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FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE
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China's Newest Aircraft Carrier Extends Capabilities With "Leapfrogged" Technology

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

In June, China officially floated its third aircraft carrier, the Fujian (Type 003) carrier, which can launch a wider variety of aircraft due to its increased size and the implementation of an electromagnetic catapult launch system (EMALS). The two excerpted articles, published by Chinese internet technology company *NetEase* and Indian television broadcast network *Noida News 18*, provide an overview on the newly unveiled carrier and possible implications of using the groundbreaking EMALS. The articles also highlight the emphasis the Chinese place on advancing technological developments as quickly as possible.

China's first two aircraft carriers, the Liaoning (Type 001) and Shandong (Type 002), feature a ski jump deck, which assist jets taking off from the short runway. The launched aircraft are restricted by size, weight, and payload. The Liaoning is capable of operating 40 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, while the Shandong can accommodate up to 50 J-15 fighters, an early-warning radar, and anti-submarine aircraft and various helicopters. The Fujian is now China's largest aircraft carrier at 80,000 tons and 318 meters. Its size, coupled with greater capacity and the more condensed EMALS, allows it to carry more types of carrier-based aircraft than its two predecessors do. These include the upgraded J-15, the new stealth J-35, and the recently unveiled (2020) Air Police 600—an early warning aircraft that can reportedly detect stealth aircraft from a long distance.



A J-15 carrier-based fighter aircraft is taking off from Chinese aircraft carrier Liaoning (Type 001)

Source: Government of Japan, https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_PLAN_Shenyang_J-15_carrier-based_fighter_aircraft_is_taking_off_from_Chinese_aircraft_carrier_PLANS_Liaoning_%28CV-16%29_20220510.jpg, Attribution: CC BY 4.0

ment, however, claims to have developed and constructed EMALS using all domestic innovation and technology. Regardless, according to *Noida News 18*, China is already working on its next aircraft carrier (Type 004), which could be nuclear-powered, greatly extending the country's long-range operational capabilities.

In addition to similar observations regarding the Fujian's technological advances, Indian observers from *Noida News 18* commented that China's aircraft carriers are not designed to be used in a conflict within the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, or Indian Ocean region. The article argues that China has learned from the United States over the past several decades and will most likely use carriers to coerce and punish smaller powers. Most importantly, the authors argue, they "will help China to overcome the limits of their own geography."

... **A** modern navy equipped with aircraft carriers gives China a power projection capability, which was previously unavailable to them.

Regarding the launching system, it is noteworthy that the next-step technology would have been a steam-piston driven system, which increases the launch and payload capacity from that of the ski jump. As the *NetEase* authors point out, instead, China "leapfrogged" to EMALS, a technology developed by the United States. The Chinese govern-

Continued: China's Newest Aircraft Carrier Extends Capabilities With "Leapfrogged" Technology

Source: Song Zhongping, "宋忠平：实现跨越式发展的中国新型航母003 (China's New Aircraft Carrier 003 Achieves Leapfrog Development)," *NetEase* (a business and technology oriented Chinese website) 20 June 2022. <https://www.163.com/dy/article/HAACEBL40552AOD9.html>

The Fujian is the first aircraft carrier to have an electromagnetic catapult launch systems (EMALS)... Like the Shandong, the third aircraft carrier is completely developed and manufactured domestically.

The official displacement of the Fujian exceeds 80,000 tons, which is larger than both the Liaoning and Shandong ships... The Fujian is also larger than America's Kitty Hawk class, but smaller than the USS Ford, which has a full load displacement of 110,000 tons.

The Fujian has adopted so many innovative technologies, some of which are world-class. For example, it is the first time a Chinese aircraft carrier uses EMALS... The new carrier is able to house more types of carrier-based aircraft, such as the upgraded J-15 fighter and the new stealth J-35. It will also carry the Air Police 600, a new type of early warning aircraft.

China developed its aircraft carriers for offshore operations and long-sea escort.

It should take another two years for the ship to become fully operational.

Source: Suyash Desai, "What Does China's New Aircraft Carrier Say About Its Technology and Strategy," *Noida News18 Online* (Indian and English language news service based in Noida India. International coverage provided by CNN while Indian and local news is a product of Indian Broadcast Network), 27 June 2022. <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/what-does-chinas-new-aircraft-carrier-say-about-its-technology-and-strategy-5447215.html#fpo>

China launched its third aircraft carrier this month. The type 003, now named Fujian, is China's biggest, most modern and most powerful aircraft carrier. At 80,000 tons and 318 meters, the Fujian outstrips all but America's supercarriers, the new USS Gerald R. Ford-class...

...Fujian is reported to have electromagnetic catapult launch systems (EMALS). Its main advantage is that it accelerates the aircraft more smoothly, putting less stress on their airframes... Fujian helps China catch up with the US... However, like US carries, the Fujian will not be nuclear-powered, meaning its speed, endurance, and long-ranged operational capabilities would still be limited...

...Some authoritative Chinese reports suggest that China has already started the work for building the next aircraft carrier, Type 004, which could possibly be a nuclear-powered carrier. However, there is no concrete evidence to support this claim. It reportedly plans to have six aircraft carriers by 2049 to be a world-class force and become a blue water navy to protect and pursue overseas interests.

China's aircraft carriers are not designed for a Taiwan reunification campaign or to have a direct role in a conflict with big powers like the US or India in the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea or Indian Ocean Region. China is learning from the US' use of carriers over the past several decades and is most likely to use them in coercing and punishing smaller powers in the near and far seas. Also, a modern navy equipped with aircraft carriers gives China a power projection capability, which was previously unavailable to them. But most importantly, the aircraft carriers will help China overcome the limits of their own geography.

China Advancing Cooperation With Pakistan's Navy in the Indian Ocean

By Cindy Hurst
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying three excerpted articles highlight different perceptions of the growing China-Pakistan strategic partnership in the Indian Ocean. In July, China and Pakistan held their second “Sea Guardians” joint naval exercise off the coast of Shanghai. The exercise was meant in part to test Pakistan’s new Type 054A/P warship—the country’s most advanced Chinese-built frigate. The Pakistani navy commissioned its first Type 054A/P, the *PNS Tughril*, in January and the second one, *PNS Taimur*, in June. Pakistan has a contract to receive two more at an unspecified date. According to popular Indian daily *The Hindu*, the “Sea Guardians” exercises are paving the way for closer security cooperation between China and Pakistan in the Indian Ocean. Chinese and Pakistani experts point out the need to safeguard strategic sea lanes used to transport energy and goods. They also comment on Pakistan’s need “to ensure

seaward defense, maintain peace, stability and balance of power in the Indian Ocean region.” The Hong Kong-based semi-independent *South China Morning Post* attributes China’s growing role in the Indian Ocean to growing U.S.-India joint maritime security cooperation. China’s goal is to “counter U.S. efforts to advance its Indo-Pacific strategy, which emphasizes India’s continued rise and leadership in the region.” Meanwhile, Paris-based, online media source *Naval News* sees the buildup of Pakistan’s naval capability more generally as an effort to counter India. According to the article, the Pakistani navy is in the process of renewing its fleet. In addition to the four Chinese frigates, they will be commissioning new corvettes from Turkey and a multi-purpose offshore patrol vessel from the Netherlands. Pakistan is also modernizing its submarine fleet. In 2016, Pakistan entered a \$5 billion deal with China to acquire eight Chinese

To counter India, it is important for Pakistan to improve its navy by acquiring advanced equipment from Beijing and enhancing its capabilities through these drills...

Yuan-class Type 041 diesel submarines by 2028. According to the article, the goal is “to shift the force balance with its archrival India.”

Source: Ananth Krishnan, “China, Pakistan Begin War Games Off Shanghai,” *The Hindu* (Indian daily newspaper), 10 July 2022. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-pakistan-begin-war-games-off-shanghai/article65624154.ece>

China and Pakistan on Sunday began four-day naval exercises off the coast of Shanghai, involving Pakistan’s most advanced China-built frigate and paving the way for closer security cooperation between the two countries in the Indian Ocean.

Wei Dongxu, a Chinese military expert, told the paper the two countries “need to jointly demonstrate their capabilities in safeguarding strategic sea lanes that transport energy and goods.”

The first Type 054A, Tughril, was commissioned last year. Pakistan’s envoy to China Moil Ul Haque then told Chinese media that the commissioning of the frigate “in the context of the overall security paradigm of the region” would “strengthen Pakistan Navy’s capabilities to respond to maritime challenges to ensure seaward defence, maintain peace, stability and balance of power in the Indian Ocean region.”

Continued: China Advancing Cooperation With Pakistan's Navy in the Indian Ocean

Source: Amber Wang, "China and Pakistan Launch Naval Drills Aimed at Countering US Indo-Pacific Strategy," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong based semi-independent English language daily), 11 July 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3184897/china-and-pakistan-launch-naval-drills-aimed-countering-us-indo>

This is the second time China and Pakistan have held a "Sea Guardians" joint maritime exercise. The first was held in January 2020 in the northern Arabian Sea.

Lin Minwang, a professor of South Asian studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said the exercise would help China to expand its engagement in the Indian Ocean and counter US efforts to advance its Indo-Pacific strategy, which emphasizes India's "continued rise" and leadership in the region.

"The strengthening of maritime security between India and the United States has led to China's greater engagement in the Indian Ocean."

The Indian Ocean is a vital trading hub, and 80 per cent of China's oil imports come through the Malacca Strait, the ocean's busiest "choke point."

To counter India, it is important for Pakistan to improve its navy by acquiring advanced equipment from Beijing and enhancing its capabilities through these drills, according to Lin.

Source: Tayfun Ozberk, "Pakistan Navy Commissions 2nd Type 054 A/P Frigate 'PNS Taimur,'" *Naval News* (Paris based naval focused news outlet), 24 June 2022. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/06/pakistan-navy-commissions-2nd-type-054-a-p-frigate-pns-taimur/>

The Pakistan Navy is currently undertaking an important renewal of its fleet, with the procurement of several modern platforms: In addition to these frigates from China, Pakistan will also commission new corvettes from Turkey and OPV from the Netherlands. It is also modernizing its submarine force. In 2016, Pakistan agreed to pay China \$5 billion for the acquisition of eight Chinese Yuan-class type-041 diesel submarines by 2028 in order to shift the force balance with its archrival India.

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.



Profile of a Joint Staff Officer in the PLA's Northern Theater Command

By Kevin McCauley
OE Watch Commentary

Since joint theater commands replaced the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Army-dominated military regions in 2015, the new structures have experienced problems with officers lacking joint experience. To address this ongoing issue, the PLA emphasizes education and realism in training. In an article from its official newspaper, the *PLA Daily* describes a "model" officer, shedding light on aspects of the theater commands and their associated staff officers. The profiled officer is Zeng Xing, a division chief from the Joint Staff Department of the Northern Theater Command. Many PLA articles, such as this one, omit officer rank. According to the article, Zeng has been in the Army for 19 years and an operational staff officer for 15 of those years.

In 2019, President Xi Jinping recognized Zeng as a model officer. The article indicates that Zeng, like many Theater Command officers holding joint positions, must learn joint operations skills on the job and through self-education, including talking to officers in other services and arms. While on the staff of the Northern Command, Zeng studies informationized warfare theory, joint operations, joint command, and the pilot joint operations command system on his own. He also studies foreign military operations and joint command regulations to improve his skills and knowledge.

The article particularly highlights a recent command post exercise, during which Zeng was responsible for assessing the battlefield situation and formulating the operational plan. It noted that Zeng and his staff worked to collect, analyze, and process information, develop the operational



PLA Theater Commands

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Theatres_of_PLA_en.svg, Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

plan, and decide on operational methods (operational art and tactics). Following that Zeng and his staff used a simulation to preview the operational plan and combat actions to inform the commander's decision-making in the wargame. As the PLA views it, this model of staff officer education, including common, contemporary doctrine-based education, self-study, and exercise simulations, will bridge the joint experience gap in China's theater commands.

No war is conducted in full accordance with the operational plan, and no war is conducted in full non-compliance with the operational plan.

Continued: Profile of a Joint Staff Officer in the PLA's Northern Theater Command

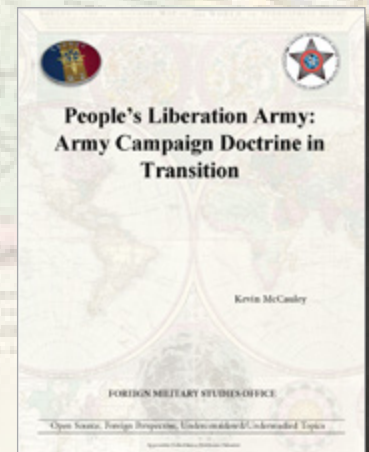
Source: “北部战区联合参谋部某处处长曾星：向着打胜仗目标全力奔跑 (Zeng Xing, Department Chief in the Joint Staff Department of the Northern Theater Command: Running towards the goal of winning the war),” *PLA Daily* (official newspaper of the People's Liberation Army), 13 July, 2022. http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2022-07/13/content_4915489.htm

The joint operations staff is a bridge connecting commanders and combat troops. In the face of complex battlefield situations, they must always keep a clear head and clear thinking. During a command post exercise, Zeng Xing was responsible for planning and formulating the operational plan. On the basis of fully understanding the determination and intention of the commander, he led his comrades in arms to work overtime, skillfully collect, analyze and process information, derive the battle plan and preview the battle methods through the simulation system, and provide reference for the commander's decision-making.

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.



PLA Army Efforts Integrate New Technology and Equipment Into Units

By Kevin McCauley
OE Watch Commentary

A recent *PLA Daily* article, whose author is affiliated with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Army Research Institute in Beijing, chronicles methods for integrating new equipment and improving the technological knowledge of troops. This is one example of many articles that the PLA produces to help with the learning curve related to employing new, more technologically advanced equipment. The article recounts a training program that the Ministry of Defense introduced during in 2022 to help integrate new equipment into units. Developing a new system of training is reportedly part of the effort to accelerate combat effectiveness of newly modernized units.

Overall, the training methods described in the article are foundational. For example, one recommendation is to improve the scientific and technological literacy of officers and troops by sending technology experts to support unit

training, which enhances the researchers' knowledge by better understanding unit requirements. The article also notes that military research institutes should provide classes, assist in solving problems assimilating new equipment into units, and cultivate scientific talents within units. The author believes that an expanded program, which integrates research institutions with units, could accelerate the PLA's modernization effort and transformation. However, the article laments the current limited scope of cooperation between military and scientific institutions, pointing to a lack of technological expertise in active duty units and a lack of coordination between military research institutions and units. These issues are reportedly hindering the quality of research and assimilation of new technologies and equipment into the PLA, thereby slowing the development of combat effectiveness.

... **O**nly by giving full play to external knowledge of military scientific and technological experts can we transform scientific and technological advantages and equipment advantages into talent advantages and winning advantages.



PLA Soldiers March in Parade

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_China_Victory_Day_Parade#/media/File:The_military_parade_in_honor_of_the_70-th_anniversary_of_the_end_of_the_Second_world_war_01.jpg, Attribution: CC BY 4.0

Continued: PLA Army Efforts Integrate New Technology and Equipment Into Units

Source: “把科技专家请进演训场 (Invite technology experts to the training ground),” PLA Daily (official newspaper of the People’s Liberation Army), 27 July 2022. https://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2022-07/27/content_320703.htm

...The army's training ground is the main battlefield for scientific research and innovation. The battlefield asks questions of scientific research, and scientific research answers the battlefield. The front line of military training is in urgent need of a group of military science and technology experts who really know what to do. They regard the need to win as a scientific research requirement and the problem of preparing for war as a scientific research topic, and use their own ingenuity and scientific research innovation results to serve the preparation for military struggle. At the same time, only by aiming the "sight" of scientific research at the "bull's eye" of actual combat can military science and technology experts move from the frontier of science and technology to the frontline of the battlefield, truly set up a clear orientation of scientific research as a battle, and improve the contribution rate of scientific research innovation to the growth of combat effectiveness.

If you cannot win on the battlefield, everything equals zero. Regardless of military training or military scientific research, we should insist on focusing on war preparations and combat, comparing them with war preparations, and testing them with war preparations and wars, so that the standards of combat effectiveness can truly be established. Inviting military science and technology experts to the front line of exercises and training is not only conducive to improving the combat effectiveness of the troops, improving the fit between research and warfare, but also helping to realize the self-value of scientific and technological experts. However, due to constraints such as ideas and concepts, the scope of cooperation between the army and military scientific research institutes is limited, and the mechanism is not perfect enough. How to let more military science and technology experts go to the front line of training needs further exploration.

The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's World Wide Equipment guide was developed to support the U.S. Army training and doctrine, including the Opposing Force (OPFOR) portrayal in training simulations (constructive, virtual, live, and gaming).

The equipment in this WEG represents military systems, variants, and upgrades that U.S. forces may encounter now and in the foreseeable future. The authors continually analyze real-world developments, capabilities, and trends to guarantee that the OPFOR remains relevant.

[HTTPS://ODIN.TRADOC.ARMY.MIL/WEG](https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/weg)

To request equipment be added to the WEG, email the TRADOC G-2 Operational Environment Integration at odin_feedback@army.mil

Equipment highlighted in OE Watch articles are hyperlinked to the Worldwide Equipment Guide (WEG).



China Arming Algeria To Fight Its “New Generation Wars”

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Chinese weapons and technology continue to play a prominent role in meeting some of Algeria's contemporary military needs, most notably unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Algeria operates several advanced Chinese platforms, including [Wing Loong II](#) and [CH-4](#) drones. Earlier this year, several media outlets reported that Algeria had placed an order for six Chinese [CH-5](#) combat drones. According to the Algeria-focused, military affairs website *Menadefense*, in late 2021 Algeria placed an order for four Chinese [WJ-700](#) “Falcon” UAVs. The WJ-700 is arguably China's most capable export platform: a high-altitude, high-speed drone similar in design and performance to the MQ-9 Reaper.

Algeria has also invested in Chinese-manufactured counter-UAV systems. Some of these were on display at the recent armed forces’ military parade in Algiers, held on 5 July to mark the 60th anniversary of the country’s independence from France. The parade included a recently acquired, integrated Chinese electronic warfare (EW) system that social media observers specialized in Algerian military affairs called “a CEW-03A mobile EW system,” although it has also been referred to as a LDK-190 and CHL-906 system (see “Algeria Obtains Chinese Integrated EW Reconnaissance/Jamming System,” *OE Watch*, Issue 2, 2022). The Independence Day parade also featured two self-propelled Chinese radar systems—the JY-11B array radar and a DWL-002 passive detection radar. As noted in the accompanying excerpt from the Qatar-aligned daily *al-Araby al-Jadeed*, Algerian military leaders have repeatedly mentioned fighting “new generation wars” as a top priority, with EW highlighted as a principal area of focus.

High-tech EW platforms were not the only type of Chinese weapons on display at Algeria’s Independence Day parade. As noted by the military news website *21st Century Asian*



Wing Loong II

Source: Photo by Mztourist, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wing_Loong_II_side_view.jpg, Attribution: CC 4.0

Arms Race, marching infantry soldiers were seen carrying old [Type 56](#) Chinese assault rifles, which the Algerian military has been producing domestically for many years. The juxtaposition of advanced UAVs and EW systems, on the one hand, and inexpensive, outdated assault rifles on the other, may hint at the Algerian military’s priorities. The fact that they are all of Chinese origin serves as a reminder that the evolving Chinese-Algerian military relationship is rooted in historical ties that go back decades. Chinese technology seems likely to play an increasingly important role in helping Algerian forces prepare for the type of wars its leaders foresee across the horizon.

For some time now, the leaders of the Algerian army have been constantly talking about the need to prepare for new forms of war, especially regarding virtual and electronic warfare, and the benefits of cybersecurity...

Source: “l’Algérie commande quatre drones HAL de combat à la Chine (Algeria orders four HAL combat drones from China),” *MenaDefense* (non-governmental website focusing on Algerian military affairs), 24 January 2022. <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/lalgerie-commande-quatre-drones-hal-de-combat-a-la-chine/>

It turns out that Algeria is the mysterious customer who bought the Chinese high-altitude/high-speed WJ-700 combat drone. The signing of the contract was announced on December 21, 2021.

Continued: China Arming Algeria To Fight Its “New Generation Wars”

Source: @nuwangzi, Twitter, 5 July 2022. #Algeria #EW First clear image of the CEW-03A in Algeria - A Chinese Mobile 6x6 truck EW system. <https://twitter.com/nuwangzi/status/1544388039035723776>

Source: @kmlodial70, Twitter, 4 July 2022. jy-11b radar, dwl 002 passive detection radar system, #Algerian #AirDefense #Algeria #AlgerianArmy #MilitaryParade. <https://twitter.com/kmlodial70/status/1544016896596516864>

Source: @kad_ghani, Twitter, 4 July 2022. Chinese CETC Self-Propelled JY-11B 3D Electronically Scanned Array Radar Hunter-1 makes his first appearance with the Algerian Army. https://twitter.com/kad_ghani/status/1544042364532129792

Source: حديث متوال عن الحروب الجديدة لدى الجيش الجزائري
(Continuous talk about the Algerian army's new wars),” *al-Araby al-Jadeed* (Qatari-aligned daily), 2 July 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/ypp543r2>

For some time now, the leaders of the Algerian army have been constantly talking about the need to prepare for new forms of war, especially regarding virtual and electronic warfare, and the benefits of cybersecurity.

Source: “Cheap Chinese Assault Rifles Are Made In Algeria,” *21st Century Asian Arms Race* (military news website), 7 July 2022. <https://21stcenturyasianarmsrace.com/2022/07/07/cheap-chinese-assault-rifles-are-made-in-algeria/>

...during a recent military parade to mark 60 years since independence it became apparent its soldiers are issued with the most basic, even completely outdated, assault rifle supplied by China. It turns out a state-owned factory called the Mechanical Construction Establishment of Khenchela has been mass-producing Type 56 and Type 56-1 assault rifles since the 1990s.



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

How China Will “Win” the War in Ukraine

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

In the accompanying article from the semi-independent *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obezreniye*, respected military expert Alexander Khramchikhin provides a thought-provoking assessment of how China looks at its relationship with Russia within its wider foreign policy. The author asserts that “in economic terms, China is using Russia's problems to the maximum extent, trying to get it to lower prices for supplied energy resources.” The Chinese leadership understands that it cannot fully side with Russia in its war on Ukraine because “it is more important for Beijing to maintain economic relations with the West than to provide assistance to Russia.” The author downplays the military side of the China-Russia relationship, claiming that the “measures were more of a demonstrative propagandistic nature.” He points out that while “Beijing's political position is no longer neutral, but pro-Russian,” it is mostly “at the level of the rhetoric of officials and China's votes in the UN.” Despite Beijing's vocal support, the author

points out that “China supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine, sends humanitarian aid to this country and calls for a political resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by respecting the interests of both sides.”

The author claims that “China is interested in the military weakening of both Russia and the West.” He points out that it is to China's advantage if the conflict is prolonged, which will lead to “maximum exhaustion of both sides.” Such

China is interested in the military weakening of both Russia and the West...

an outcome will make it easier for Chinese leaders to cut favorable political and economic deals with an “exhausted Russia.” Similarly, an “exhausted West will lose many levers of pressure on China, which, in particular, will allow Beijing to solve the issue of joining Taiwan much easier.”



President Vladimir Putin held talks in Beijing with President of China Xi Jinping, Feb 2022

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67712> Attribution: CCA 4.0 Intl

Continued: How China Will “Win” the War in Ukraine

Source: Alexander Khramchikhin, “Кому быть младшим партнером (Who will be the junior partner),” *Nezasimoye Voennoye Obezreniye* (semi-independent Russian media source), 23 June 2022. https://nvo.ng.ru/gpolit/2022-06-23/10_1194_partner.html

What will the Chinese choice of Russia lead to? ...The thesis that China is a true friend of Russia, ready to lend a helping hand to it in any difficult situation, is taken for granted by many citizens of our country. Although this thesis never had almost any practical confirmation, it does not have them even now.

...In economic terms, China is using Russia's problems to the maximum extent, trying to get it to lower prices for supplied energy resources. At the same time, many Chinese companies de facto complied with the anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the West, since it was more important for them to preserve not the Russian, but the Western markets.... This means that it is more important for Beijing to maintain economic relations with the West than to provide assistance to Russia.

In the military sphere, several major bilateral and multilateral exercises were held with the participation of the Russian Armed Forces and the PLA, as well as several joint patrols of the Russian and Chinese Air Forces near Japan. These measures were more of a demonstrative propagandistic nature....

...The current conflict in Ukraine has actually become a continuation of the events of 2014, taking into account the general change in the situation in the world. Today, Beijing's political position is no longer neutral, but pro-Russian—however, again, only at the level of the rhetoric of officials and China's votes in the UN. At the same time, however, China stands for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, sends humanitarian aid to this country and calls for a political resolution of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by respecting the interests of both sides....

In the economic sphere, China is acting in exactly the same way as in 2014 and in subsequent years: it seeks to make the most of Russia's problems, seeking to reduce prices for Russian energy resources. At the same time, Chinese companies de facto comply with almost all new anti-Russian sanctions, since Western markets are still more important for them. Moreover, some Chinese companies are refusing to buy Russian oil and coal even at reduced prices....

Of course, Chinese military experts will carefully study the military operations of both sides—and again draw conclusions for themselves. China is interested in the military weakening of both Russia and the West...

Accordingly, China is not interested in either a quick victory for Russia or its defeat. From all points of view, it is beneficial for China to prolong the conflict to the maximum and to have a compromise outcome, caused by the maximum exhaustion of both sides. An exhausted Russia will be much more accommodating towards China on all economic and political issues. The exhausted West will lose many levers of pressure on China, which, in particular, will allow Beijing to solve the issue of joining Taiwan much easier and easier....

...The transformation of Russia into a junior partner (if not a direct vassal) of China is possible if the war in Ukraine drags on for a long time and turns out to be, if not a failure, then generally unsuccessful for Moscow. Such a scenario also seems unlikely so far.... The evolution of Russian-Chinese relations into a direct and open military-political alliance is possible if Russia wins a victory in Ukraine (full or partial). At the same time, the West will continue to increase pressure on both Moscow and Beijing....

In any case, the current situation once again confirms that Beijing always acts solely in its own interests. Which is absolutely right—this is how a normal country should behave. It's just that Chinese interests do not always coincide with ours.

China will never be our friend. And he will extend a helping hand to us only if he receives something very significant and valuable from our hand in return.

Russia To Provide Belarus a Potential Nuclear Delivery Capability



Russian Air Force Su-25 Ground Attack Aircraft

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/MAKS-2007/i-kphcXRn/0/e220a607/X2/maks-2007-003-X2.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0

By Charles Bartles
OE Watch Commentary

The accompanying excerpted article from pro-Kremlin daily *Izvestiya* describes Russian plans to provide Belarus with the Iskander missile system. Russia exports the Iskander-E limited capability export variant to Armenia and Algeria. However, according to *Izvestiya*, due to changing “geopolitical realities,” Russia will provide Belarus with the same version of the Iskander that the Russian Armed Forces field. In a related development, Russian government news service *Interfax* describes President Putin’s proposal to modernize Belarus’s aging fleet of **Su-25** ground attack aircraft and President Lukashenko’s request to modify Belarussian aircraft so they may employ nuclear weapons. In February, Belarus removed verbiage from the constitution regarding its status as a “nuclear-free zone.” This prompted speculation that Russia may be planning to deploy nuclear weapons on Belarussian territory. There have been no announcements from Moscow or Minsk on what, if any, arrangements they have made for such a contingency, but the announcement about the Iskander, which is capable of nuclear delivery, and Lukashenko’s request for nuclear delivery capable aircraft is notable.

The strengthening of the "missile fist" of the Union State can deter the deployment of critical, but vulnerable stationary objects of NATO military infrastructure near the borders of both Belarus and Russia.

Source: Anton Lavrov, “Идите под ‘зонтик’ (Go Under the ‘Umbrella’),” *Izvestiya* (large circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 28 June 2022. <https://iz.ru/1356221/anton-lavrov/idite-pod-zontik>

On June 25, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Iskander [missile systems] would be transferred to our closest. According to him, Belarus will receive a variant with both ballistic and cruise missiles.

This means that we are talking about transferring to a partner in the Union State not a limited and simplified export version of the Iskander, but a full-fledged formidable system that is not inferior in capabilities to those that are in service with our country and are now being successfully used in a special operation in Ukraine.

*Due to international agreements, the export **Iskander-E** is limited to a range of 280 km. The deployment of such in Belarus would not bring a serious increase in NATO territory controlled by them compared to the Iskanders already in the Kaliningrad region...*

Such a radical discrepancy in the capabilities of the export and "home" version has long encouraged the leadership of Belarus to strive to obtain the Russian version. But the issue of its acquisition, as well as price, for various reasons, remained the subject of bargaining between Minsk and Moscow for years. Dramatically changed geopolitical realities, it seems, will allow Alexander Lukashenko to get a variant in the "top configuration". It is clear that in the event of a real conflict, it will be possible to use it jointly with the Russian Federation and according to a single plan.

The strengthening of the "missile fist" of the Union State can deter the deployment of critical, but vulnerable stationary objects of NATO military infrastructure near the borders of both Belarus and Russia. The Alliance will have to reckon with the prospect of receiving a highly accurate and irresistible retaliatory strike against them in the event of a military confrontation... Iskander missiles have already been deployed in the Russian Kaliningrad region. But their additional deployment in Belarus will give a significant increase in the

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Continued: Russia To Provide Belarus a Potential Nuclear Delivery Capability

Source Continued: Anton Lavrov, “Идите под ‘зонтик’ (Go Under the ‘Umbrella’),” *Izvestiya* (large circulation pro-Kremlin daily newspaper), 28 June 2022. <https://iz.ru/1356221/anton-lavrov/idite-pod-zontik>

reach zone, it will shift another 300 km to the south.

...the Kaliningrad bridgehead has serious shortcomings. Its limited territory is completely visible from all sides by means of NATO reconnaissance, and the Iskander has limited maneuverability there. Issues of ammunition storage and protection are also not easy. Belarus is much better protected from outside surveillance. The complexes on its territory will have better survivability not only due to the air defense "umbrella", but also due to their ability to maneuver around the country and even beyond its borders. It is much more difficult to hunt for ground launchers in the wide open area of Belarus than the small area of Kaliningrad. The experience of the special operation has shown that mobile long-range weapons systems are still a very difficult target to counter...

Source: “Президент РФ предложил дооборудовать Су-25 для Белоруссии на российских заводах (President of the Russian Federation proposed to retrofit Belarussian Su-25s at Russian factories),” *Interfax* (Russian government news service), 25 June 2022. <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/847889>



Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL) with 9M723K5 Short Range Ballistic Missiles and Transloader of the Iskander-Mt

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, <https://photos.smugmug.com/Military/ARMY-2016-Demonstration/i-bSmJnCF/0/ac0d8313/X2/Army2016demo-076-X2.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY 4.0

President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin proposed to retrofit the Su-25 aircraft in service with

the Belarusian army in Russia.

"The Belarusian army is armed with a fairly large group of Su-25 aircraft. They could be appropriately equipped and training of flight personnel could be started accordingly," Putin said during Russian-Belarusian summit talks on Saturday. "This modernization should be carried out at aircraft factories in Russia. We will agree on how to do this," he stressed.

Meanwhile, Lukashenko has asked Putin to help convert Belarusian military aircraft to carry nuclear warheads. He acknowledged that he was "very concerned about the training flights of US and NATO aircraft, which are preparing to carry nuclear warheads and nuclear charges."... "It's very stressful for us," he said.

Lukashenko has asked Putin to help convert Belarusian military aircraft to carry nuclear warheads.

Russia's Newest Nuclear Submarine Joins Northern Fleet

By Les Grau
OE Watch Commentary

According to the excerpted article from Norway-based *The Barents Observer*, Russia recently announced that its newest nuclear-capable research submarine, the *Belgorod*, will begin “experimental operation” with the Northern Fleet in Arctic waters. Many of Russia’s research submarines begin their work with the Arctic portion of the Russian Navy’s specialized submarine and surface fleet designed for espionage, deep-sea rescue, and special operations. However, according to the article, the *Belgorod*’s real mission is to

The ‘Belgorod’ special purpose submarine, carrier of the so-called doomsday Poseidon drones, will be in experimental operation with the Northern Fleet before later to serve in the Pacific Fleet.

carry up to six Poseidon autonomous nuclear-powered underwater attack drones. The *Belgorod* is likely to join the Pacific Fleet as part of Russia’s nuclear triad when the Poseidon drone system is deployable.

Source: Thomas Nilsen, “World’s longest nuclear submarine handed over to the ‘Russian Navy’,” *The Barents Observer* (independent Norwegian internet news service in Russian and English currently blocked in Russia), 8 July 2022. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/climate-crisis/2021/06/looming-arctic-collapse-more-40-north-russian-buildings-are-starting-crumble>

An official press release posted by the Sevmash submarine yard on 8 July says the “Belgorod” (K-239) is a “research submarine.” In fact, the vessel is built to carry one of the craziest weapons of mass destruction mankind ever has seen: The Poseidon is an autonomous, nuclear-powered underwater drone that can deliver its nuclear payloads from deep under water after crossing distances like the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean.

Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Navy, Admiral Nikolai Evmenov, stated: “...this is a significant day for us” as ...advanced achievements of science and the latest construction technologies were applied.... “The submarine “Belgorod” opens up new opportunities for Russia in conducting various studies, allows conducting diverse scientific expeditions and rescue operations in the most remote areas of the World Ocean.” ...The statement also adds that the submarine can conduct search and rescue operations in deep waters as it carries autonomous unmanned underwater vehicles. There is no mention of the Poseidon drone weapon armament.

With the U.S. developing an anti-ballistic missile defense system, Russia started to develop a deep-diving response capability. The Poseidon is a 24-meter-long torpedo-shaped vehicle with an estimated range of 10,000 km and can travel at speeds of 100 knots down to a maximum depth of 1,000 meters. Powered by a small nuclear reactor, it could be armed with a megaton nuclear warhead.

The submarine likely carries six Poseidon drones. The submarine also serves as a mother vessel for a deep-diving midget nuclear-powered submarine, like the infamous Losharik, a mini-submarine that got the world’s attention in July 2019 when its batteries caught fire and all 14 officers on board died.

The “Belgorod” has an elongated hull of what was originally meant to be an Oscar-II class multi-purpose submarine, a sister vessel to the ill-fated “Kursk” submarine that sank in the Barents Sea during a naval exercise in August 2000. The hull of the submarine was laid down in 1992, but only twenty years later, in 2012, the Defense Ministry decided to use the hull to construct this giant special purpose vessel. With a hull elongated by 29 meters to 184-meters, the one-of-a-kind vessel is longer than the world’s largest submarine, the Soviet-built Typhoon-class.

The “Belgorod” launched in April 2019, the “Belgorod” started sea trials in the White Sea last summer. The Russian Navy has not announced where the “Belgorod” will be based for the period it will be in experimental operation with the Northern Fleet. It could be Severodvinsk where the Poseidon drone development will be conducted or at Olenya Bay on the Kola Peninsula where the other special-purpose submarines of GUGI, Russia’s Main Directorate for Deep Sea Research, are based. Indications are that the long-term assignment of the Belgorod will be with the Pacific Fleet.

Kremlin Easing Russian Citizenship for All Ukrainians

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Six months before Russia invaded Ukraine, President Putin published a long historical article where he asserted that “Russians and Ukrainians are one people, a single whole.” (See: “Studying Putin’s History of Ukraine,” *OE Watch*, Sept 2021.) Attempts to prove this assertion using force have thus far met with considerable Ukrainian resistance. However, the Kremlin is also employing its administrative and economic prowess to make it easier for Ukrainians to become Russian citizens. As the first excerpt from the pro-business site *Kommersant* points out, the Kremlin has recently enacted legislation “giving the right to all residents of Ukraine to obtain Russian citizenship in a simplified manner.” The article goes on to stress that this new streamlined procedure does “not require them to renounce Ukrainian or other citizenship.” The article concludes by quoting a high-level Kremlin official, who claims that “from 2016 to 2020, about 978,000 citizens of Ukraine received Russian citizenship.”

The second excerpt from the popular, pro-Kremlin site *Versiya* describes how Russian authorities have set up “bus

passport tours” to transport those Ukrainians who want to obtain Russian citizenship. The buses pick up Ukrainians in regions not taken by Russia and transport them to those occupied by Russian forces. According to the author, Russian “passportization of the Black Sea region is gaining momentum [where, for instance], “the number of residents of Odessa who have received Russian passports goes into the thousands.” Many pensioners participate in these tours, since once they gain Russian citizenship, they “will be able to apply for Russian pensions (before recalculation—10,000 rubles [\$185] a month.” The article asserts that there are many other categories eligible to receive monthly payments: “war veterans and children, the disabled... fathers and single mothers... pregnant women,” and that the Russian benefits far exceed those provided by the Ukrainian government. The article concludes by pointing out that because of the conflict in and around “the Mykolaiv and Zaporozhye regions..., up to 85 percent of local residents lost their jobs... [and] there is only one hope—for Russia.”

President Vladimir Putin ...signed a decree giving the right to all residents of Ukraine to obtain Russian citizenship in a simplified manner....

Source: Elena Rozhkova, Ksenia Veretennikova, “Гражданам Украины вышло упрощение (Citizens of Ukraine received a simplification),” *Kommersant* (pro-business site), 11 July 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5458512>

President Vladimir Putin on Monday signed a decree giving the right to all residents of Ukraine to obtain Russian citizenship in a simplified manner.... The expert believes that the updated decree will be relevant given the dynamically changing situation with the transition of Ukrainian territories under the control of Russian troops, as well as for Ukrainian emigrants living in Russia.

According to the new amendments, the possibility of obtaining Russian citizenship in a simplified manner now applies to all residents of Ukraine, and not only to the population of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics (DNR and LNR) and regions of Ukraine controlled by the Russian armed forces. The document also notes that the presence of citizens in military service cannot serve as a basis for rejecting their applications for admission to Russian citizenship....

...The deputy [Mr. Zatulín] also clarified that residents of the DPR, LPR and Ukraine who receive Russian citizenship are not required to renounce their first citizenship and can have two passports....

...In June 2022, TASS, citing the press center of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, reported that since April 2019, on the basis of this decree, more than 800 thousand people have acquired Russian citizenship. A year ago, Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation Dmitry Kozak... stated that not only

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Continued: Kremlin Easing Russian Citizenship for All Ukrainians

Source Continued: Elena Rozhkova, Ksenia Veretennikova, “Гражданам Украины вышло упрощение (Citizens of Ukraine received a simplification),” *Kommersant* (pro-business site), 11 July 2022. <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/5458512>

residents of Donbass, but also residents of the “rest of Ukraine” apply for Russian citizenship. According to him, from 2016 to 2020, about 978 thousand citizens of Ukraine received Russian citizenship...

Source: Alexander Artishchenko, “Турь за паспортами (Tours for passports),” *Versia* (popular, pro-Kremlin site), 3 August 2022. <https://versia.ru/zhiteli-nikolaeva-i-odessy-ezdyat-oformlyat-rossijskoe-grazhdanstvo-v-xersonskuyu-oblast>

Passportization of the Black Sea region is gaining momentum—Russian citizenship is issued in Kherson, Skadovsk, Genichesk, Nova Kakhovka, Oleshki, Belozerka and Gola Prystan. Despite the fact that it is rather difficult to leave the settlements controlled by Ukraine, besides, they mostly let pensioners through and, less often, women, the number of residents of Odessa who have received Russian passports goes into the thousands....

...Bus passport tours are organized from Zaporozhye and Nikolaev to Kherson—the final destinations of the trip are usually not advertised, but these buses are still allowed through at checkpoints without any problems. As explained by the deputy head of the military-civilian administration of the Kherson region Ekaterina Gubareva, any citizen of Ukraine, regardless of place of residence, even from Lviv, can apply for a Russian passport. ...Together with Russian citizenship, pensioners will be able to apply for Russian pensions (before recalculation—10,000 rubles a month, but in the fall they promise to recalculate and increase pensions, and accrue “from above” what they don’t receive in the summer). Moreover, war veterans and children, the disabled and some categories of beneficiaries are entitled to an allowance of 5,000 rubles per month. The allowance can be issued in the same place as passports. Gubareva separately noted, that monthly social payments are due to fathers and single mothers—at the rate of 10,000 rubles for each child. And payments to a full family for the maintenance of a minor child will amount to 4,000 rubles. Also, pregnant women can apply for social assistance (10,000 rubles—a one-time payment for pregnancy, and another 20,000—at the birth of a child).

Russia’s social support is especially important, since Kyiv has actually curtailed the payment of pensions and social benefits in the Mykolaiv and Zaporozhye regions. As of early August, up to 85 percent of local residents lost their jobs—able-bodied families do not have the full opportunity to support their elderly and children. In the Odessa region, 70 percent of the inhabitants have lost their jobs (although pensions are still paid there). So there was only one hope—for Russia.

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.



Russian Views on Finland and Sweden Joining NATO

By Ray Finch
OE Watch Commentary

Russian reactions to the recent decision by Finland and Sweden to join NATO have ranged from mild concern to grave trepidation. According to the excerpted article from the pro-Kremlin news outlet *RIA Novosti*, President Putin does not foresee any serious problems with this decision, provided that no “military infrastructure of the alliance is deployed in Finland and Sweden.” If this were to occur, Putin stated that “Russia will be forced to respond in a similar way.” Putin also asserted that there was no merit to “the thesis that Russia’s goal to push NATO forces away from its borders, preventing Ukraine from joining the alliance, led to the opposite, only from Sweden and Finland.” Putin explained his rationale by claiming that “unlike Ukraine, Sweden and Finland do not persecute people who feel they are part of Russian culture.”

Of course, this means the deterioration of our strategic position....

Other knowledgeable Russians have expressed greater concern over the further enlargement of NATO. In an interview in the popular daily *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, “Ruslan Pukhov, the Director of the Moscow Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), spoke about the military significance of NATO expansion in the northwest.” According to Pukhov, this expansion “means the deterioration of our



NATO Secretary General meets with Ministers of Defense for Finland and Sweden, March 2022

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/nato/51942155994>, Attribution: CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

strategic position.” He asserts that Russia will now “have to spend more on defense than before February this year [which will mean] that less money will be spent on infrastructure projects, healthcare, and education.” Pukhov reviews Russia’s long history with these two countries, stating “both the Swedes and the Finns have already experienced the power of Russian weapons,” which resulted in “bad memories for them.” He concludes that becoming members of NATO might tempt them to try to settle old scores, and that therefore Russia “can’t be weak.”

Source: “Путин: Россия ответит в случае размещения баз НАТО в Швеции и Финляндии (Putin: Russia will respond in case of deployment of NATO bases in Sweden and Finland),” *RIA Novosti* (pro-Kremlin news outlet) 30 June 2022. <http://RIA/Ru/20220629/Putin-1799133978.html>

In Russia's relations with Sweden and Finland, there are no such problems as with Ukraine, if they want to join NATO, let them join, but if the military infrastructure of the alliance is deployed in Finland and Sweden, Russia will be forced to respond in a similar way, Russian President Vladimir Putin said...

...He also called false and ‘having nothing to do with reality’ the thesis that Russia ‘s goal to push NATO forces away from its borders, preventing Ukraine from joining the alliance, led to the opposite, only from Sweden and Finland. “For us, the membership of Finland and Sweden in NATO is not at all the same as the membership of Ukraine, these are completely different things. They understand this very well. No. This is a completely different thing,” the Russian leader emphasized. He noted that, unlike Ukraine, Sweden and Finland do not persecute people who feel they are part of Russian culture.

Continued: Russian Views on Finland and Sweden Joining NATO

Source: Olga Bozheva, “Вступление Финляндии и Швеции в НАТО принесло России серьезные риски (The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO brought Russia serious risks),” *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* (popular, pro-Kremlin news organization), 5 July 2022. <https://www.mk.ru/politics/2022/07/05/vstuplenie-finlyandii-i-shvecii-v-nato-prineslo-rossii-sereznye-riski.html>

The process of accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO was continued. On July 4, negotiations between these countries and the Alliance were completed in Brussels. On July 5, the Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Finland signed the accession protocol at NATO Headquarters. Ruslan Pukhov, Director of the Moscow Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), spoke about the military significance of NATO expansion in the northwest.

Now there are rather contradictory statements about the entry of Sweden and Finland into NATO. A number of political scientists say that this does not pose a serious danger to us. Someone thinks that we need to strengthen the borders, up to the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons there. What do you think their entry into the alliance means for us?

Of course, this means the deterioration of our strategic position. And not because these countries suddenly became anti-Russian overnight—even before that they loved us like a dog with a stick. However, they were not at least formally integrated into NATO structures, and accordingly, they behaved cautiously and correctly towards us.

...In any case, such a move by Stockholm and Helsinki does not lead to anything good. And the one who says that their entry into NATO means practically nothing to us, he, I think, is disingenuous.

...This will force us to invest more financially in the arms race. We've already gotten into it. And now it doesn't matter at all whether we did it ourselves or were dragged into it. The score is on the scoreboard. We will have to spend more on defense than before February this year. This means that less money will be spent on infrastructure projects, healthcare, and education. There are no illusions here.

...Both the Swedes and the Finns have already experienced the power of Russian weapons... bad memories for them. They still remember very well how they got hit in the teeth from us. And if you suddenly forgot, so we can remind you.... So we can't be weak.



FANGS OF THE LONE WOLF

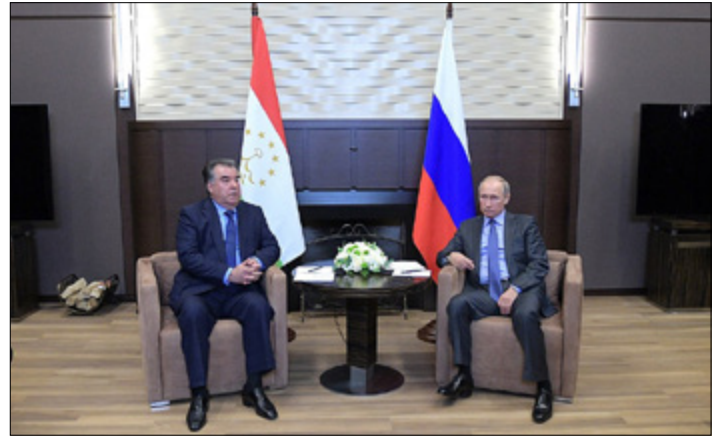
by Dodge Billingsley with Lester Grau

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.

Ukraine War Likely To Reduce Russian Security Commitments in Central Asia

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary

The Russian government has repeatedly stated it is committed to security in Central Asia and often points to ongoing security assistance to governments in the region and the 201st Military Base in Tajikistan and the 999th Airbase in Kyrgyzstan as proof of its commitment. The accompanying excerpted articles offer an update on Russian commitments in Central Asia amid its invasion of Ukraine. The article from the independent news website *Fergana Agency* reports on President Putin's visit to Tajikistan to meet with President Emomali Rahmon at the end of June. The article mentions that the presidents discussed expanding security cooperation, modernizing Tajikistan's armed forces, and strengthening the Tajik–Afghan border. The article does not mention how much money Russia will spend or what equipment it will provide. The article from the independent news website *Kloop* reports on Putin's order to begin negotiating with the government of Kyrgyzstan over a joint air defense system. The article notes that Tajikistan reached a similar agreement for a joint air defense system with Russia last year. Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense cited



Emomali Rahmon and Vladimir Putin

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Emomali_Rahmon_\(2017-10-10\)_03.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Emomali_Rahmon_(2017-10-10)_03.jpg), Attribution: CCA 4.0

the need to counter the threat posed by terrorist groups potentially using unmanned aerial systems as one reason for the agreement. Russian spending and security assistance in Central Asia reportedly decreased following the takeover of Crimea and the Donbas in 2014 due to sanctions but rebounded after a couple of years. While it is unknown how much money and materiel Russia has so far expended in its invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin will probably have little choice but to reduce its commitment to security in Central Asia at least temporarily.

Emomali Rahmon and Vladimir Putin discussed issues of expanding cooperation in the field of security, including through military and military-technical cooperation, as well as in the field of defense construction, especially in terms of modernizing the armed forces of Tajikistan and strengthening the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border.

Source: “Путин и Рахмон обсудили модернизацию армии Таджикистана и охрану таджикско-афганской границы (Putin and Rahmon discussed the modernization of Tajikistan's army and the security of the Tajik-Afghan border),” *Fergana Agency* (independent news website focusing on Central Asia), 29 June 2022. <https://fergana.agency/news/126750/>

The President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, and the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, discussed the modernization of the armed forces of Tajikistan and the strengthening of the protection of its border with Afghanistan...

Putin arrived in Dushanbe on the evening of June 28 for a two-day visit. Rahmon personally met him at the airport...

“During the talks, special attention was paid to the development of the situation in Afghanistan and the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border. In this context, Emomali Rahmon and Vladimir Putin discussed issues of expanding cooperation in the field of security, including through military and military-technical cooperation, as well as in the field of defense construction, especially in terms of modernizing the armed forces of Tajikistan and strengthening the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border.”—Rahmon's press service said in a statement...

Continued: Ukraine War Likely To Reduce Russian Security Commitments in Central Asia

Source: Munduzbek Kalykov, “Кыргызстан и Россия могут создать объединенную региональную систему ПВО—Путин поручил провести переговоры (Kyrgyzstan and Russia could create a regional air defense system—Putin authorized discussions to be held),” *Kloop* (independent Russian-language news website in Kyrgyzstan), 8 July 2022. <https://kloop.kg/blog/2022/07/08/kyrgyzstan-i-rossiya-mogut-sozdat-obedinennuyu-regionalnuyu-sistemu-pvo-putin-poruchil-provesti-peregovory/>

Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized negotiations with Kyrgyzstan on the creation of a unified regional air defense system. Putin signed this order on July 8.

“Instruct the Russian Ministry of Defense to hold negotiations with the Russian Foreign Ministry with the Kyrgyz side and, upon reaching an agreement, sign the said agreement on behalf of the Russian Federation, allowing changes that are not of a fundamental nature to be made to its draft, approved by the government of the Russian Federation,” the document says...

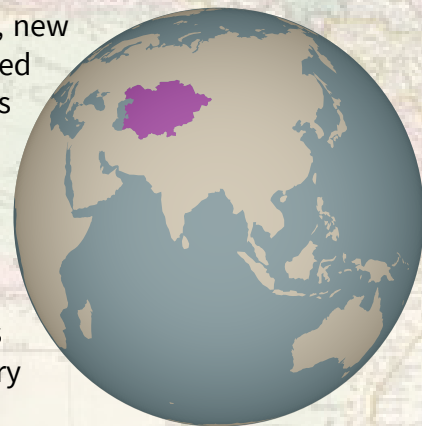
The same agreement on the creation of a joint regional air defense system with Russia last year was approved by the Parliament of Tajikistan.

Minister of Defense Sherali Mirzo, speaking in parliament, noted that the implementation of this agreement is in the interests of ensuring the security of the airspace of Tajikistan “given the growing regional threats and the emergence of new types of hostilities, such as the widespread use of unmanned aerial vehicles, including by terrorist and extremist groups.” ...It was also reported that Russia is negotiating the creation of a joint air defense system with Kazakhstan and Armenia...

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>

Iranian F-14 Crash Highlights Iran's Need for New Fighter Contract

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

Recent news of an Iranian F-14 crash reinforces the notion that Iran's diminishing stable of military aircraft and its inability to manufacture more will increase pressure on Tehran to make major, multibillion dollar purchases—most likely from Russia or China. The excerpted article from a media outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' *Tasnim News Agency* claims the fighter crash was a result of engine failure and illustrates the fact that Iran's remaining F-14 fleet is far beyond the end of its life cycle. Iran is the only country that continues to fly the F-14 and it is unclear how many are still operable. Iran only had 79 operational F-14s when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini overthrew the Shah in 1979. Over the decades, the number of Iranian F-14s has dwindled because of accidents and the need to cannibalize some aircraft for spare parts to support others.

While Iran likes to trumpet its domestic military industries, no Iranian manufacturer can make an aircraft as sophisticated as western countries, Russia, or China. Currently, the necessities of the war in Ukraine raise questions about the number of Russian aircraft that the Kremlin will transfer to any other state in the near future. At the same time, however, increasing oil revenue and both waivers and non-enforcement of sanctions give Iran greater shopping cash. China may want to help Iran rebuild its air force since a major sale could help Beijing cement a decades-long relationship with Tehran. An alternate and not mutually exclusive approach would be to augment its anti-aircraft missile capabilities. Either way, the loss of one of its last F-14s over Isfahan will likely increase pressure on Iran to reconsider its air defense while coming to terms with the need to purchase a modern fighter aircraft from abroad.



An Iranian F-14 Fighter Jet

Source: Tasnim News, <https://newsmedia.tasnimnews.com/Tasnim/Uploaded/Image/1401/03/28/1401032812560629425541164.jpg>

Source: “Soqut-e Havapeyma-ye Jangandeh F_14 dar Isafahan (Crash of an F-14 Warplane in Isfahan),”, *Tasnim News Agency* (media outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps), 18 June 2022. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1401/03/28/2730359>

The head of the army's public relations department for the Isfahan region said, “The F-14 fighter plane suffered a technical malfunction this morning and the pilot and co-pilot landed by parachute, and were taken to Al-Zahra Hospital for treatment. In an interview with Tasnim reporter in Isfahan, Rasoul Motamedi, referring to the incident for the F-14 fighter plane this morning, said: “This warplane suffered a technical malfunction in the engine at 10:30 a.m.... The pilot and co-pilot of the aircraft were injured during the parachute landing, and were immediately taken to Al-Zahra Hospital for treatment, but the F-14 plane was destroyed.”

OEWATCH

Check out these **back issues** of **FMSO's Operational Environment** Watch dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.



Iranian Trade With China Is Up, but So Is Political Risk

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

Between 2018 and the end of 2020, Iran's foreign reserves shrunk from \$122 billion to just \$4 billion. However, its foreign reserves have since rebounded and are expected to be up to \$43 billion by the end of 2022 thanks to record oil prices and a diplomatic environment more conducive to Iranian oil sales. According to Chinese customs authorities cited in the excerpted article from Iranian financial website *Bourse24.ir*, a healthy chunk of this increase in foreign reserves appears to be due to increasing trade with China. However, the dollar-enumerated trade can be deceptive. Iran often sells oil to China at a steep discount to

China's imports from Iran... grew by 26 percent.

avoid any questions about sanctions violations, especially as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps controls Iran's energy sector and has a controlling interest in many Iranian shipping companies. China also historically dumps cheaper manufactured goods in other states to the detriment of those countries' own manufacturing base. While Iran and China have signaled a mutual desire to increase trade and perhaps even military relations, any willingness by the Iranian government to allow greater Chinese exports into Iran would have high potential costs. Chinese competition with Iran's manpower-centric sectors, such as textiles and construction, could create a nationalist backlash against both China and Chinese nationals who might be visiting or working in Iran. China and Iran might celebrate the current increase in trade, but further expansion carries risks.



The Iranian port of Chabahar has become a focal point of Sino-Iranian trade

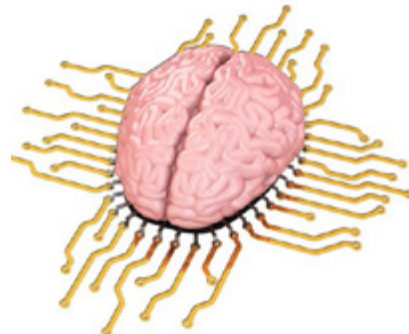
Source: Iran Kala Television, https://cdn.iktvi.ir/images/thumbnail/20200510/11042013_xl.jpg

Source: "Tejarat-e Iran va Chin ba Rashad 18 dar sadi az 6 Milyard Dollar Gozasht (Trade between Iran and China Exceeds \$6 billion with 18 Percent Growth)," *Bourse24.ir* (Iranian financial website), 25 June 2022. <https://www.bourse24.ir/news/247196>

...The latest statistics released by Chinese customs show that the country's trade with Iran in the first five months of this year has grown 18 percent compared to the same period a year ago, reach \$6.472 billion.... China's imports from Iran in the first five months of 2022 grew by 26 percent compared to the same period a year ago, reaching \$3.192 billion. China imported \$2.535 million worth of good from Iran during the same period last year. China's exports to Iran from January until April this year also grew 11 percent to \$3.280 billion. China exported \$2.946 billion worth of good to Iran between January and May last year.

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>



Inauguration of the second phase of the Shahid Ziyadian Treatment Center, Tehran

Source: Fars News Agency, <https://www.farsnews.ir/photo/14001112000780>

Source: “Faz-e Jadid Markaz-e Daman-e Shahid Ziyadian bezudi Ahdas Mishavad (New Phase of the Shahid Ziyadian Treatment Center to be Constructed Soon),” *Holy Defense News Agency* (official news agency of the Iranian Ministry of Defense), 25 June 2022. <https://defapress.ir/fa/news/530666>

General Hassan Hassanzadeh, commander of the Revolutionary Guards for Greater Tehran, said this morning [25 June 2022] at the National Conference for the Celebration of Rescue held at the Martyr Ziyadian Treatment Center, “There are 1,500 clients in the Shahid Ziyadian Treatment Center affiliated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps of Greater Tehran. Within the next six months, we will build a new phase of this center for 1,100 people....”

The commander of the Greater Tehran Revolutionary Guards Corps continued, “One of our problems in this center is the time it takes to find the families of the clients, because sometimes it takes up to a year and a half to find the families of these individuals. Another activity of this center is to create vocational training workshops. For this reason, we are now looking to obtain orders for the sewing of military clothing by the clients of this center.”

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards To Expand Drug Treatment Center

By Michael Rubin
OE Watch Commentary

On 25 June Brigadier General Hasan Hassanzadeh, commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) for the greater Tehran region, visited the IRGC’s soon-to-be expanded Shahid Ziyadian Treatment Center. Hassanzadeh’s visit is significant for two reasons. First, as the officer in charge of Tehran’s security from enemies foreign and domestic, he is on the fast track for promotion to the top levels of Iran’s security apparatus. Second is his choice to focus attention on drug addiction and other threats facing not only broader Iranian society, but also the Iranian military.

The official media outlet of the Iranian Ministry of Defense, *Holy Defense News Agency*, describes the imminent expansion of the Shahid Ziyadian facility from 1,500 beds to 2,600 beds. By comparison, the James J. Peters Veterans Administration Medical Center in New York, among the largest Veterans Administration hospitals in the United States, has 1,663 beds. While the excerpted article does not detail the ailments that the new facility treats, additional reporting suggests the primary goal of the facility is drug rehabilitation. Photos from *Fars News Agency* depict young,

Sometimes it takes up to a year and a half to find the families of these individuals.

military-age men in close quarters. Hassanzadeh was also accompanied by Brigadier General Eskandar Momeni, Secretary-General of Iran’s Anti-Narcotics Headquarters.

Post-revolutionary Iran has long had some of the toughest drug penalties in world. However, in November 2017 Iran significantly loosened penalties for many drug crimes, perhaps signaling a recognition of the science behind addiction as well as the scope of the problem. In 2009, Esmail Ahmadi-Moghaddam, the chief of Iran’s Law Enforcement Forces, said Iran produced 130,000 new addicts annually and acknowledged that more than one million Iranians were now addicted, mostly to opium and heroin. In 2020, Naser Aslani, deputy head of Iran’s Drug Control Headquarters, reported that his agency counted 2.8 million addicts and estimated an additional 1.4 million remained unidentified. The IRGC’s expanded facility in Tehran is a possible reflection of the scope of the problem and perhaps its growing impact on military readiness.

Iran Believes Turkey's Rapprochement With Israel and Saudi Arabia Is a Threat

By Ihsan Gunduz
OE Watch Commentary

Turkey's activities and recent rapprochement with regional actors have created a perception in Iran that a regional front might be forming against Iranian interests. On 27 June, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited Turkey amid concerns that Turkey is strengthening relations with Iran's main regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and Israel. The Iranian Foreign Minister's visit followed on the heels of visits by both Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. The accompanying articles analyze the regional power competition through these visits. According to the excerpted article from security news focused *al-Monitor*, Turkey's improved relations with Israel worry Iran because Turkey and Israel have recently had a convergence of interests in countering Iran's influence in the Middle East, especially in Syria.

The second article from pro-government Turkish daily *Sabah* states that the visits of MBS and Yair Lapid demonstrate the concrete results of Turkey's desire to normalize its relations with the regional players and strengthen its

role in the regional power balance. The article notes that Turkey's normalization of relations with regional players is not intended to threaten the interest of third parties, including Iran, even though it might influence the calculations of other players. The article further states that Turkey and Saudi Arabia are likely to repair their relationship quickly and strengthen their cooperation in trade, tourism, construction, energy, the defense industry, and new technologies. Iran's influence in the region through its proxies and the progress of its nuclear program concern the regional players, especially Israel. Regional dynamics will likely have an impact on ongoing negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. Ultimately, normalizing Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia and Israel will play a significant role in the power balance in the region and help curb Iran's growing regional influence while ongoing, indirect negotiations continue between the United States and Iran to restore the 2015 nuclear deal.



This dual-track rapprochement, along with the aforementioned factors specific to Iraq and Syria, has created the perception in Iran that a regional front might be in the making... with the primary aim of confronting Iran...

The President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, and the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

Source: The Spokesperson Unit of the President of Israel, via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isaac_Herzog_state_visit_to_Turkey,_March_2022_%28GPOHA1_1042%29.jpg.
jpeg Attribution: CC-BY-SA-3.0 | Uploaded with pattypan

Source: Amberin Zaman, "Iran's foreign minister checks in with Ankara as Turkey courts Tehran's foes," *al-Monitor* (globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 27 June 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/06/irans-foreign-minister-checks-ankara-turkey-courts-tehrans-foes>

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian [visited] Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Ankara... part of an effort to manage growing tensions between the prickly regional rivals.

Upon his arrival, Amir-Abdollahian said he would be discussing "comprehensive long-term cooperation" between Iran and Turkey with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu and Erdoğan.

continue on 28

Continued: Iran Believes Turkey's Rapprochement With Israel and Saudi Arabia Is a Threat

Source Continued: Amberin Zaman, "Iran's foreign minister checks in with Ankara as Turkey courts Tehran's foes," *al-Monitor* (globally read security news site with regionally based reporting), 27 June 2022. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/06/irans-foreign-minister-checks-ankara-turkey-courts-tehrans-foes>

In any case friction over Israel, which has deepened as Turkey mends fences with the Jewish state, has taken a back seat to Iran's other big concerns, observers say. "Syria and Iraq are at the top of the list," ... "Iran is deeply worried about the prospect of a new Turkish military operation, especially if it's going to involve Tel Rifaat," Azizi told Al-Monitor. He was referring to the Syrian town south of Aleppo that is close to the Shiite-majority town of Nubl and Al-Zahra that could also act as a gateway allowing Turkey and its Sunni rebel allies to expand their influence around Aleppo...

"From Iran's point of view, this could be a prelude to the further expansion of the influence of Turkey toward central Syria, enabling it to limit Iran's influence and create a new headache for the Syrian regime," Azizi added. Erdogan renewed vows to conduct another military operation against the Syrian Kurds today...

Iran's other concern is Iraq, where Turkey is trying to limit Iran's influence in the Iraqi political sphere by facilitating the formation of a unified front composed of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the country's main Sunni faction.

At the same time, the escalation in Turkey's military operations in Iraqi Kurdistan has raised concerns among Iran and its affiliated Shiite groups that Turkey may seek to establish a permanent sphere of influence in northern parts of Iraq. Those worries were sharpened by KRG Prime Minister Masrour Barzani's comments earlier this year about selling Iraqi Kurdish gas to Europe via Turkey to offset supply deficits stemming from sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

But on a wider regional scale, "what worries Iran the most is that Turkey has been improving its relations with Iran's rivals, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia," said Azizi, the Iranian analyst.

"This dual-track rapprochement, along with the aforementioned factors specific to Iraq and Syria, has created the perception in Iran that a regional front might be in the making with the participation of Turkey, Israel and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf with the primary aim of confronting Iran," Azizi said.

Source: Burhanettin Duran, "Bin Salman ve Lapid Ziyaretlerinin ardından... (In the aftermath of Bin Salman and Lapid's visits...)," *Sabah* (pro-government Turkish daily), 24 June 2022. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/duran/2022/06/24/bin-selman-ve-lapid-ziyaretlerinin-ardindan>

...official visits [by Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid] were significant because they demonstrated the concrete results of Turkey's normalization policy and the country's strengthening role in balancing the regional power equilibrium. It is especially important to note that the normalization process has been shaped by a mutual commitment, as opposed to a request by either party, so that the relevant expectations can be assessed on a rational basis. At the same time, the normalizing parties strive to ensure that their new relationship does not hurt the interests of third parties. Again, each normalization process has its own dynamics and influences the calculations of others.

Indeed, the joint statement points in that direction. Accordingly, the two nations aim to strengthen their cooperation regarding trade, tourism, construction and energy, as well as the defense industry and new technologies.

Having turned over a new leaf in its relationship with Riyadh, Ankara finds an opportunity to play a more active role in the region... Meanwhile, Iran's proxies and the progress of that country's nuclear program, which ostensibly can build nuclear weapons, remain a source of concern for the entire region. That situation, in turn, encourages all countries in the region, starting with Saudi Arabia, to become nuclear powers themselves.

Indeed, Tel Aviv is among those capitals in the Middle East, which are most unhappy with Iran's growing regional influence...

Yemen's Houthi Movement Continues To Recruit and Indoctrinate Child Combatants

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Yemen's Ansarallah, a.k.a. the Houthis, have been indoctrinating child combatants with a militant anti-Western ideology for years. According to the accompanying excerpt from the Emirati daily *al-Ittihad*, the Houthis have recruited more than 30,000 children to fight in Yemen's ongoing conflict. Ansarallah began as summer camps where children and adolescents, who were known as "Believing Youth," were steeped in Zaydi religious doctrine, a Shiite offshoot prevalent in Yemen. They also learned to oppose stridently external involvement in their society's affairs, particularly from the United States. As the Houthis morphed into an armed rebel movement in the early 2000s, their summer camps evolved into a recruitment pool for committed foot soldiers.

Observers attribute the Houthis' frantic race to recruit children to a need to cover huge losses on the fighting fronts...

Although Ansarallah is now the de facto government of former North Yemen, it remains faithful to its roots as a network of youth training and indoctrination centers. Since April, in the context of a nation-wide truce, the group vowed to stop sending children to the battlefield. However, according to an expert cited by the Saudi-funded daily *Independent Arabia*, the Houthis have ramped up their recruitment activities this summer to make up for losses sustained in a failed attempt to take the city of Marib over the past year. A variety of methods are used to get parents to send their children to the camps, including extensive nation-wide media campaigns, material incentives, and various forms of pressure and blackmail. Lagging recruitment this summer, as noted in the accompanying article from the Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, has led Ansarallah to force government employees to send their children to the summer camps or risk losing their jobs.

Source:

الحوثي "يواصل سياسة تجنيد الأطفال" (‘Houthis’ continue child recruitment policies),” *al-Ittihad* (Emirati daily), 2 June 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/3bdtwwmy>

Majed Al-Fadael, Undersecretary of the Yemeni Ministry of Human Rights and a member of the Supervisory Committee for the Exchange of Prisoners and Abductees, told Al-Ittihad that although there are no accurate statistics on the number of child soldiers, estimates indicate that more than 30,000 children have been dragged into the fighting fronts by the Houthi militia.

Source:

المراكز الصيفية "طعم حوثي لتجنيد الأطفال" (‘Summer Camps’: Houthi bait for recruiting children),” *Independent Arabia* (Saudi-funded daily), 18 June 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yckr8vyp>

Observers attribute the Houthis' frantic race to recruit children to a need to cover huge losses on the fighting fronts, especially during a nearly two-year battle to control the strategic city of Marib.

Source:

الحوثيون يلزمون موظفيهم إحضار أبنائهم إلى معسكرات التجنيد والتعبئة (Houthis force employees to bring their children to the recruitment and mobilization camps),” *al-Sharq al-Awsat* (influential Saudi daily), 20 June 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/yj83zj7j>

Despite intimidation, incentives, and media campaigns in which mosques and dozens of radio and television stations participated, the Houthi militias failed to convince the majority of students' parents in the occupied Yemeni capital to enroll their children in their sectarian "summer camps." For this reason, they have resorted to forcing employees in government institutions and departments to bring their children to the camps.

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Iván Márquez Survives Attack but FARC Dissidents Remain on the Run

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Colombia's leading weekly magazine *Semana* recently published rumors that Iván Márquez, the leader of peace negotiations with the Colombian government who later returned to arms, had been killed (see "Colombian Military Continues To Forcefully Dismantle FARC Dissident Structure," OE Watch, Issue 4). This news story played for two weeks in the wake of the previous assassinations of at least four FARC commanders in the same border area. However, according to Spanish-language CNN Español, Colombia's intelligence service says Márquez survived the attack and the outlet reports that Márquez is convalescing in a hospital in Caracas, protected by Venezuela's Maduro regime. CNN Español also reports that FARC dissidents later released a video confirming the attack on Márquez and his subsequent survival. Although Márquez apparently survived, changing circumstances on the ground and a string of recent assassinations suggest that the various organizations of FARC dissidents continue to lose ground to Colombia's National Liberation Army and rival criminal groups, including the Tren de Aragua and Mexican cartels.



Iván Márquez, one of the leaders of the FARC dissidents known as the Second Marquetalia
Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ivan-Marquez-GoraHerria.jpg>, Attribution: CC BY-SA 4.0

Márquez 'is being protected by the Maduro regime.' Colombia's Minister of Defense indicated that Márquez was part of a confrontation and that in 'that dispute, one of these vendettas occurred in which his integrity was affected.'

Source: "Urgente: Fuentes venezolanas le confirman a SEMANA que Iván Márquez sí está muerto (Urgent: Venezuelan sources confirm to SEMANA that Iván Márquez is indeed dead)," *Semana* (Colombia's leading weekly magazine), 2 July 2022. <https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/urgente-fuentes-venezolanas-le-confirman-a-semana-que-ivan-marquez-si-esta-muerto/202250/>

In Venezuela, in the middle of an attack, Iván Márquez, maximum leader of the FARC dissidents of the so-called Second Marquetalia, died. According to the information known about the event, he fell in the middle of an attack. It transpired that Márquez's death occurred in the midst of a brutal war that is being waged in Venezuelan territory between criminal organizations to keep control of the illicit drug business, especially in the border area with Colombia.

Source: "'Iván Márquez' se encuentra en un hospital de Caracas y es 'protegido por el régimen de Maduro,' afirma el ministro de Defensa de Colombia ('Iván Márquez' is in a hospital in Caracas and is 'protected by the Maduro regime,' says the Colombian Defense Minister)," *CNN Español* (Spanish-language outlet of the popular American news site), 13 July 2022. <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2022/07/13/ivan-marquez-se-encuentra-en-un-hospital-de-caracas-y-es-protegido-por-el-regimen-de-maduro-afirma-el-ministro-de-defensa-de-colombia-orix/>

Colombia's Minister of Defense, Diego Molano, said on Wednesday that he has been informed by Colombia's intelligence services that Luciano Marín Arango, "Iván Márquez," one of the leaders of the dissidents of the FARC, is in a hospital in Venezuela. Speaking to several journalists in Bogotá, Molano said that Márquez "is being protected by the Maduro regime." The official indicated that Márquez was part of a confrontation and that in "that dispute, one of these vendettas occurred in which his integrity was affected." Days ago, the FARC dissidents... assured in a video that on June 30th Márquez "was the victim of a criminal attack directed from the army barracks and the commandos of the police" and that "luckily he was unharmed."

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Mexican Criminal Organizations Poised To Dominate South America's Illicit Economies

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Mexico's drug cartels have been marching through South America and consolidating their gains across the hemisphere. As previously reported (see "Mexican Criminal Organizations Consolidate Their Positions in South America," Issue 5, 2022 and "Mexican Cartels Buying Land on Colombia – Venezuela Border," *OE Watch*, Issue 6, 2022), cartels have cut out middlemen in Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. According to Spain's center-left daily *El País*, the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel are both now physically present in Chile. The article notes that Chilean authorities have uncovered plans for several large drug shipments linked to the two groups. The establishment of a physical presence in Chile has also been blamed for an uptick in homicides and violent crime, as Mexican cartels push out local criminal organizations. Chilean digital publication *Pauta* mentions a report from an investigatory unit in the public prosecutor's office confirming the arrival of Mexican cartels in the country. The report notes the presence of Mexican cartels in relation to the increase in drug users, as well as increasing involvement in other illicit economies, such as illegal logging and mining. A strong physical presence in Chile for the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation Cartels would represent a criminal environment in Latin America dominated by two Mexican groups, with an uninterrupted physical presence from the United States southern border to the southern tip of Patagonia.



Mexican Police stand guard on the back of a truck in Mexico City

Source: <https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=88661&picture=mexican-police-force-on-truck>, Attribution: CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0)

The Sinaloa Cartel's tentacles stretch across almost the entire globe... It does not have a hierarchical structure, but rather is made up of cells independent of each other, which facilitates its deployment.

Source: "Los dos principales cárteles de la droga mexicanos aterrizan en Chile (The two main Mexican drug cartels land in Chile)," *El País* (Spain's major daily generally considered center-left), 29 June 2022. <https://elpais.com/mexico/2022-06-29/los-dos-principales-carteles-de-la-droga-mexicanos-aterrizan-en-chile.html>

A plane from the Sinaloa Cartel tried to send 665 kilograms of cocaine from Chile to the port of Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. The CJNG established a laboratory in the Chilean city of Iquique. It was also discovered trying to introduce 3.5 tons of marijuana into the country through the port of San Antonio, according to the Chilean Prosecutor's Office. The evidence and sightings of cartel operatives no longer leave room for doubt about their presence in the region. The Sinaloa Cartel's tentacles stretch across almost the entire globe... It does not have a hierarchical structure, but rather is made up of cells independent of each other, which facilitates its deployment.

Source: "Tres carteles internacionales de droga ya llegaron a Chile (Three international drug cartels have already arrived in Chile)," *Pauta* (a Chilean digital publication), 8 September 2021. <https://www.pauta.cl/nacional/narcotrafico-chile-carteles-de-droga-fiscalia-informe>

This is part of the alerts that the 2021 Report of the Drug Trafficking Observatory discovered. "Our country faces for the first time the threat of the installation in Chile of international drug cartels, which we did not know about until now."

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Benin Park Rangers Take on Counterterrorism Tasks

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

The French-language Beninese investigative media website *daabaaru.bj* published an article discussing an attack that left two Beninese police officers and two militants dead along Benin's northern border with Burkina Faso. A separate excerpted article in the Paris-based pan-African website *jeuneafrique.com* discussed the incident in the context of Pendjari Park rangers, who work in the area. Although no one has taken credit for the attack, it occurred in the area of operations of the al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for Support of Muslims and Islam (JNIM). According to the *jeuneafrique.com* article, the rangers acknowledge that they now coordinate with security forces to monitor jihadists' infiltration into bases in the national park. Current protocol for the park rangers when confronting jihadists is to contact the Beninese military and withdraw to allow the soldiers to intervene. The article suggests that if the rangers are to be

trained by a third party, the contractors should be former soldiers because they already have some relevant skills for both conservation and encountering terrorist groups. In addition, although the park rangers acknowledge that several of them have lost their lives to jihadists in the Sahel in recent years, they are determined to continue working. The rangers also note that they are not capable of devel-

In Benin, there is a lot of communication between us [park rangers] and the Beninese armed forces, but our roles are very distinct.

oping a strategy to prevent terrorism, but it is necessary for the governments in the Sahel to formulate a more comprehensive strategy for how park rangers should deal with not only poachers, but now also jihadists.

Source: "Quatre morts dans une Attaque terroriste (Four dead in a terrorist attack)," *daabaaru.bj* (French-language Beninese website), 26 June 2022. [https://daabaaru.bj/atacora-quatre-morts-dans-une-attaque-terroriste/](https://daabaaru.bj/atacora- quatre-morts-dans-une-attaque-terroriste/)

The Commissariat of Dassari, commune of Matéri, department of Atacora was attacked by an armed group on the night of Saturday June 25 to Sunday June 26, 2022. The result was four dead, including two on the Beninese side and significant material damages.

Source: "African Parks: 'Au Bénin, face aux jihadistes, nous ne définissons pas la stratégie militaire' (African Parks: 'In Benin, faced with the jihadists, we do not define the military strategy')," *jeuneafrique.com* (Paris-based pan-African website), 25 June 2022. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1355173/politique/african-parks-au-benin-face-aux-jihadistes-nous-ne-definissons-pas-la-strategie-militaire/>

The rangers are armed according to the park where they work for the needs of the missions entrusted to them. Their training, on the other hand, is relatively standard: it includes modules on respect for human rights, on escalation during an engagement, on how to deal with different risks and on how to behave when arriving at a crime scene.

We use external trainers, who work under the direction of our head instructor. The outside supporters are often former soldiers, some of whom also have real expertise in the field of conservation. Our role is not to carry out national security missions, but to preserve the integrity of the areas entrusted to us. Our rangers are trained to fight against poaching, but are effectively confronted with all kinds of threats, including jihadists. In Benin, there is a lot of communication between us and the Beninese armed forces, but our roles are very distinct. And when it is established that jihadists are involved, we withdraw immediately and let the military intervene.

Vietnam Trains Cambodian Navy Amid Chinese Competition

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

Vietnam's Naval Academy has trained Cambodian naval officers for years. Recently, the Vietnamese government-affiliated *People's Army Newspaper* reported that the Cambodian navy sent senior officials to Vietnam to discuss how to improve the effectiveness of the program from which thousands of Cambodians have graduated. The article notes the Cambodian cadets receive instruction in history, tradition and naval tasks and functions, while fostering friendship and solidarity between the two neighboring countries' navies. The continuation of the training program comes amid greater competition from China for influence on the Cambodian navy.

A separate article posted on the Chinese Ministry of Defense website noted that U.S. media outlets and government officials have claimed that China's development of the Cambodian Ream Naval Base in Sihanoukville lacked transparency and was part of the Chinese military strategy to create a global network of naval bases. The Chinese Ministry of Defense, however, claims its naval cooperation with Cambodia

is a normal function of international relations and consistent with international law. The ministry also condemned any suggestion that Chinese naval activities in Cambodia pose a threat. Rather, the Chinese claim that Ream Naval Base will improve Cambodia's ability to protect its maritime territorial integrity and combat piracy and other maritime crimes.

Vietnam is an historical ally of Cambodia and competitor of China with maritime territorial disputes with China over islands in the South China Sea. Therefore, Chinese presence at the Ream Naval Base, near Vietnam's own naval base in Phú Quốc, draws Vietnam's attention. Given Vietnamese perception of naval competition with China, continuing to train Cambodian naval cadets is important to Vietnam as it seeks to maintain military influence in Cambodia.

The cooperation program in education and training between Cambodian military schools and the [Vietnamese] Naval Academy will continue to expand and develop to improve its effectiveness...



Vietnam People's Navy honor guard at ASEAN defense ministers meeting 2010-10-12

Source: Master Sgt. Jerry Morrison, U.S. Air Force, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vietnam_People%27s_Navy_honor_guard_at_ASEAN_defense_ministers_meeting_2010-10-12_1.jpg Attribution: CC x 2.0

Continued: Vietnam Trains Cambodian Navy Amid Chinese Competition

Source: “Đoàn cán bộ cấp cao Hải quân Hoàng gia Campuchia trao đổi kinh nghiệm tại Học viện Hải quân (A senior official delegation from the Royal Cambodian Navy exchanged experiences at the Naval Academy),” *People’s Army Newspaper* (government-affiliated media source), 27 June 2022. <https://www.qdnd.vn/quoc-phong-an-ninh/tin-tuc/doan-can-bo-cap-cao-hai-quan-hoang-gia-campuchia-trao-doi-kinh-nghiem-tai-hoc-vien-hai-quan-698277>

On June 27, a high-ranking delegation of the Royal Cambodian Navy led by Vice Admiral Non Sophat visited and exchanged experiences at the Naval Academy. Dr. Nguyen Van Lam, Director of the Naval Academy, introduced briefly the history, traditions, functions, tasks, achievements and development trajectory of the Naval Academy. Simultaneously, he discussed with the delegation the situation and results of training Cambodian military cadets at the academy. Over the years, the Naval Academy has trained and cultivated thousands of Royal Cambodian Navy officers. Recently, despite the complicated situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Academy still organizes trainings for Cambodian students.

The cooperation program in education and training between Cambodian military schools and the Naval Academy will continue to expand and develop to improve its effectiveness further and contribute to fostering more friendship and solidarity between the armies, navies, and peoples of Vietnam and Cambodia to ensure peace, stability, and development of each country in the region and in the world.

Source: “国防部回应美炒作中柬合作：戴着有色眼镜看什么都“不透明 (The Ministry of Defense responded to the United States exaggeration about China-Cambodia cooperation: Like wearing colored glasses to makes everything "blurry"),” *mod.gov.cn* (Chinese Ministry of Defence website), 22 June 2022. http://www.mod.gov.cn/jzhzt/2022-06/30/content_4914396.htm

Some media continue to exaggerate the normal exchanges and cooperation between China and Cambodia, which is entirely devoid of ulterior motives. On June 8, the upgrading and reconstruction project of the Yungyang Naval Base assisted by China officially commenced. It conforms to the domestic laws of the two countries and relevant international laws and international practices and is not targeted at a third party. The construction of the Yungyang base is aimed at strengthening the Cambodian Navy’s ability to maintain maritime territorial integrity and combat maritime crimes.

OEWATCH

Check out these **back issues** of **FMSO’s Operational Environment Watch** dating back to 2011. They provide translated selections with background from a diverse range of foreign media that our analysts and expert contributors believe will give security professionals an added dimension to their critical thinking about the Operational Environment.



India Strengthens Security Cooperation With Vietnam

By Matthew Stein
OE Watch Commentary



Defense Minister Shri Rajnath Singh

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Defence_Minister_Shri_Rajnath_Singh.jpg, Attribution: Government Open Data License – India (GODL)

India has taken several measures to counter China in the past several years, particularly after violent clashes on the Indian – Chinese border in 2017 and 2020. In addition to strengthening the capabilities of its armed forces along the border, the accompanying excerpted article from the Indian independent think-tank *Observer Research Foundation* reveals how India is trying to improve security cooperation with Vietnam. Following the 2020 border skirmishes, Indian officials believe future conflict with China will not likely be limited to one domain. The article reports on Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh's visit to Vietnam in early June, noting that he signed two security cooperation agreements. One remains unpublished in the public domain, but

the other agreement involved mutual logistics support and allows both to use the other's military facilities for repairs and replenishment. According to the article "this arrangement will mainly benefit the Indian Navy as it ramps up its profile in the Indo-Pacific."

Finally, the article addresses the impact of the war in Ukraine on Vietnam's ability to procure weapons and equipment from Russia, noting that India has the potential to offer Vietnam various weapons and equipment. India operates "similar platforms to Vietnam's and...has leveraged this by assisting Hanoi in training and capacity building." Ultimately, India's agreements with Vietnam mark another step to counter China and offer a potential market for the Indian defense industry.

Source: Sameer Patil, "The importance of India's defence partnership with Vietnam," *Observer Research Foundation* (independent think tank in India), 28 June 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-importance-of-indias-defence-partnership-with-vietnam/>

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh recently paid a three-day visit (8-10 June 2022) to Hanoi to strengthen defence and security ties with Vietnam... India has also activated a satellite imaging and tracking station in Hanoi, enabling it to track Chinese naval activities in the region...

During Minister Singh's recent visit, India and Vietnam signed two key agreements:

The first agreement, 'Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership towards 2030', casts a long-term perspective on the mutual ties. While contents of the agreement are not available in the public domain, according to officials, it aims to "enhance the scope and scale of existing defence cooperation."

The second agreement, an MoU, focused on mutual logistics support to enable the two countries to use each other's military bases to repair and replenish supplies. According to the official statement, this agreement is "the first such major agreement which Vietnam has signed with any country." This arrangement will mainly benefit the Indian Navy as it ramps up its profile in the Indo-Pacific.

Besides, the two countries also agreed to expedite the extension of a US\$500-million Line of Credit (LoC) to Hanoi... As part of the US\$ 500 million LoC, India has offered Vietnam Brahmos cruise missiles, Akash missile air defence system, Varunastra anti-submarine torpedoes, and coastal radars...

Notwithstanding the pro-China orientation of the current political leadership, a key driver of Vietnam's military

continue on 36

Continued: India Strengthens Security Cooperation With Vietnam

Source Continued: Sameer Patil, “The importance of India’s defence partnership with Vietnam,” *Observer Research Foundation* (independent think tank in India), 28 June 2022. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-importance-of-indias-defence-partnership-with-vietnam/>

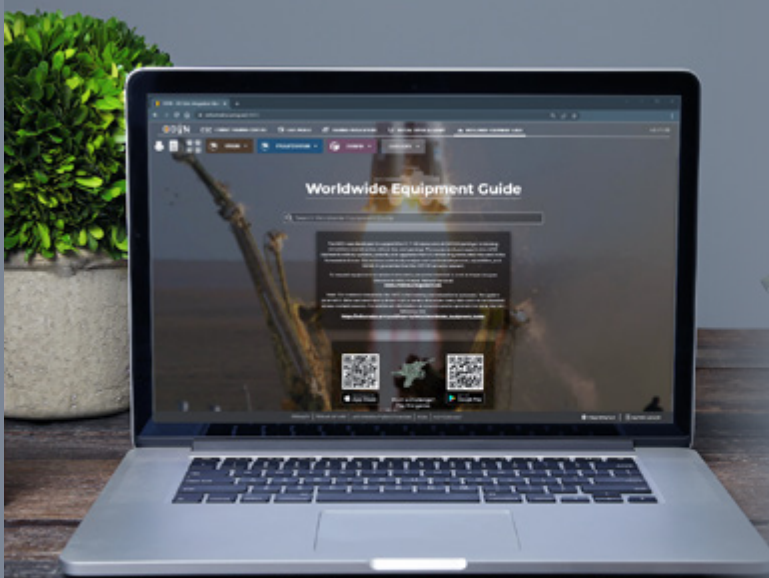
build-up is the security rivalry with China. Beijing’s stepped-up aggression to press its territorial claims in the South China Sea dispute has been a significant irritant for Hanoi...

Vietnam has traditionally relied on Russia for its weapons. However, given its renewed proximity with the US and the US sanctions against the Russian defence industry, Hanoi has sought to diversify its recent arms purchases...

Since the South China Sea clashes, Vietnam has boosted its defence spending, averaging US \$4.8 billion between 2014 and 2018. But, compared to the threat posed by China and its military requirements, this spending is inadequate. Therefore, Hanoi is looking for more affordable defence suppliers with this moderate defence spending.

India can potentially be one such source. The Indian military has the advantage of operating similar platforms to Vietnam’s. It has leveraged this by assisting Hanoi in training and capacity building in Kilo-class submarine operations and Sukhoi-30 fighter jet training.

The unrelenting Chinese hostility in the region will ensure that India and Vietnam will continue on the path of cooperation... However, to optimise the gains of their collaboration and contribute to regional stability, New Delhi and Hanoi will have to show tangible progress...



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The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's World Wide Equipment guide was developed to support the U.S. Army training and doctrine, including the Opposing Force (OPFOR) portrayal in training simulations (constructive, virtual, live, and gaming).

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[HTTPS://ODIN.TRADOC.ARMY.MIL/WEG](https://odin.tradoc.army.mil/weg)

Source: Patrick Ilunga and Luke Anami, “Why the EAC regional force is yet to be deployed to DR Congo,” *The East African* (African-based media company), 27 June 2022. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/why-the-eac-regional-force-is-yet-deployed-to-dr-congo-3861010>

But however noble President Kenyatta’s deployment proposal, not everyone in the DRC agrees with the regional leaders’ decision of a military solution to stabilise the restive eastern DRC provinces.

“All the armies from the East African Community states are already present in the east of our country in one form or another. The Rwandan army is associated with the M23 in North Kivu and supports the Red-Tabara [Burundian rebellion based in Congo]. The Ugandan army, which you invited, has been operating openly in North Kivu and Ituri since November 2021. The Burundian army operates regularly in South Kivu, and the South Sudanese army in the province of Haut-Uele [northeast of DRC]. The Tanzanian and Kenyan armies are already present in North Kivu and Ituri as part of the UN intervention brigade,” the letter reads.

“At least three out of seven member states of the East African Community have been involved for more than two decades in the aggression and destabilisation of our country through direct interventions of their armies or by proxy, through armed groups. Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi accuse each other of destabilisation. They compete for influence, even control of part of our country for security as well as economic and geopolitical reasons, so much so that more than once they have had to confront each other on our territory, directly or through armed groups,” Lucha writes.

President Tshisekedi has to make tough decisions. His main political opponent Martin Fayulu accuses him of “subcontracting the security of the country to Rwanda and Uganda and unnecessarily creating a competition of East African countries over the Congo.” He has called on the president to reveal “his secret deal.”

DRC Conflicts Reveal Difficulties in Deploying Regional Forces

By Robert Feldman
OE Watch Commentary

Kenya’s influential President, Uhuru Kenyatta, recently proposed deploying the East African Standby Force (EASF) to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Regional leaders at the East African Community Heads of State Conclave even endorsed Kenyatta’s proposal, but still no troops have been sent to help combat M23 rebels as well as the multiple militias who have ramped up attacks on civilians. As the excerpted article from the Africa-based media company *The East African* notes, there are several reasons for this delay. Many politicians in the DRC, as well as a significant segment of the population, view a potential EASF deployment with distrust. They are especially wary of having Rwandan troops in the DRC given the long history of hostility between the two nations. Troops from Uganda and Burundi, as well as Rwanda, are also unwelcomed as they all have rebel groups in the country. There is fear their divergent goals might further complicate an already complicated situation. There is also concern that EASF will be comprised of countries that have formerly plundered DRC’s mineral riches. Finally, there are traditional obstacles to deployment including logistics, communications, rules of engagement, budgets, and agreements on the status of forces. As the article explains, no timeline exists regarding when these issues would be resolved.

Meanwhile, violence in eastern DRC is increasing, portending further destabilization and the potential interruption of the importation of critical minerals, including those for defense industries. The recent military intervention in The Gambia by several West African countries under the auspices of ECOWAS gives some hope that East African countries can also come together and find that delicate balance whereby all parties can agree on the terms of a deployment. Additionally, any solutions to the struggle of launching the EASF could be valuable in helping the African Union’s African Standby Force finally stand up. Both forces have the potential to help provide the security and stability desperately needed in the DRC and elsewhere in Africa.

B*ut however noble President Kenyatta’s deployment proposal, not everyone in the DRC agrees with the regional leaders’ decision of a military solution to stabilise the restive eastern DRC provinces.*

Russia and China Look To Corner Bolivia's Lithium Industry

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

Bolivia has some of the largest deposits of lithium in the world, a mineral with civilian and military applications. As reported by the UK-based news outlet *BBC Spanish*, Russia, which possesses deep experience in mining strategic minerals, is one of the major contenders to win a globally strategic contract to extract much of Bolivia's lithium. China is another contender. According to U.S. Government international broadcaster *Voz de America*, China already controls 80 to 90 percent of global lithium mining capacity. *Voz de America* reports that there is international concern that

China will consolidate its position as the most important lithium mining power, given China's past use of economic interdependence as a weapon. Russian or Chinese dominance over the lithium industry risks producing another raw material dependence on authoritarian competitors.

China controls 80 to 90 percent of global capacity. This is an extremely dominant position for a country at a time when everyone is trying to expand.

Source: “La carrera por los codiciados ‘minerales del future’ que pueden crear gigantescas fortunas e influir en la seguridad nacional de los países (The race for the coveted ‘minerals of the future’ that can create gigantic fortunes and influence the national security of countries),” *BBC Spanish* (Spanish-language version of the popular British news outlet), 21 April 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-61144362>

Russia, one of the major exporters of gas and oil, demonstrated that due to the dependence of many countries on its exports, especially European ones, fuels are a weapon of war amid the harsh economic pressures that the U.S. and its allies have pursued in order to get the Kremlin to end the invasion of Ukraine... However, in the race for the metals that will play a crucial role in future economic development, Russia has its advantages: it is the world's second largest exporter of cobalt, the second of platinum, and the third of nickel.

Source: “Fuerte competencia por el litio de Latinoamérica para reducir dependencia de China (Strong competition for lithium from Latin America to reduce dependence on China),” *Voz de America* (U.S.-based, state-owned international broadcaster), 24 June 2022. <https://www.vozdeamerica.com/a/fuerte-competencia-por-el-litio-de-latinoamerica-para-reducir-dependencia-de-china/6628644.html>

The race for lithium has led manufacturers of electric vehicles to enter into contracts directly with mining companies to ensure the supply of lithium... China not only exploits lithium but also exercises a dominant position in the entire supply chain for the manufacture of electric car batteries. Most of the battery manufacturing is in China. China controls 80 to 90 percent of global capacity. This is an extremely dominant position for a country at a time when everyone is trying to expand.