "robotics and artificial intelligence systems," claiming that "large-scale work is underway in Russia to create 'soulless' combat units."

“The State Weapons Program (SWP) will focus on the creation of non-traditional types of weapons, including directed energy weapons, kinetic weapons, as well as artificial intelligence control systems and robotic systems.”

Source: “Разящая кинетика, направленное действие, искусственный интеллект (Breaking kinetics, directed action, artificial intelligence),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye* (NVO-Independent Military Observer; somewhat independent), 7 April 2022. https://nvo.ng.ru/nvoweeek/2022-04-07/2_1184_week.html

Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov promised the emergence of non-traditional weapons in Russia. The State Weapons Program (SWP) will focus on the creation of non-traditional types of weapons, including directed energy weapons, kinetic weapons, as well as artificial intelligence control systems and robotic systems. As reported on the Kremlin website, Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov spoke about this at a meeting with President Vladimir Putin. “The work on preparing the initial data for the next SAP has been completed, by mid-2023 it will be formed and submitted for approval.

...During the special operation in Ukraine, we are already talking about the effectiveness of using high-precision weapons. These are ship-based cruise missiles 'Caliber,' aviation Kh-555, Kh-101 and Dagger, which allow the country to deliver massive strikes against enemy infrastructure....

...However, Yuri Borisov speaks of a completely different level of weapons.... Another non-traditional direction could be laser weapons. In December 2019, the world's first really working combat laser system 'Peresvet' was put on combat duty. There is still no exact understanding of whether it 'burns or dazzles' the optical instruments of air objects. But it is already obvious: the country is actively working on the development of this type of weapon....

Robotics and artificial intelligence systems are also a priority. If you look at the exposition of the exhibition-forum 'Army' in Kubinka near Moscow, it becomes obvious that large-scale work is underway in Russia to create 'soulless' combat units.

Kremlin Using Education Policy To Foster Approval of Its “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Alongside its extensive media arsenal to maintain public support for the “special military operation” in Ukraine, the Kremlin has also mobilized its educational system. As the first excerpt from the Moscow regional source *M24* points out, children of Russian service personnel who have died fighting in this operation “will be able to study free of charge at the Russian State Social University (RGSU).” The article posits that this education initiative might expand to include the “country's leading universities, [which] will support our initiative and accept educational certificates from the RGSU as an exchange basis for free education.”

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education (MoE) continues to develop mandatory courses for school-aged children to ensure that they understand the Kremlin's narrative surrounding this operation. In addition to grasping the Kremlin's historical justification (see: “Kremlin Pushing False Narrative About Ukraine to Russian School Children”, *OE Watch*, Issue #4, 2022). The brief excerpt from the pro-business site *Kommersant* describes how the MoE

“The children of the soldiers who died in the special operation in Ukraine will be able to study free of charge at the Russian State Social University (RGSU).”

has now developed school lessons covering both Western sanctions and import substitution. The article stresses that “the teacher should show Russia's ability to overcome the negative consequences of Western countries' sanctions pressure on the economic sphere of our society.” According to the article, “teachers should tell children about the benefits of import substitution,” and how this program will strengthen the Russian economy. The article concludes by citing economic experts asked to gauge the effectiveness of such lessons. One skeptical expert commented, “in the summer, or certainly in the fall, the children will come home and see for themselves that the family has no money, that there is no way to buy any goods.”

Source: “Дети погибших в спецоперации на Украине военных получают бесплатное образование в РГСУ (Children of soldiers who died in a special operation in Ukraine will receive free education at the RGSU),” *M24.ru* (Moscow based regional news outlet), 26 March 2022. <https://www.m24.ru/news/obrazovanie/26032022/444852>

The children of the soldiers who died in the special operation in Ukraine will be able to study free of charge at the Russian State Social University (RGSU). This was reported on the official website of the university....

...The university expressed the hope that other Russian universities would also support the initiative, since the children of the military who died during the special operation may have different educational plans, including specialties that the RGSU does not teach.

"In such cases, we expect that other Russian state educational institutions chosen by them, including the country's leading universities, will support our initiative and accept educational certificates from the RGSU as an exchange basis for free education," the Russian State Social University concluded.

Continued: Kremlin Using Education Policy To Foster Approval of Its “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine

Source: Anna Vasilyeva, Maria Starikova, Olga Nikitina; Vlad Nikiforov, Alexander Dremlyugin, “Школам завезли антисанкционки (Anti-sanctions brought to schools),” *Kommersant* (Russian pro-business news media), 5 April 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5293728>

As it became known to Kommersant, Russian schools received new recommendations on conducting special lessons against the backdrop of a “special military operation” in Ukraine. This time, teachers should organize classes for students in grades 5–9 and 10–11 on the topic “Anti-Russian sanctions and their impact on the domestic economy.” In the training manual, this “influence” is presented as rather positive - schoolchildren will be told about the growth in the share of Russian products in several areas, and then they will be asked to assess which countries will suffer large economic losses from sanctions....

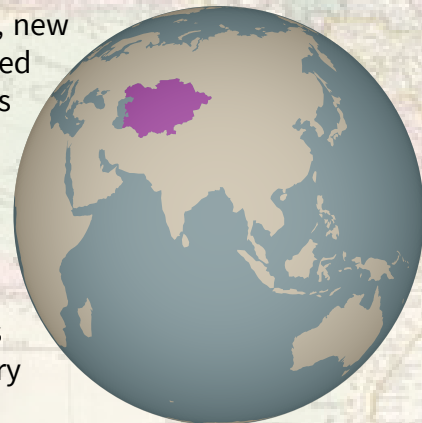
...As stated in the training manual, the teacher should “show Russia’s ability to overcome the negative consequences of Western countries’ sanctions pressure on the economic sphere of our society, give an idea of the main directions of the anti-sanctions policy in the Russian Federation.” Teachers should tell children about the benefits of import substitution....

“The lesson materials invite schoolchildren to familiarize themselves with the measures taken by the president and the government to counter sanctions from unfriendly countries,” the Ministry of Education told Kommersant....

...Kommersant asked economists to comment on the manual. Natalya Zubarevich, a specialist in the field of socio-economic development of the regions, refused to study it. “Why should I read these manuals? And so it is clear that we will lose the most advanced technological industries,” she told Kommersant. “In the summer, or certainly in the fall, the children will come home and see for themselves that the family has no money, that there is no way to buy any goods.”

Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity By Matthew Stein

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



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

Russian Culture Ministry Proposes Possible Framework for New State Ideology

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Even though the Russian constitution states that “no ideology may be established as state or obligatory,” the current Kremlin leadership continues to advance the parameters of a possible official state ideology. The first excerpt from Russia’s official news agency, TASS, describes how the Ministry of Culture has submitted for public discussion the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values. The article reports this proposed draft policy document “refers to a number of traditional values (e.g., life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland..., high moral ideals, a strong family, creative work, the priority of the spiritual over the material...),” designed to strengthen Russia. Besides listing these aspirational values, the document also identifies the dangers facing modern Russia, calling out “threats to traditional values [to include]... extremist and terrorist organizations, the actions of the United States and its allies, transnational corporations, and foreign non-profit organizations.”

The second excerpt from an editorial in the mostly independent *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* questions the value of such a document, suggesting that it “is reminiscent of the ideological practices of the times of the USSR.” As this article points out, just as in Soviet times, the new document makes “it necessary for citizens to see an ideological enemy everywhere and oppose personal interests to state interests.” The article concludes by asserting that this proposed policy

“limits the rights and freedoms of a person prescribed in the Constitution, dictating both the way of thinking and the way of life.” While this proposed document is designed to guide those involved with cultural pursuits, its impact may ultimately be felt throughout Russian society should the Kremlin approve it.

Source: “Основы госполитики по сохранению традиционных ценностей обсудят с экспертами (Fundamentals of state policy for the preservation of traditional values will be discussed with experts),” TASS (official news agency), 25 January 2022. <https://tass.ru/kultura/13522119>

The published version of the Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values is not final, the proposals will be discussed at the platforms of the upper and lower houses of parliament, in the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation and in other instances....

In the current version, the document, posted on the federal portal of draft regulatory legal acts, refers to the number of traditional values “life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its destiny, high moral ideals, a strong family, creative work, the priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual assistance and mutual respect, historical memory and the continuity of generations, the unity of the peoples of Russia.” Threats to traditional values, according to the authors of the project, “bears the activities of extremist and terrorist organizations, the actions of the United States and its allies, transnational corporations, foreign non-profit organizations....”

“...In general, the document, with a certain interpretation, limits the rights and freedoms of a person prescribed in the Constitution, dictating both the way of thinking and the way of life.”

Continued: Russian Culture Ministry Proposes Possible Framework for New State Ideology

Source: “Минкультуры возвращает россиян во времена СССР (The Ministry of Culture returns Russians to Soviet times),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (mostly independent Russian media outlet), 27 January 2022. https://www.ng.ru/editorial/2022-01-27/2_8357_editorial.html

Is it necessary for citizens to see an ideological enemy everywhere and oppose personal interests to state interests?

A draft presidential decree “Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values” developed by the Ministry of Culture has been submitted for public discussion. The document is intended to clarify the concept of traditional values within the framework of the National Security Strategy approved by the President....

... The threat to these values, according to the authors of the document, is “the activities of extremist and terrorist organizations, the actions of the United States and its allies, transnational corporations, foreign non-profit organizations.” The document notes “the ideological and psychological impact on the citizens of Russia”, and this destructive ideology includes “the cult of selfishness, permissiveness, immorality, the denial of the ideals of patriotism, service to the Fatherland, procreation, creative labor, Russia’s positive contribution to world history and culture...”

... All this is reminiscent of the ideological practices of the times of the USSR. Then the citizens were also designated the image of the enemy and demanded that they meet “high criteria....” The personal is opposed to the public: the primary are the needs of the state (serving the Fatherland), while the private (the cult of selfishness) are secondary.

... In general, the document, with a certain interpretation, limits the rights and freedoms of a person prescribed in the Constitution, dictating both the way of thinking and the way of life.



FANGS OF THE LONE WOLF

by Dodge Billingsley with Lester Grau

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

Sanctions Threaten Russia's Arctic Energy Projects

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

“Moscow’s war against Ukraine is having a large toll on one of the most remote parts of the planet. The region that over the past years has been a top priority for the Russian government is now about to face a serious economic setback. Several of the new oil and gas projects, mines and infrastructure initiatives that until recently have been under development might now come to a grinding halt.”

According to the accompanying article from Norwegian independent news outlet *The Barents Observer*, the West’s economic measures against Russia will slow or stop most major Russian Arctic development projects. Russia’s past response to Western sanctions has been to become more self-reliant, which requires financial outlays and time. According to the

article, Russia will find it difficult to acquire the partnerships and financing necessary to become self-reliant and continue its current pace of Arctic development. Thus, Russian ambitions in the Arctic are certain to suffer in addition to all the other consequences Russia will face because of Putin’s decision to invade Ukraine.

Source: Atle Staalesen, “Big Collapse looms Over Russian Arctic Policy,” *The Barents Observer* (Norwegian independent news source), 30 March 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2022/03/big-collapse-looms-over-russian-arctic-policy>

Moscow’s war against Ukraine is having a large toll on one of the most remote parts of the planet. The region that over the past years has been a top priority for the Russian government is now about to face a serious economic setback. Several of the new oil and gas projects, mines and infrastructure initiatives that until recently have been under development might now come to a grinding halt.

Natural Gas Company Novatek confirmed that it will stop the development of its liquefied natural gas projects in the region. It will only complete the first train of the Arctic LNG 2. [An LNG train is a liquefied natural gas plants liquefaction and purification facility...]. According to original plans, the project’s first train is to come into production in 2023 and deliver 6.6 million tons of LNG to the market. The project train number two and three that were to be ready in 2024 and 2025 respectively will be postponed. The announcement comes after French project partner Total made clear that it is halting all new investments in Russia. Other international oil and gas companies have made similar announcements. Among them are Baker Hughes, Halliburton and Schlumberger.

Novatek is fully dependent on Western technology to follow up its major Arctic LNG projects. Both the Yamal LNG and the Arctic LNG were built with foreign equipment provided by companies such as Linde, Siemens and Baker Hughes. Ship traffic data indicate that there is still a high level of activity around the Arctic LNG 2 project port of Utrenneye. This week, two nuclear-powered icebreakers escorted cargo vessels to site....

The new western sanctions against Russia will affect also several other industrial projects. State oil company Rosneft is in the process of developing what is due to become the biggest oil project ever in the Arctic, and is dependent on western technology to build both infrastructure and ice-class tankers. Also the investment basis of the project is now also increasing unclear as project partner Trafigura Group says that it is “reviewing its shareholding in Vostok Oil LLC.”

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Continued: Sanctions Threaten Russia's Arctic Energy Projects

Source Continued: Atle Staalesen, "Big Collapse looms Over Russian Arctic Policy," *The Barents Observer* (Norwegian independent news source), 30 March 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/industry-and-energy/2022/03/big-collapse-looms-over-russian-arctic-policy>

The Vostok Oil includes the building of 13 gas and oil fields in the remote Taymyr tundra and the annual production of more than 100 million tons by 2030.

On the Russian Arctic agenda is also the building of several mines, among them the Syrdasaysky coal project in Taymyr. This project is dependent on western tech, at least for the building of ice-class bulk carriers that can export the coal.

Ship traffic data indicate that there is still a high level of activity around the project seaport of Yenisei, despite the difficult ice conditions in the area.

As industrial projects come to a halt, Russia will not be able to meet its ambitious plans for Arctic shipping. The objective set by President Putin in 2018 is the annual shipments of at least 80 million tons of goods on the Northern Sea Route by 2024.

The country's Minister of the Far East and Arctic Aleksei Chekunkov during a visit to Murmansk in early March told local media that the objectives remain unchanged. But he appears to shut his eyes for the ongoing developments that is about to fully isolate Russia in international relations and trade.

*It is now increasingly unclear also whether Russia will be able to meet its plan on nuclear icebreaker construction. The country intends to build a fleet of up to six **LK-60 icebreakers** in the course of the decade, as well as the super-powerful Lider. But the Baltic and Zvezda shipyards will hardly be able to complete construction without western technology.*

The Russian government in 2018 presented a 5-year plan for Arctic developments that included investment up to 5.5 trillion rubles by year 2024 and 13.5 trillion rubles by 2050. That document now appears like nothing but a piece of paper.

In addition to the standstill in its grand industrial projects, Russia is blocked in international bodies of regional cooperation. Russia expected dividends from its two-year presidency in the Arctic Council and planned as many as 88 various events.

The Ukraine fighting affects the plans and projections and the subsequent halt in international Arctic cooperation. On March 4, the Arctic Council announced that it had decided to "pause all official meetings of the Council and its subsidiary bodies until further notice." The Barents Council followed with the same decision.

Iran Digs into Central Syria, Filling Vacuum Left by Russia

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Iran and its allies are fortifying their positions in the central Syrian desert. The accompanying article from the influential Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat* delves into the recent repositioning of Iranian proxies and allies in central Syria. The article cites an early 2022 deal between the Syrian military's 4th Division and Iran, in which they agreed to establish nearly a dozen bases throughout central Syria. These moves coincided with Russia turning its focus to Ukraine and Iran's recent escalation with Israel, which likely added urgency to Iranian efforts to strengthen its military position in Syria. To that end, Iran and its allies have focused on supplying and fortifying weapons depots across central Syria. According to the report from *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, Iran has provided its Syrian proxies and allies with vehicles, communications

devices, and anti-tank missiles. Russia has also given Iran and its allies control of the massive weapons depot in Mheen, in the Homs desert. Iran recently established a new militia in Syria, drawing from its various local proxy forces, in order to guard all these weapons depots. Pro-Iranian forces in central Syria are likely to employ unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to secure their positions. Local outlets have reported on recent drone transfers, and in late March, Iranian forces held a UAV training session for some of their Syrian proxies. In early April, the Iranian Arabic-language news channel *al-Alam* aired footage showing Iran's proxy forces in Iraq employing Iranian **Shahed-129** drones against ISIS targets, suggesting Iranian proxies in Syria would be similarly capable.

“...the spread of pro-Iranian militias and the Fourth Division coincided with the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the beginning of the withdrawal of Russian forces from some military sites in eastern Homs...”

Source:

(Iran expands the reach of its militias and weapons in Syria),” *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 7 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yp83a5pu>

إيران توسع انتشار ميليشياتها وسلاحها في سوريا

In a new Iranian military tactic aimed at extending Iran's influence over the largest area of Syrian territory, the Revolutionary Guards have recently strengthened... their presence in about 120 sites and military headquarters in the eastern countryside of Homs, Hama desert, Raqqa desert, and Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo governorates. They have reinforced these sites with about 4,500 members of the militias loyal to them, and a number of missile launchers, heavy weapons, drones and communications devices. They recently took control of the strategic Mheen warehouses east of Homs, after expanding their influence in the Nairab military airport in Aleppo governorate, at the expense of the Russian and regime forces. They have also established training camps for Syrian volunteers to join militias loyal to Iran.

In the desert of Homs and eastern Hama, sources told Asharq Al-Awsat that “an agreement was reached at the beginning of 2022. Military leaders in the Fourth Division, led by Maher al-Assad, brother of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and leaders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, established about 11 headquarters, headed by officers and military experts from both sides, in the areas of Hasya, Palmyra, Mahin, Al-Qaryatayn, Al-Sukhnah, Al-Kum and Al-Taybeh, east of Homs, and the Salamiyah, Al-Saan, Athria and Sheikh Hilal areas, east of Hama.

... “the spread of pro-Iranian militias and the Fourth Division coincided with the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war, and the beginning of the withdrawal of Russian forces from some military sites in eastern Homs.

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Continued: Iran Digs into Central Syria, Filling Vacuum Left by Russia

Source Continued:

(Iran expands the reach of its militias and weapons in Syria)," *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 7 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yp83a5pu>

"إيران توسع انتشار ميليشياتها وسلاحها في سوريا"

This includes their recent withdrawal from the Mheen warehouses, which were handed over to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Lebanese Hezbollah"...

*On March 27, Iran moved 10 Iranian **Muhajir drones** from its warehouses in the city of Palmyra, east of Homs, to a camp for drones that was recently established in the al-Tabani area, southwest of Deir ez-Zor. There, they established a UAV training project, imposing a security cordon around the area.*

... Syrian activists said that "the IRGC recently formed a new militia called Fajr al-Islam. It is led by Iranian officers and made up of elite elements from the Afghan Fatimiyoun Brigade, the Iraqi Harakat al-Nujaba, and Lebanese Hezbollah, in addition to groups of Alawites loyal to Iran and young Syrian Shiites." Its mission is to guard Iranian military depots in Hama, Homs, Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor, Palmyra, and Sukhna, east of Homs

Source:

(The Emirati Impasse Deepens: A New Front... from Iraq)," *al-Akhbar* (pro-Iran influential Lebanese daily), 4 February 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/w7xb8a88>

"بالفيديو.. مسيرة شاهد ١٢٩ تستهدف اوكار الدواعش في العراق"

(Video... Shahed-129 drone targets ISIS hideouts in Iraq)," al-Alama (Iranian Arabic-language news channel), 9 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/376pba2u>

Video footage emerged showing members of the Popular Mobilization Forces using the Iranian Shahed-129 drone to target the hideouts of ISIS terrorist gangs in Iraq.

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.



Iran's UN Ambassador Majid Takht Ravanchi, 2 March 2022.

https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Images/1400/02/17/14000217000288_Test_PhotoN.jpg

Iran Tries To Justify Abstention in UN Vote Condemning Russian Invasion of Ukraine

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

The excerpted article from the official government media outlet *Islamic Republic News Agency*, explains Iran's abstention from a United Nations resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The article cites Iran's Ambassador to the UN Majid Takht Ravanchi, who offers a series of excuses without addressing the elephant in the room—Iran's military, diplomatic, and financial ties to Russia. First, he questions the UN General Assembly's right to condemn

Russia as opposed to the UN Security Council, although Iran frequently complains that the UN Security Council is archaic, benefits the United States, and is in need of "democratization" and reform. Second, Ravanchi argues that it was hypocritical to condemn Russia for invading Ukraine but not Saudi Arabia for its actions in Yemen despite the fact that Saudi Arabia's actions are at the invitation of the UN-recognized government in Yemen and are not part of a war of conquest. Ravanchi's complaints about lack of participation may also reflect frustration with a temporary ban that the UN imposed on some Iranian voting in January 2022, due to Tehran's unpaid dues.

Ravanchi's need to issue such a lengthy explanation is partly due to the deep unpopularity of the abstention vote inside Iran. While the Iranian government sought to avoid antagonizing Russia, ordinary Iranians draw a parallel to their experience during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War. Iraq was the aggressor during that conflict, but most of the world nevertheless isolated Iran due to antagonism toward its revolution and its subsequent taking of hostages. Iranians still lament what they see as a lack of justice at the time and draw parallels between their experience 40 years ago and events in Ukraine today. They are, therefore, critical of their government's refusal to side with Ukraine and condemn Russia. Ravanchi probably understood he needed to explain his vote in order to quell public anger.

“The security concerns of the Russian Federation must be taken into account.”

Source: “Qat’anameh Mojomeh-e ‘Amumi Sazman’e Melli ‘Aliyeh Rusiyeh ba 141 ray-e Movafeq Tasvib Shod (The UN General Assembly resolution against Russia was adopted by 141 votes in favor),” *Islamic Republic News Agency* (official government news outlet), 2 March 2022. <https://www.irna.ir/news/84668745>

UN members voted in favor of the resolution, which was approved by about 80 countries, condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and calling for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. The UN General Assembly resolution was adopted by 141 votes to 35, with five abstentions. Russia, Syria, Belarus, North Korea and Eritrea voted against the resolution. Also, Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, the Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, Tanzania, Vietnam and Zimbabwe abstained....

Following the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on the Ukraine crisis, Iran's representative to the UN said that the resolution submitted to the General Assembly lacks the element of neutrality and realistic mechanisms for resolving the issue through peaceful means.... He added, “The Islamic Republic is following the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine with deep concern.”

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Continued: Iran Tries To Justify Abstention in UN Vote Condemning Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Source Continued: “Qat’anameh Mojomeh-e ‘Amumi Sazman’e Melli ‘Aliyeh Rusiyeh ba 141 ray-e Movafeq Tasvib Shod (The UN General Assembly resolution against Russia was adopted by 141 votes in favor),” *Islamic Republic News Agency* (official government news outlet), 2 March 2022. <https://www.irna.ir/news/84668745>

He stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran's principled position is based on the need for a peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with international law and the need for full compliance by all parties with the supreme principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including international humanitarian law. We emphasize that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be fully respected and the safety and security of all civilians must be guaranteed.

[Majid] Takht Ravanchi continued, “Finding a lasting and long-term solution to such crises requires addressing its roots. We note that the current complexity and fragile situation in Eastern Europe has been exacerbated by provocative actions by the United States and NATO. The security concerns of the Russian Federation must be taken into account.”

Takht Ravanchi said that the United Nations should always avoid double standards in dealing with issues related to international peace and security.... An example of this is the Security Council's approach to the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

He continued, “We believe that the resolution presented to the General Assembly lacks the element of neutrality and realistic mechanisms for resolving the issue through peaceful means. In addition, not all members of the United Nations had the opportunity to participate in the drafting of this resolution.”

The Iranian ambassador to the United Nations continued: “It is necessary to emphasize that the General Assembly is not in a position to determine the existence of an aggressive act.” In addition to Article 39 of the Charter, UN General Assembly Resolution 3314 of 14 December 1974 delegated this to the Security Council.

The senior diplomat of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations stated, “Based on the above-mentioned reasons, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran abstained from voting on the resolution contained in document.”

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.



Iranian Navy Joins Indian Naval Exercises

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

The excerpted article from Iranian media source *Fars News Agency* reflects on the increasing operations of the Iranian Navy in the Indian Ocean basin. The article describes a combined naval exercise called the IONS Maritime Exercise 2022 (IMEX 2022) near the southern Indian city of Goa. The exercise was sponsored by the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), which consists of 24 Indian Ocean littoral states, including Australia and France (due to its possession of the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte). The participation of the Iranian destroyer Dena and maritime reconnaissance aircraft and helicopters in the exercise—even when coupled with India’s and Iran’s regular exchange of naval port calls—does not mean that India and Iran are developing a special relationship. . At a minimum, Iranian participation 1,400 miles away from Hormuz demonstrates the Iranian Navy’s growing confidence operating in blue water. The exercises, which excluded China, also reflect a growing recognition in India that competition with China in the Indian Ocean mandates interoperability amongst Middle Eastern, South Asian,



Iran’s “Dana” Destroyer, which participated in the IONS 2022 Exercises off Goa, India.

Source: Islamic Republic News Agency, <https://img9.irna.ir/d/r2/2022/03/29/4/169562898.jpg?ts=1648547583599>

“The presence of the Navy in open waters... shows the authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the maritime arena.”

and East African states. Notably, IONS member Pakistan, a traditional adversary of India as well as a client of China, did not participate in the Goa exercises.

Source: “Agaz-e Razmayesh Marakab-e Darya-ye IONS 2022 ba Hazor Navshakan Tamam Irani (A Domestically-Manufactured Iranian Destroyer Joins the IONS 2022 Combined Naval Exercises),” *Fars News Agency* (media outlet close to Iran’s defense and security apparatus), 29 March 2022. <https://www.farsnews.ir/news/14010109000323>

After holding briefings, workshops and visiting the fleets of the two sides, this morning the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) Combined Naval Exercise (IMEX 22) began in Goa with the participation of Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, India, Bangladesh and the Indian Ocean countries and the participation of 14 IONS members.

Captain Farhad Fattahi, commander of the Naval Expeditionary Fleet, said that the Islamic Republic of Iran currently chairs the IONS Maritime Security Committee, and said, “IMEX 2022 exercise will be held in two phases, coastal and naval. The coastal phase includes includes briefings, training workshops and visits to the fleets of the two sides. In the naval phase, specialized naval operations including formulation exercises, guard officer maneuvers, medical aid exchange operations, rescue operations, tests and assessments will be carried out...”

Emphasizing that today the Navy has become a decisive force in various fields, he stated, “The presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy in open waters and its participation in multilateral exercises with countries around the world, shows the authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the maritime arena and [our] effective interaction with other countries in securing maritime prosperity and world peace.

Iran's New Damavand Destroyer Set To Join Navy

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

On 10 January 2018, Iran's Damavand destroyer collided with a breakwater while docking at the Caspian port of Bandar Anzali. While Iranian authorities initially denied the incident, local bloggers soon posted videos of the ship listing and sinking, reportedly killing at least three sailors. In the excerpted article from the Iranian Defense Ministry's official news source, *Holy Defense News Agency*, Shahram Irani, head of the Iranian Navy, announces that the Navy would soon officially launch a new destroyer to replace the Damavand. That it has taken four years to build the new ship gives a sense of the speed of Iranian shipbuilding. Iranian Mowj (Wave) class destroyers are equipped with anti-submarine torpedoes, an assortment of surface-to-surface missiles, surface-to-air missiles, and various naval guns and cannons. Because the Damavand—named for Iran's tallest mountain—operates in the landlocked Caspian Sea, its replacement needed to be built at Bandar Anzali. Its mission is to show the flag and guard Iran's Caspian infrastructure against Caspian littoral states—Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, all which are relatively friendly with Iran. This suggests that the political and economic need to keep shipyards busy trump military needs when the Iranian Navy decides where to spend its money. Given the fact that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps controls such shipbuilding, the construction and launch of a new destroyer for the uncontested Caspian Sea demonstrates how difficult meaningful economic reform in Iran will be.

“The process of building naval equipment will accelerate.”



Iran's previous Damavand destroyer sank after striking a breakwater at Bandar Anzali, 10 January 2018.

Source: Young Journalist Club (a subsidiary of the state-controlled Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting). https://cdn.yjc.news/files/fa/news/1398/7/19/10699419_907.jpg

Source: “Anjam-e Testha-ye Nahaye Navshakan ‘Damavand’ (Performing Final Tests on the Damavand Destroyer),” *Holy Defense News Agency* (Iran's Defense Ministry news outlet), 3 April 2022. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/511977>

Admiral Shahram Irani, commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, in an interview with the defense correspondent of the Holy Defense News Agency, said with regard to the latest situation of the Damavand destroyer, “The Damavand destroyer will join the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy soon and it will be a special occasion.” He stated that the Damavand destroyer is undergoing final tests, and added, “In 2022, the process of building naval equipment will accelerate, with regard to both surface and subsurface technology.”

According to the Holy Defense News Agency, the Damavand destroyer is completely indigenous and the second warship in the Mowj [Wave] class. It is more advanced than the Jamaran [the first of the Mowj class] that joined the Northern [Caspian] fleet on 9 March 2015.

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME



A narco-sub of the type found in a clandestine shipyard in Colombia.

Source: Peru Ministry of Defense via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peru_Narco-submarine.jpg Attribution: CC BY 2.0

Colombian Navy Discovers Clandestine Narco-sub Shipyard

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Colombia's criminal organizations have always proven capable of evading detection through innovation. According to Colombian weekly magazine *Semana*, the country's navy discovered a clandestine shipyard meant for building "narco-subs" for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group. The shipyard was found in Nariño, a department on the southern border with Ecuador. According to the article, the shipyard contained two half-built, 82-foot

semi-submersibles with a full range of modern equipment. Colombian authorities have seized more than 40 semi-submersibles since the beginning of 2021.

Right-leaning Mexican daily *El Universal* says that traffickers have employed semi-submersibles with increasing frequency in the Pacific Ocean. Colombian groups have recently started using this maritime route to move their products to Mexican criminal organizations rather than the land route. Each narco-sub can carry about four tons of cocaine.

Other semi-submersible submarines have been making trans-Atlantic and Pacific crossings in recent years. Although there are no known instances of drug traffickers accomplishing this feat, it suggests that it is plausible that criminal organizations can ship their own product, even across the Atlantic, rather than hiding it in shipping containers or having to pay off corrupt customs officials. Such a development would remove several points of vulnerability from the drug trafficking supply chain, making detection and interdiction more difficult in the vast oceans.

“Navy men located two semi-submersibles that were ready to be loaded with eight tons of cocaine... During the year 2021 and so far in 2022, 43 semi-submersible naval devices have been seized.”

Source: “Encuentran dos semisumergibles en selvas de Nariño, listos para cargar de cocaína (An encounter of two semi-submersibles in the jungles of Nariño, ready to load cocaine),” *Semana* (Colombia's most famous weekly magazine), 16 March 2022. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/encuentran-dos-semisumergibles-en-selvas-de-narino-listos-para-cargar-de-cocaina/202239/>

Navy men located two semi-submersibles that were ready to be loaded with eight tons of cocaine...Semi-submersibles are used by drug traffickers to ship tons of cocaine undetected...During the year 2021 and ..in 2022, 43 semi-submersible naval devices were seized.

Source: “CJNG. Salsa Club, el antro de los narcos mexicanos en Colombia (CJNG. Salsa Club, the den of Mexican drug traffickers in Colombia),” *El Universal* (a major Mexican daily that tends to lean right), 12 April 2022. <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/mundo/cjng-salsa-club-el-antro-de-los-narcos-mexicanos-en-colombia>

The celebration was used by Colombian and U.S. agents to infiltrate and find out the details of the Mexican-Colombian criminal alliance to traffic cocaine in semi-submersibles through a maritime corridor of the Pacific Ocean that leaves the coast of San Juan de la Costa en route to...Mexico and the US. The corridor covers the Pacific coasts of Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Central America, and Mexico, and in the 21st century it became a vital drug trafficking route from South to North America.

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Mexican Criminal Organizations Consolidate Their Positions in South America

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Historically, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela had various homegrown criminal organizations all working with Mexican cartels. More recently, however, it appears that Mexican groups are moving to cut out middlemen and become major players further afield of their traditional regions of operation and influence. A series of recent events signal this shift in northern parts of South America. Ecuador suffered a series of deadly prison riots throughout 2021 and into 2022. These gruesome acts heralded the arrival of Mexico's powerful criminal organizations, jockeying for position in the country's drug trade, as well as territory for the export of narcotics via the Pacific Ocean. The excerpted article from one of Medellín's leading newspapers, *El Colombiano*, reports that emissaries of Mexican criminal organizations have been on the Colombia-Venezuela border trying to mediate disputes between local drug gangs. Purportedly, Mexican cartels would like to tamp down the violence and restore the steady supply of illicit drugs that existed prior to the Venezuelan government's operations in the border regions. The article goes on to say that representatives, mostly from the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels, arrive through Venezuelan territory, while



Violence breaks out in Ecuador during protests over the spiraling security situation.

Source: Romina Icaza via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/asambleanacional/5018365312> Attribution: CC BY-SA 2.0

others pass through Colombia. The article from Colombian weekly magazine *Semana* reports that Colombian authorities arrested a top lieutenant of Mexican trafficker Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán in Cali.

“Mexican drug traffickers, especially from the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels, are sending emissaries that arrive at the border through Venezuelan territory and that, in a few cases, pass through Colombian airports in Bogotá and Medellín.”

Source: “Emisarios de narcos extranjeros aterrizan en frontera con Venezuela para mediar en la guerra (Emissaries of foreign drug traffickers land on the border with Venezuela to mediate in the war),” *El Colombiano* (one of Medellín's leading newspapers), 11 April 2022. <https://www.elcolombiano.com/colombia/narcos-mexicanos-llegan-a-colombia-para-frenar-guerra-criminal-en-frontera-con-venezuela-cocaina-y-armas-CH17239658>

...It is in this context that Mexican drug traffickers, especially from the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels, are sending emissaries that arrive at the border through Venezuelan territory and, in a few cases, pass through Colombian airports in Bogotá and Medellín... The message they are sending is there is money for everyone and they do not have to kill each other.

Source: “Cabecilla del cartel de Sinaloa y mano derecha del Chapo Guzmán fue capturado en Cali (Leader of the Sinaloa cartel and right-hand man of Chapo Guzmán was captured in Cali),” *Semana* (Colombia's leading weekly magazine), 8 April 2022. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/cali/articulo/cabecilla-del-cartel-de-sinaloa-y-mano-derecha-del-chapo-guzman-fue-capturado-en-cali/202248/>

In a condominium in the exclusive residential neighborhood Ciudad Jardín, in southern Cali, the authorities captured a Mexican citizen who arrived in Colombia as an emissary of the Mexican drug trafficker, alias Mayo Zambada, successor in the Sinaloa Cartel of Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán Loera... The whereabouts of the emissary was known thanks to the monitoring carried out by the authorities, with infiltrated agents.

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME



A female soldier belonging to the Somali National Army.

Source: AMISOM/Flickr, <https://flickr.com/photos/61765479@N08/27519432255> Attribution: Public Domain

Source: “Al-Shabaab Increases Attacks as Elections Drag in Somalia,” *Shabelle Media Network* (independent news outlet), 26 March 2022. <https://shabellemedia.com/al-shabaab-increases-attacks-as-elections-drag-in-somalia/>

Security analysts said the brazen attacks were a fresh demonstration of al-Shabab’s goal of destabilizing the government in Mogadishu.

Among the dead was a firebrand woman member of parliament, Amina Mohamed, who was on the campaign trail when she was targeted and killed by a suicide bomber.

“If the election is being delayed then they must have got time, so that at least they can easily target the elders, who select the candidates,” Abdisamad said. “They can easily kill candidates vying for the seats. They can easily interrupt the entire election process, so that they see failed outcome at the end of the day.”

Safiina said security has been tightened at all polling stations and is provided by national police as well as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Safiina said anyone who wants to undermine the election by acts of terrorism or disruption will fail.

Al Shabaab Takes Advantage of Somalia’s Disjointed Election Process To Ramp Up Attacks

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

As the accompanying excerpted article from Somali independent news outlet *Shabelle Media Network* explains, al Shabaab is involved in two aspects of the country’s dragged out elections. First, it is delaying the voting process by targeting politicians and the means to conduct an election. As the article notes, the election was originally scheduled for July 2021. At that time, 329 seats in parliament were to be filled. Second, it is taking advantage of the confusion caused by the delay to launch additional terrorist attacks, including two bombings in the city of Beledweyne, which claimed at least 48 lives. Among the dead is Amina Mohamed Abdi, a young lawmaker who had been a strong critic of the government. She is the fifth parliamentary candidate killed in two months.

Political disputes between President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, as well as disagreements between the central and provincial governments, have had a significant role in knocking the election process off kilter. All of this has played into the hands of al Shabaab, which has found the disarray an opportune time to strike at targets that compound the government’s inability to keep a firm election date. Additionally, al Shabaab’s attacks have created concern among the civilian populace about their safety, likely suppressing the actual number who will go to the polls. On the same day as the Beledweyne bombings, two al Shabaab militants breached Mogadishu’s heavily fortified airport, which was the designated location for the presidential elections. It is also the location of the UN, AMISOM, and several Western embassies. Western powers have been pushing Somalia to conduct elections, hoping they might help unify the divided nation and strengthen its ability to combat al Shabaab. Al Shabaab’s recent attacks are a strong reminder that despite repeated pronouncements of the terrorist organization being weakened, it is still a potent force capable of frustrating both the Somali government and Western powers.

“Security analysts said the brazen attacks were a fresh demonstration of al-Shabab’s goal of destabilizing the government in Mogadishu.”

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Separatist Conflict Imminent in Northern Mali

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

On 10 March, the Arabic-language website *imangahdien.com*, which covers northern Mali, published the excerpted interview with the spokesperson for the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA). The CMA includes Tuareg and Arab militant and political movements that seek autonomy for northern Mali. In 2015, the CMA concluded a peace agreement with the Malian government, known as the Algiers Accords. CMA spokesperson Mohamed Ramadan Mouloud suggests that the CMA may take up arms again against the Malian state and renounce the Algiers Accords. The CMA views that a return to war is likely because the current Malian military rulers are unwilling to grant autonomy in parts of northern Mali to the CMA. The CMA's views regarding the lack of implementation of the Algiers Accords are consistent with the findings of the International Crisis Group, which argued in 2020 that the decentralization and regionalization guaranteed by the Accords had indeed not been fully implemented and that the Malian government focused almost exclusively on the jihadist threat.

Mouloud notes that the CMA welcomed the coup that brought the Malian military to power last year and ousted the democratically elected President Ibrahima Boubacar Keïta. According to Mouloud, Keïta did not implement the Algiers Accords. However, the CMA believes that the military leaders have also not implemented them, despite their promises to do so. Further, the CMA resents the military rulers because they allowed Russian forces, including from the Wagner Group, on Malian soil despite Russia's record



Islamist fighters in northern Mali.

Source: Idrissa Fall, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islamist_fighters_in_northern_Mali.PNG Attribution: CC x 2.0

“He reiterated that kinetic measures alone will not end the war and therefore advised that a political solution be implemented.”

of human rights abuses in Syria, Libya, the Central African Republic, and elsewhere. Moreover, the CMA claims that Russia will not be able to compensate for the withdrawal of French troops from Mali because the security and counter-terrorism demands of the country are too severe for either foreign power to resolve. Rather, the CMA believes its own military forces should be granted increased authority to provide security in northern Mali.

Source:

(CMA Spokesperson: A return to armed struggle is not excluded because of Mali's rejection of the peace agreement),” *imangahdien.com* (Arab language news website), 10 March 2022. <https://imangahdien.com/en/2022/03/10/porte-parole-de-la-cma-un-retour-a-la-lutte-armee-nest-pas-exclu-a-la-lumiere-de-la-repudiation-par-le-mali-de-laccord-de-paix/>

The spokesperson for the Coordination of Azawad Movements, which signed the peace agreement with the Malian government, stated that a return to armed struggle cannot be discounted because of the Malian government's disavowal of the agreement concluded between the two parties.

Mohamed Ramadan Mouloud: In fact, we welcomed with anticipation the departure of the regime of former President Ibrahima Boubacar Keïta, who had no will to implement the agreement concluded between the Malian government and the Azawad movements, signed six years ago, all of which was scheduled to be implemented

continue on 29

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Continued: Separatist Conflict Imminent in Northern Mali

Source Continued:

"العودة إلى الكفاح المسلح ليست مستبعدة في ظل متصل مالي من اتفاقية السلام CMA المتحدث باسم

(CMA Spokesperson: A return to armed struggle is not excluded because of Mali's rejection of the peace agreement)," *imangahdien.com* (Arab language news website), 10 March 2022. <https://imangahdien.com/en/2022/03/10/porte-parole-de-la-cma-un-retour-a-la-lutte-armee-nest-pas-exclu-a-la-lumiere-de-la-repudiation-par-le-mali-de-laccord-de-paix/>

within two years of its signing.... The precedent that has been procrastinating and manipulating the Azawadi issue.

Our position on the Russian presence is very clear and specific. From the first day, we issued a statement rejecting the Russian presence on the territory of Mali, and we said that this presence would represent a danger to the region, and that Wagner's history is linked to crimes and massacres in Syria, Libya and Central Africa.... Of course, they will not be able to fill the vacuum of the French and European forces, and in fact, the security vacuum in Mali can only be filled by the re-arranged national army, to include the national forces of the Azawad movement.

Source: "Mali's Algiers Peace Agreement, Five Years On: An Uneasy Calm," *The International Crisis Group* (international research organization), 24 June 2020. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/laccord-dalger-cinq-ans-apres-un-calme-precaire-dont-il-ne-faut-pas-se-satisfaire>

The agreement seeks to restore peace in Mali principally through a process of decentralisation or regionalisation, reconstituting a national army from the members of the former armed groups that were signatories, and boosting the economy (particularly in the north), based on dialogue, justice and national reconciliation.... So far, the measures have been temporary or too limited to make any real impact on the ground.

KREMLIN KONTROL RUSSIA'S POLITICAL MILITARY REALITY by Timothy L. Thomas

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



GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Sanctions Likely To Weaken Russian Arms Flow to Africa



Ethiopian soldier holding an AK-47.

Source: U.S. government via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Afrimil-ethiopiansoldier.jpg> Attribution: Public Domain

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

Economic sanctions on Russia will likely jeopardize African countries's ability to purchase new weapons and maintain existing stockpiles, according to the excerpted article from South African news source *The Conversation Africa*. As the article points out, African countries import 49 percent of its military hardware from Russia, everything from battleships and fighter jets to handguns and rifles.

The article notes five ways the sanctions on Russia are likely to impact African defense contractors and/or militaries. First, Russia cannot deliver military hardware that is already on order. Second, African militaries will struggle to maintain their vast inventories of Russian weapons because the supply of spare parts is now in jeopardy. Third, various contractual obligations between Russian

arms suppliers and African nations will not be met, possibly leaving some difficult issues for courts to decide. Fourth, arms merchants from numerous countries will try to fill the void created by Russia's absence. However, since so much of Africa's weaponry is Russian made, it will not be easy for many African countries to replace their Russian weapons with Western armaments. Fifth and finally, the already present black market in arms transfers is likely to grow as Russia and possibly some African nations look to skirt the sanctions.

The absence of Russian weapons could also prove to be an incentive for African defense industries to increase the quantity of their output as well as try to manufacture larger and more complex weapons platforms. As the article points out, Russia might even transfer some of its defense contracts to countries such as Nigeria and South Africa, which already have a enough industrial capacity to manufacture arms.

“The wide-ranging sanctions could have serious implications for Africa. Importantly, they could affect the continent's ability to procure and maintain military hardware from Russia.”

Source: Moses B. Khanyile, “Sanctions against Russia will affect arms sales to Africa: the risks and opportunities,” *The Conversation Africa* (South African independent news source), 27 March 2022. <https://theconversation.com/sanctions-against-russia-will-affect-arms-sales-to-africa-the-risks-and-opportunities-180038>

The wide-ranging sanctions could have serious implications for Africa. Importantly, they could affect the continent's ability to procure and maintain military hardware from Russia.

The biggest buyers of armaments from Russia – and most long-standing importers – are Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco and Uganda.

In the past Russia has been astute in filling the void left by western countries. It did this in 2013 when the US cut off military aid and arms to Egypt after the military staged a coup. Suppliers such as Russia and France were happy to fill the gap.

The comprehensive sanctions imposed on Russia are likely to last beyond the current conflict. This implies that what may be regarded as ‘interim measures’ to fill a temporary void may end up being a long-lasting solution to Africa's desire to produce its own military hardware for its own use, and also to reduce reliance on external suppliers.

African countries should therefore make a concerted effort to look towards defence companies on the continent for support. The African Union and South Africa, in particular, given its BRICS link, should play a central role in driving such a campaign.

Algeria Caught Between Neutrality and Strategic Relations with Russia

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Algeria has sought to remain neutral in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but historical strategic relations with Russia and growing security concerns on its borders may draw it closer to Russia. As noted in the excerpts from the Saudi-funded *Independent Arabia* and the influential Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, these relations were on display during a late March visit to Algiers by a high-level Russian military delegation, during which the two sides agreed to hold joint anti-terror military exercises in southern Algeria in November. Algeria is a key buyer of advanced Russian weaponry and an attractive strategic partner for Russia in the current geopolitical climate due to its location on NATO's underbelly and its abundant natural gas resources. Russia can help Algeria with two of its vital concerns: securing its southern border, particularly with Mali, and militarily balancing Morocco. Relations with Morocco have soured over the past year, and Morocco's blossoming military partnership with Israel threatens to tilt the balance in its favor. Although the Algerian military has recently turned to China for some advanced weaponry, Russia remains its main security partner and possibly the only country willing to help Algeria maintain a favorable military balance with Morocco.

On 4 April, the speaker of the People's National Assembly, Algeria's lower house of parliament, hosted the Russian ambassador and reaffirmed Algeria's commitment to its deep strategic relationship with Russia, in comments that were reported by the country's official news agency *Algeria Press Service*. However, Algerian in-depth cooperation with Russia does not equate to enthusiastic support for Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine. Like other countries of the region, Algeria hopes to stay out of a Russia-NATO conflict. Algeria has been explicit in endorsing a negotiated settlement to the conflict, and its foreign minister has been active in an "Arab Contact Group" that seeks to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. Still, Algeria's relations with Russia run deeper than those of many other Arab countries, particularly when it comes to defense cooperation. Algeria joined Syria in the vote against expelling Russia from the UN Human Rights Commission, making them the only two Arab countries to do so. Most other Arab countries either abstained or refused to vote. Mali's government, which is increasingly close to Russia and a strategically important partner of Algeria's, also voted against the resolution.

“... the repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war are strongly present in these diplomatic moves, by virtue of Algeria's strong strategic relationship with Russia and its stable relations with Western countries...”

Source:

(Russia beats Blinken to 'the Algerian Arena')," *Independent Arabia* (Saudi-funded news website), 27 March 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/mr2czhan>

"روسيا تسبق بلينكن إلى 'حلبة الجزائر'"

The Algerian Ministry of Defense announced that the Chief of Staff of the Army, Said Chengriha and other high-ranking officers met with members of a Russian delegation at the conclusion of their visit to Algeria. The Russian delegation was led by the Director of the Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation of Russia, Dmitry Shuvaev, and also included the Russian ambassador to Algeria. The meeting came at the end of the Russian delegation's visit, from March 23 to 25, to attend the regular meeting of the Algerian-Russian Intergovernmental Committee in charge of military and technical cooperation...

Said Hadeif, a researcher in Maghreb affairs, told The Independent... "It is difficult to predict what Russia was expecting from its allies, but it seems that the visit of the director of the Federal Service for Military and Technical Cooperation came under the weight of one month of war for Russia, and the consequent sanctions and Moscow's fear of losing its allies." He noted that the repercussions of the Russian-Ukrainian war are strongly present in these diplomatic moves, by virtue of Algeria's strong strategic relationship with Russia and its stable relations with Western countries. This is making it move cautiously, as it seeks to preserve its positions and its allies, and at the same time avoids "angering" the West, led by Washington.

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Continued: Algeria Caught Between Neutrality and Strategic Relations with Russia

Source:

(Algeria-Russia anti-terror military maneuvers)," *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 6 April 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/3k8r9fuc>

"مناورات عسكرية جزائرية - روسية تحاكي محاربة الإرهاب"

Yesterday, the Russian TASS news agency quoted the Russian Southern Military District as saying that joint anti-terror exercises of the Russian and Algerian ground forces will take place next November in Algeria. The upcoming maneuvers were discussed, according to the press office of the Southern Military District in the Russian city of Vladikavkaz, during the "first planning conference to prepare for joint Russian-Algerian ground forces anti-terror maneuvers." The same source also announced that the military exercises will take place at a base located in the Adrar Governorate, in the far south of Algeria. According to the Russian Agency, during the conference, "the exercise's scenario and the organization of logistics, including accommodation procedures, were coordinated." It added that the maneuvers "will consist of tactical moves to search, detect and destroy illegal armed groups. On the Russian side, about 80 soldiers from the Southern Military District are scheduled to participate in the exercises."

Source:

(People's National Assembly Speaker welcomes the Russian ambassador to Algeria)," *Algeria Press Service* (official Algerian news service), 4 April 2022. <https://www.aps.dz/ar/algerie/124089-2022-04-04-14-29-34>

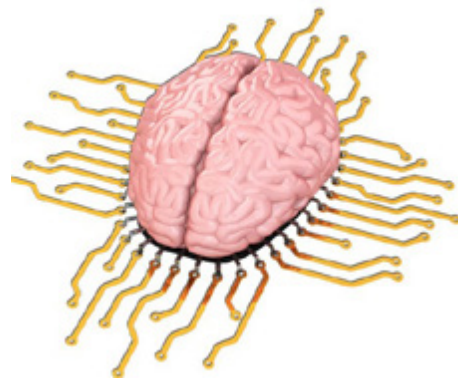
"رئيس المجلس الشعبي الوطني يستقبل السفير الروسي لدى الجزائر"

On Monday, the Speaker of the People's National Assembly, Mr. Ibrahim Bougali, received the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Algeria, Mr. Igor Belyaev, in a meeting centered on the "outstanding bilateral relations" that unite the two countries, according to a statement from the parliament.

... In addition, Mr. Bougali affirmed "Algeria's commitment to its in-depth strategic partnership with Russia" and called for "exploiting all available possibilities to diversify the areas of cooperation."

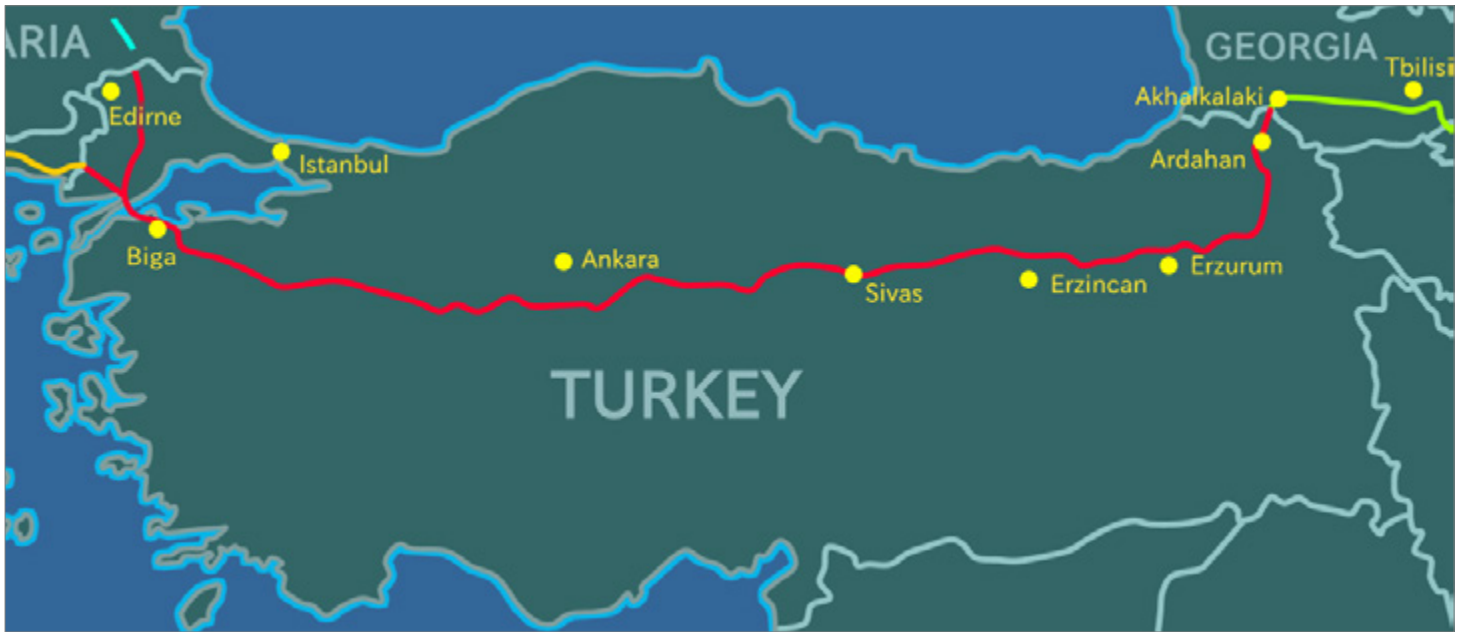
THE MAD SCIENTIST LABORATORY BLOG

**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.**



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

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT



Map of the Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline (the central part of the Southern Gas Corridor, which connects the giant Shah Deniz gas field in Azerbaijan to Europe through the South Caucasus Pipeline and the Trans Adriatic Pipeline.

Source: Golden, Own Work, via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trans-Anatolian_gas_pipeline.png, Attribution: CC-BY-SA-4.0 | Self-published work | Maps by Golden

Turkey Central To Reducing Europe's Dependence on Russian Natural Gas

By Ihsan Gunduz
OE Watch Commentary

The two excerpted articles suggest that Europe could reduce or eliminate its dependence on Russian natural gas by using possible alternatives from the Middle East via Turkey. The first article from Turkey's state-owned news agency, *Anadolu Ajansı*, looks at a potential Turkey-Israeli natural gas pipeline that would pump Eastern Mediterranean gas reserves to Europe. Israeli President Isaac Herzog revived this idea during his visit to Ankara in early March 2022. Accordingly, the article states that the issue was on both Turkey's and Israel's agenda. Turkish President Erdoğan reportedly signaled that the sides would continue to work to determine concrete steps on proposed routes.

The excerpted article from security news site *al-Monitor* explores the option of Europe importing natural gas from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq via Turkey. It warns that this will likely increase the rivalry between Turkey and Iran, as Iran would perceive it as a threat to its energy market. On

13 March, Iranian missiles struck Erbil and one target was the villa of a Kurdish businessman involved in the Kurdish region's energy sector. The article notes that a key trigger for the strikes was a plan to pump Kurdish natural gas into Turkey and Europe with the help of Israel. The article refers to several statements made by both Kurdish and Turkish officials indicating such plans. For example, President of the Kurdistan Region Masrour Barzani said on 28 March that the region would "become a net exporter of gas to the rest of Iraq, Turkey, and Europe in the near future and help meet their energy security needs." President Erdoğan also stated that Turkey was gearing up for new energy projects.

“Potential projects to carry Iraqi Kurdistan natural gas to Europe via Turkey, in order to reduce dependency on Russia, might also increase rivalry between Turkey and Iran.”

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Continued: Turkey Central To Reducing Europe's Dependence on Russian Natural Gas

Source: Haydar Oruç, “Türkiye-İsrail normalleşmesinin enerji boyutu (Energy Dimension of Turkey-Israel Normalization),” *Anadolu Ajansı* (Turkey's state-owned news agency), 11 March 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/turkiye-israil-normallesmesinin-enerji-boyutu/2531776>

Undoubtedly, the issue that comes to the fore at first glance is energy cooperation...

...after the Russian invasion of Ukraine the issues experienced in energy supply, Europe feels the need to reduce its dependence on Russian energy supply. And this reality puts Eastern Mediterranean gas one step ahead of other alternatives.

When the [EastMed Pipeline] project is implemented, first of all, Turkey's energy supply will be diversified... Iran, which has supplied most of Turkey's energy needs previously, being subjected to international sanctions complicates the sustainability of the gas its gas supplies... In addition, Iran's desire to use gas as a political tool from time to time also harms relations.

Similarly, recent international sanctions on Russia makes its [energy] source unsustainable. Therefore, the emergence of Eastern Mediterranean gas as an alternative source is extremely important in terms of energy security. This will increase the importance and value of Turkey in the energy market.

...if Turkey and Israel reach an agreement for the delivery of Eastern Mediterranean gas to Europe via Turkey, energy supplies will be diversified, energy routes will be secured...

Source: “Erdoğan: Turkey-Israel Gas pipeline on the agenda,” *Yetkin Report* (blog of veteran Turkish Journalist Murat Yetkin), 31 March 2022. <https://yetkinreport.com/en/2022/03/31/erdogan-turkey-israel-gas-pipeline-on-the-agenda/>

Is Turkey-Israel gas pipeline project on the agenda as an alternative to Russian streams? Erdoğan answered Turkish journalist's questions on March 33... stating that a gas pipeline crossing through Turkey is on the agenda.

“We discussed many issues in detail with Mr. Herzog, especially the energy issue. In the past, there were some relations, contacts between Israel and Turkey regarding energy... Laying pipes under the sea from Israel to Greece, to Europe, is not a feasible thing to do. As a result of the cost calculations, it is seen that the most suitable way for this is [the passage] of this natural gas [pipeline] through Turkey. Of course, they are already making assessment on the issue...”

Erdoğan added that he proposed a bilateral meeting between Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and Energy and Natural Resources to discuss the energy issue in detail, and said that Israeli President's response was positive on this proposal...

“...the cooperation between Israel and Turkey here will accelerate the process related to Eastern Mediterranean oil and natural gas. I am very hopeful about this,” [Erdoğan] said.

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Continued: Turkey Central To Reducing Europe's Dependence on Russian Natural Gas

Source: Fehim Taştekin, "Ukraine war shakes up Turkey's ties with both Russia and NATO," *al-Monitor* (globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 08 April 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/04/will-renewed-interest-iraqi-kurdish-gas-fuel-turkey-iran-rivalry>

Potential projects to carry Iraqi Kurdistan natural gas to Europe via Turkey, in order to reduce dependency on Russia, might also increase rivalry between Turkey and Iran.

...a potential plan to carry Iraqi Kurdish gas through Turkey with the help of Israel was one reason for Iran's missile attack on Erbil on March 13.

...Under an energy cooperation deal between Ankara and Iraqi Kurdistan in 2013, Turkey has already finished the pipeline linking its border with northern Iraq to a conduit which carries Azeri gas to Europe.

...

Erbil has amped up its efforts to boost its energy ties with regional actors amid escalating tensions between Russia and the Western capitals over Ukraine. Iraqi Kurdistan President Nechirvan Barzani met with Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara on Feb. 2. Ali Hama Salih, the head of the energy commission in Kurdistan's parliament, said Feb. 9 that the gas link to Turkey would become operational in 2025. ...Most recently, [KRG Prime Minister] Masrour Barzani announced Mar 28 that Iraqi Kurdistan would "become a net exporter of gas to the rest of Iraq, Turkey and Europe in the near future and help meet their energy security needs..."

While echoing previous assertions that Israel has no involvement in the plans, Barzani also admitted that Iraqi Kurdistan's expanding energy ties were not in line with Iranian interests...

In a similar vein, Erdogan said Turkey was gearing up for new energy projects. On his way back from Brussels, where he met with various NATO leaders, he told reporters, "God willing, through our meetings new avenues will be opened for Turkey in the energy field." That hints at possible markets for Iraqi Kurdish and Eastern Mediterranean gas following normalization of ties with Israel.

...But Ankara still has to find a middle ground between Erbil and Baghdad to advance its gas and oil cooperation with Iraqi Kurdistan.

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

India Begins Development of a Light Tank

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

On 3 March, the Indian government announced the development of a light tank that could better operate at high altitudes and mountainous terrain along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The project would also provide a boost to Indian firms as part of the Make in India initiative. The accompanying excerpted article from the Indian independent think-tank *Observer Research Foundation*, provides some background to the decision to develop this indigenously and points out some issues that could come up in the process.

According to the article, the proposed tank will be developed under the “Make-I category of the 2020 Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP).” This means the government will fund the development, instead of the defense industry. The article also points out that China has already developed its Type 15 light tank and deployed it in the high-altitude regions along the LAC. The author notes that India considered purchasing Russia’s Sprut light tank just after the border clashes with China in May 2020, but officials ultimately decided to develop an indigenous light tank. He also notes that while building it at home would be beneficial for the domestic defense industry, there “could potentially be a minimum five-year lag before the country witnesses the emergence of the initial variant of a homemade light tank.”

The author cites the pained development of the Arjun main battle tank, including delays and a lukewarm reception, as an example of the issues that could come up during the development of a new tank. He also notes the Arjun’s limited deployment only in certain geographic areas as a “reminder of how not to proceed with the development of an indigenous light tank.” He believes that if India repeats these mistakes with a light tank, it could eventually need to import one at a time when sanctions against Russia make it a risky source of supply.

“India had considered acquiring the Russian light tank the Sprut SDM1 following the outbreak of the current Sino-Indian boundary in May 2020.”

Source: Kartik Bommakanti, “Light tanks: A shot in the arm for the Indian Army,” *Observer Research Foundation* (an independent think tank in India), 21 March 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/light-tanks-a-shot-in-the-arm-for-the-indian-army/>

The Modi government on 3 March 2022 announced the development of light tanks for the Indian Army (IA). This decision was taken under the Make-I category of the 2020 Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)...

...the Chinese have designed and developed a dedicated light tank called the Type-15 and deploy them due to their suitability for high altitude warfare against India. The Type-15 weighs 35 tonnes with a 105 mm gun making it significantly lighter than the IA’s T-90, T-72... It is one of the few light tanks built in the last three decades...

Against this backdrop, India had considered acquiring the Russian light tank the Sprut SDM1 following the outbreak of the current Sino-Indian boundary in May 2020. In April 2021, the Directorate General of Mechanised Forces issued a Request for Information (RFI) under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for 350 light tanks in the weight class of 25 tonnes. Notwithstanding Russia’s offer, India has now turned to native development of a light tank rather than import them.

...Irrespective of the merits of native development of light tanks, India’s decision-makers have to recognise that there could potentially be a minimum five-year lag before the country witnesses the emergence of the initial variant of a homemade light tank.

...The light tank project cannot be hobbled by past native development of armoured platforms such as the nearly 70 tonne—Arjun MBT...it is an overweight tank and can only be deployed in “pockets” such as the desert areas along the India-Pakistan border...The delayed and lukewarm integration of both variants—Mk1 and Mk1A of the Arjun MBTs by the IA also serves as a reminder of how not to proceed with the development of an indigenous light tank, because it could compel the IA and the government importing light tanks at the cost of an indigenous capability. A heavily-sanctioned Russia in the coming months and years will be a highly risky source of supply...

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Philippines Pursues Helicopter Deals with Russia, Turkey, and Poland

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying article from the Philippines-based *gmanetwork.com* looks at the Philippine government's decision to purchase 17 military transport helicopters from Russia. The article notes that the deal was made before the Russian invasion of Ukraine and, for the Philippines, the invasion does not affect the status of the deal. The article asserts that the fulfillment of the deal would ultimately depend on Russia, which has been subject to sanctions since its war in Ukraine began. The president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, has only expressed concern about, but not condemned, Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Marawi crisis UH-1H helicopter.

Source: Philippines Information Agency https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marawi_crisis_UH-1H_helicopter.jpg Attribution: CC BY 2.0

In addition, on 9 March, Turkey's pro-government *Daily Sabah* reported that the Philippines received six attack helicopters from a Turkish company. Like the Russian helicopters, the helicopters from Turkey are intended to enhance the Philippines' surface strike system. They are capable of being deployed in the South China Sea, where the Philippines has territorial disputes with China.

Besides Russia and Turkey, *gmanetwork.com* reported on 22 February that the Philippines acquired 16 Black Hawk helicopters from Poland and is under contract for the purchase of 32 more. The Philippines Air Force (PAF) noted that the helicopters would be used in humanitarian emergencies, as occurred when Typhoon Odette caused the deaths of more than 400 civilians in Visayas and Mindanao in December 2021. In addition, the PAF may use the helicopters for aerial surveillance, including of pirates and terrorist groups like Abu Sayyaf, which have been active in the south of the country, kidnapping both foreign tourists and Philippine citizens.

“The Philippines will proceed with the acquisition of 17 helicopters from Russia despite the latter's conflict with Ukraine...”

Source: “Philippines keeps \$12.7-billion chopper deal with Russia despite Ukraine conflict,” *gmanetwork.com* (largely centrist Philippine based media outlet), 10 March 2022. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/824565/philippines-keeps-12-7-billion-chopper-deal-with-russia-despite-ukraine-conflict/story/>

The Philippines will proceed with the acquisition of 17 helicopters from Russia despite the latter's conflict with Ukraine, the Department of National Defense (DND) said. In a statement, DND Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the deal and initial payment for the project were made even before the start of the crisis in Ukraine.

Source: “Philippines receives 1st batch of Turkey-made attack helicopters,” *dailysabah.com* (Turkish pro-government news source), 9 March 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/philippines-receives-1st-batch-of-turkey-made-attack-helicopters>

The Philippines has received the first batch of Turkey-made attack helicopters, the country's air force announced. The country had ordered six helicopters designed and developed by Turkish Aerospace Industries
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GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Continued: Philippines Pursues Helicopter Deals with Russia, Turkey, and Poland

Source Continued: “Philippines receives 1st batch of Turkey-made attack helicopters,” *dailysabah.com* (Turkish pro-government news source), 9 March 2022. <https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/philippines-receives-1st-batch-of-turkey-made-attack-helicopters>

(TAI). The Philippines – which is buying the six choppers worth approximately \$280 million (TL 4.1 billion) – is the first country abroad to use the ATAK.

Mariano said the Turkish-made attack helicopters are expected to enhance the “surface strike system” of the Air Force.

Source: “Philippines, Poland firm sign deal for 32 Black Hawk helicopters,” *gmanetwork.com* (largely centrist Philippine based media outlet), 22 February 2022. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/822693/philippines-poland-firm-sign-deal-for-32-black-hawk-helicopters/story/>

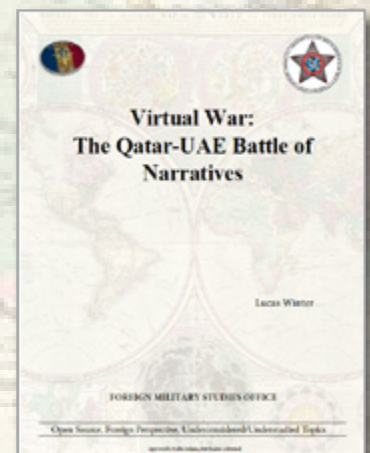
The PAF said the set of helicopters would boost the Armed Forces of the Philippines’ capability for various operations such as humanitarian assistance and disaster response missions. The defense chief added that the Black Hawk helicopters, as well as the country’s 15 Sikorsky 70i, were helpful during the onslaught of Typhoon Odette in parts of Visayas and Mindanao.

VIRTUAL WAR: THE QATAR-UAE BATTLE OF NARRATIVES

Lucas Winter

May 2020

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



GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Indonesia Upgrades Naval Submarine Fleet

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

Recently, Indonesia acquired two Scorpene submarines from France, modernizing its navy's weapons systems. The accompanying articles from local sources provide insight into two factors that prompted Indonesia to pursue new submarines. First, China has repeatedly entered the waters of the North Natuna Sea, which Indonesia claims as its exclusive economic zone and China asserts is within its so-called nine-dash line. The Natuna Sea is important for both countries' economies due to its substantial oil and gas reserves. Second, in April 2021, an Indonesian submarine sank off the coast of Bali, killing 53 crew members. The 44-year old submarine's sinking highlighted the age and vulnerability of Indonesia's aging submarine fleet and the need for an upgrade. The next step for Indonesia is to receive training on operating the Scorpene submarines and acquire the necessary spare parts and an air-independent propulsion system.



Submarine KRI Nagapasa, Indonesian Navy.

Source: Indonesian Navy (TNI-AL) https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Submarine_KRI_Nagapasa,_Indonesian_Navy.jpg Attribution: CC x 2.0

“Yudo explained that the plan to purchase Scorpene submarines had undergone a long evaluation in order to modernize the equipment of the Indonesian Navy's weapons systems”

Source: “Prabowo Bakal Beli 2 Kapal Selam Scorpene, KSAL: Kita Sudah Cek, Kita Setuju (Prabowo will Buy 2 Scorpene Submarines, KSAL: We Have Checked, We Agree),” *kompas.com* (historically pro-government and nationalist-leaning Indonesian-language news source), 5 March 2022. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/03/02/15351471/prabowo-bakal-beli-2-kapal-selam-scorpene-ksal-kita-sudah-cek-kita-setuju>

The Chief of Naval Staff (KSAL) Admiral Yudo Margono agreed to the plan to purchase two Scorpene ships from France. According to Yudo, the Scorpene submarine is a submarine that meets the requirements to be able to operate within the confines of Indonesian waters.... In addition, Yudo explained that the plan to purchase Scorpene submarines had undergone a long evaluation in order to modernize the equipment of the Indonesian Navy's weapons systems.”

Source: “Indonesia to ramp up submarine fleet in response to Chinese incursions,” *aninews.com* (news source covering Indian and Asian current affairs), 30 May 2021. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/indonesia-to-ramp-up-submarine-fleet-in-response-to-chinese-incursions20210530163032/>

In response to repeated Chinese incursions into its waters, Indonesia aims to expand its submarine fleet by as much as triple its current line to 12 total vessels, according to multiple defense sources.

This comes after the Indonesian submarine that went missing off the coast of Bali with 53 crew members on board sunk last month, killing all crewman.

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Kyrgyzstan Conducts Exercise with Its New Bayraktars

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

Kyrgyzstan rarely acquires new weapons and equipment, so when the Kyrgyz government recently announced it had received a set of Turkish **Bayraktar TB2** unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), it marked an upgrade in the capabilities of Kyrgyz forces. The accompanying excerpted articles report on a recent field exercise with the new drones as well as additional new equipment.

The article from the independent news website *Kloop* reports on an exercise involving Kyrgyzstan's new Bayraktars. The article notes that the scenario of the exercise involved eliminating a group of criminals with fire support from the UAVs. Kyrgyz units in the Ministry of Defense, not the Border Guards, typically carry out this type of exercise. The article mentions that it is unknown how many Bayraktars Kyrgyzstan purchased, but the UAVs and new vehicles are a notable upgrade specifically for the Border Guards. There have been a number of clashes on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border over the past 10 years, including clashes in April-May 2021 that resulted in a few dozen people killed (border guards and civilians) and clashes on 12 April 2022.

The excerpted article from the Kyrgyz semi-independent newspaper *Vecherniy Bishkek* reports on the delivery of "50 new KAMAZ vehicles and 55 Tigr armored personnel carriers to the Border Guards Service of the National Security



Bayraktar TB2 S-IHA of the Turkish Army in Teknofest2021at Istanbul Atatürk Airport, Turkey.

Source: CeeGee via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_S-IHA_TurkishArmy_Teknofest2021_\(3\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bayraktar_TB2_S-IHA_TurkishArmy_Teknofest2021_(3).jpg) Attribution: CC by 4.0

Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic" and notes that it is "the largest acquisition of equipment for Kyrgyzstan since its independence." The article also mentions that the Kyrgyz government purchased the new military equipment with state funds, which one political scientist believed was possible partly because of the government's takeover of the Kumtor gold mine last year. In May 2021, the Kyrgyz government took steps to take ownership of Kumtor a Canadian company that had operated and held majority ownership of the mine. As of April 2022, Kyrgyz authorities now have ownership and control operation of the mine, which makes up a significant percentage of the country's GDP.

“The Bayraktars entered service with the Border Guards in mid-December last year...”

Source: Munduzbek Kalykov, “Одним видео: «Байрактар», бронетехника и президент в полевой кухне (One video: “Bayraktar”, armored personnel carriers and the president in a field kitchen),” *Kloop* (independent Russian-language news website in Kyrgyzstan), 31 March 2022. <https://kloop.kg/blog/2022/03/31/odnim-video-bajraktar-bronetechnika-i-prezident-v-polevoj-kuhne/>

The special tactical exercise “Kalkan-2022” has started at the “Edelweiss” training center in the city of Balykchy...

According to the exercise scenario, an “international criminal group” infiltrated Kyrgyzstan from a neighboring state, having already seized weapons, mortars, a tank and other equipment.

During the exercise, special units of the Border Guards blocked off and eliminated the mock enemy. Their captured armored vehicles were destroyed with the use of the Bayraktar...

The Bayraktars entered service with the Border Guards in mid-December last year. They were bought within the budget, but it is unknown how much was spent on them. Also, the number of drones was not specified.

GLOBAL OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Continued: Kyrgyzstan Conducts Exercise with Its New Bayraktars

Source: Bakyt Basarbek, “Благодаря правильной экономической политике мы закупили военную технику (We purchased military equipment thanks to the right economic policies),” *Vecherniy Bishkek* (semi-independent, Russian-language newspaper in Kyrgyzstan), 25 March 2022. https://www.vb.kg/doc/416032_blagodaria_pravilnoy_ekonomicheskoy_politike_my_zakypili_voennyu_tehniky.html

Today, on 25 March, in Bishkek, a ceremony was held to present 55 modern fire engines to the Ministry of Emergency Situations and 50 new KAMAZ vehicles and 55 Tigr armored personnel carriers to the Border Guards Service of the National Security Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic...this is the largest acquisition of equipment for Kyrgyzstan since its independence.

...the KAMAZ trucks and the armored personnel carriers were purchased with funds from the state budget...

“Now we can buy equipment ourselves. The privatization of Kumtor and general economic policy played a role in this,” said political scientist Mars Sariev...he recalled that Kyrgyzstan previously purchased the strike-capable unmanned aerial vehicle Bayraktar from Turkey...



OEWATCH

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