THE CASPIAN PROJECT

A BI-WEEKLY EDITION FROM THE MODERN DIPLOMACY WWW.MODERNDIPLOMACY.EU

Wanting Peace Preparing for War

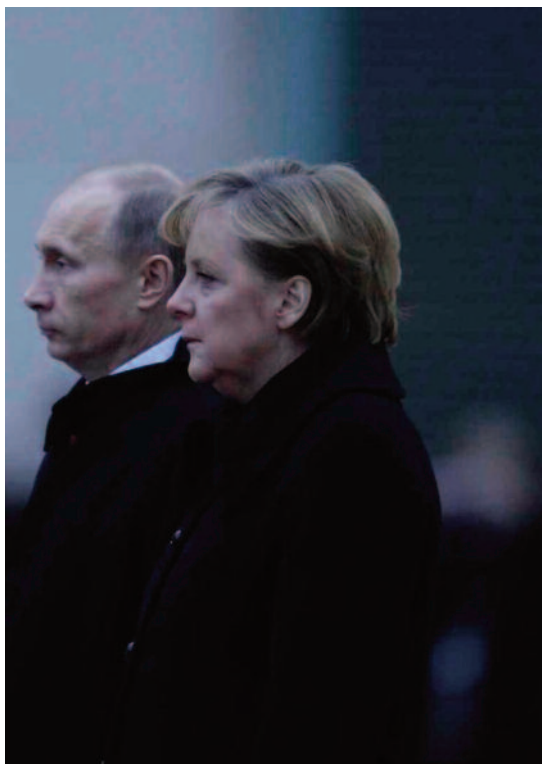
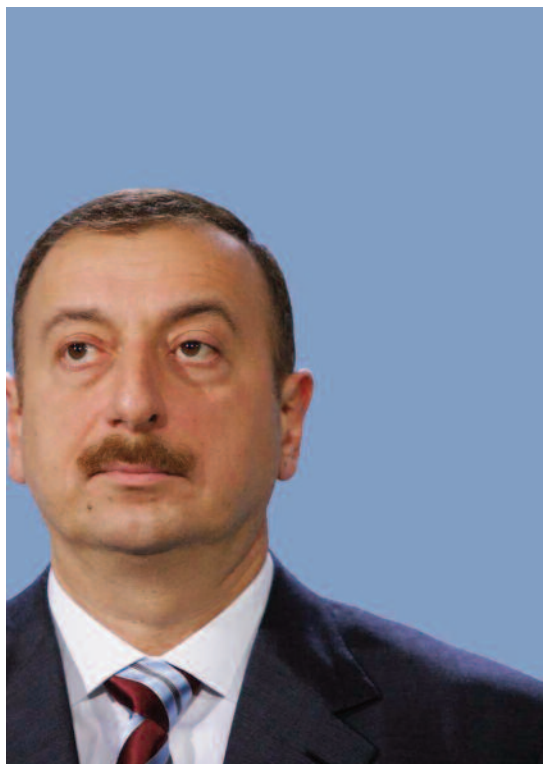
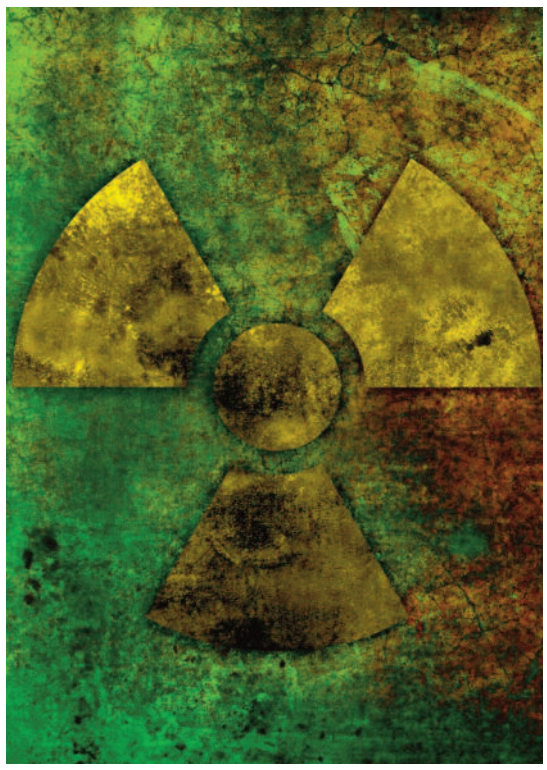
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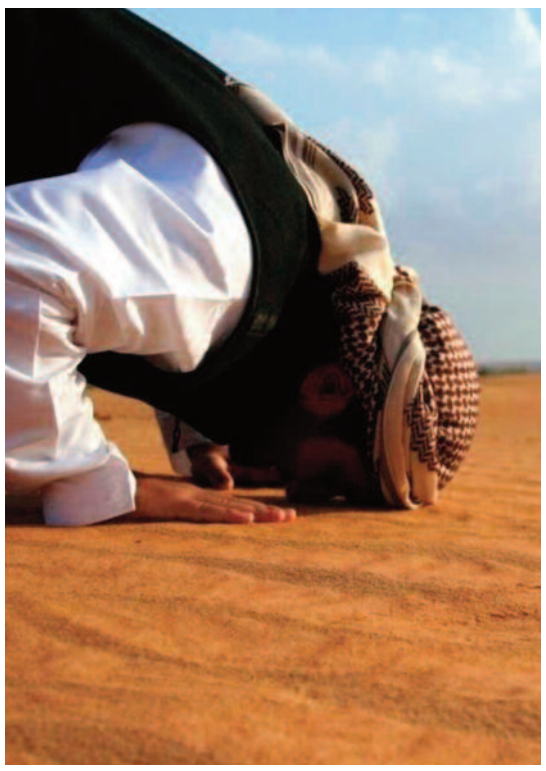
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THE CASPIAN PROJECT

BI-WEEKLY DIGITAL EDITION

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The Military Issue



Prof. Dr. Matthew Crosston

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There has always been a love/hate relationship for analysts when it comes to war. Whether it be the attitude that war is politics by any other means or that war does not determine who is right, only who is left, conflicted perspectives have been the life essence of those who study it. Regardless of where you may personally fall on the spectrum, one thing is certain: the ability to wage war, and wage it well, most heavily falls on the shoulders of a state's military. This issue of the Caspian Project looks in great detail, both individually within states and generally across the region, at the war-making capability in the Caspian. It will not be shocking to any reader to see this issue rather dominated by considerations of Russia and Iran: they are both regular participants on the global stage when it comes to conflict and often, rightly or wrongly, find themselves the subjects of conflict discussion for many states in the West.

Perhaps what will be a surprise, however, is just how important this issue is for the 'lesser' members of the Caspian region. While it is true Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan are not looking to actively involve themselves in large-scale global conflicts, the reality is they all have participated in varying degrees. On top of this, all of them have issues with each other and in the end it is indeed true that all politics is local: what may be 'small' to the United States or China can be 'existence-threatening' to others. This issue exposes readers, therefore, to those comparative perspectives and gives analyses that allow us to see just how seriously, and in what ways, all of the Caspian littorals are striving for peace while still being ready for war.

Diplomacy and politics are still the chief tools of the trade for how Caspian littorals try to remedy their problems, both with each other and with external nations. This is a good thing. But it does not mean no Caspian state is prepared to go to war or is unwilling to wage it. This issue proves that supposition false and misleading. Thus, Modern Diplomacy offers this edition with the expectation that better information leads to greater understanding. And it is only better understanding that can ensure the limitation of misperception, that one eternal flaw that always seems to weigh heavily on the initiation of war.

ATLAS TRIUMPHANT

RUSSIAN NUCLEAR CAPABILITY TODAY

SARAH NOLDER

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Although the Cold War is over, and now the most prevalent threats to national security are conventional and asymmetric in nature, nuclear weapons will always remain an integral part of international security, in addition to being a political and diplomatic tool. Aside from the United States, Russia has the most sophisticated nuclear capability and delivery platforms. This article will examine Russian nuclear capabilities, the evolution of nuclear doctrine in Russia, comparing it to other nuclear-capable states, and make predictions as to the role of nuclear weapons in Russia in the near future.

Russia is an officially recognized nuclear weapon state, as identified by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Russian Federation has several types of warheads and multiple types of delivery systems capable of transporting them.

The Russian government "has been a strong supporter of nuclear nonproliferation treaties and regimes, and bilateral arms control treaties and initiatives with the United States have helped reduce the Russian arsenal substantially from its Soviet-era peak of about 40,000 warheads to approximately 4,300 according to a March 2013 estimate." (Profile for Russia, 2015) Russia has a nuclear triad similar to that of the United States.

RUSSIA HAS MAINTAINED ITS TRADITION OF BEING A RESPONSIBLE MEMBER OF THE NUCLEAR CLUB, EVEN IF ALWAYS BEING READY TO VERBALLY REMIND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF ITS CAPABILITIES

A nuclear triad refers to the delivery systems of strategic nuclear weapons, typically launched by air, land and sea. In the case of Russia (and the United States), they have and use strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) as the three pieces of their nuclear triad.

According to the most recent data exchange in March 2015 as part of the New START treaty, Russia "deploys 1,582 strategic warheads on 515 intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers. The actual number of deployed Russian warheads is likely higher since the treaty counts one strategic bomber as one operational deployed warhead, even though, for example, the TU-95 MS16 bomber can carry up to sixteen weapons.

One open-source estimate from January 2015 put the actual number of operational Russian warheads at 1,900." (Profile for Russia, 2015) Russia also has 305 ICBMs of five different variants. Collectively, their ICBM fleet could field 1,166 warheads. Three of their Soviet-era variants are being decommissioned, however, including the SS-18, SS-19 and SS-25, with replacements coming into service by 2022. These replacements include the creation of road-mobile ICBM launchers and an ICBM that contains multiple, independently targeted reentry vehicles (MIRVs). (Profile for Russia, 2015) ICBMs can be launched quickly: a mission time of 30 minutes or less for an ICBM to be launched from Russia to the United States is realistic. (Nuclear Weapons, 2008)

While strategic rocket forces play the primary strategic role in the nuclear triad, the sea-based platform takes a less obvious, but no less important, role. In January 2015 Russia reported that its active strategic ballistic missile submarine fleet consisted of two Delta III subs in the Pacific Fleet, five Delta IV subs in the Northern Fleet, and one 995 Borey-class sub in the Northern Fleet. The Delta III submarines carry 16 SLBMs, each with three warheads. These subs are also being slowly being phased out in favor of the newer Delta IV-class subs. The Delta IV-class carries 16 SLBMs, each with the capability of carrying four warheads. The newest subs, the Borey-class subs, will have the ability to house sixteen SLBMs, with each SLBM able to carry up to six warheads. (Profile for Russia, 2015) SLBMs can be launched even more quickly: depending on their locations, SLBMs can reach their target in 15 minutes or less. (Nuclear Weapons, 2008)

The last arm of the strategic nuclear triad is air-based assets. In Russia, they have two heavy bombers that are capable of carrying out a nuclear mission: the Tu-95 Bear and the Tu-160 Blackjack.



. The Bear has two variants, the MS6 and the MS16. It is uncertain as to the number and operational status of their nuclear bomber fleet, as Russia does not declare this information under arms-control agreements. An open-source estimate made in January 2015 estimates that Russia has 55 Tu-95s and 11 Tu-160s. These assets can launch long-range missiles (air-launched cruise missiles, or ALCMs), short-range missiles, and gravity bombs. (Profile for Russia, 2015)

Tactical (non-strategic) nuclear weapons also make up a significant portion of the nuclear arsenal. However, Russia has never disclosed the amount and types of weapons they possess in this category. A March 2014 estimate puts the amount of Russian tactical nuclear weapons at 2,000. Scholars believe that these warheads are stored at facilities scattered about the country and are not mated to delivery systems.

The United States and Russia have the greatest involvement and greatest concern by far for the safekeeping and responsible holding of nuclear weapons. They have also had both the greatest rivalry and, paradoxically, the most cooperation concerning nuclear weapon matters.

Through international treaties, international organizations, and several summit conferences, the United States and Russia have slowly cooperated on matters of nuclear security. Both countries have advocated for nuclear non-proliferation and have reduced the number of their strategic nuclear weapons. The other nuclear weapon states as recognized by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are the United Kingdom, France and China. Four other states known or believed to have nuclear weapons are India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.



Both countries, the US and Russia, recognize the seriousness of the prospect of nuclear war, whether between each other or secondarily via some form of proxy war, and have agreed in the past that nuclear war is unacceptable. (Profile for Russia, 2015) And while both countries have always exhibited remarkable restraint in terms of honoring that commitment, the fact remains that both nuclear doctrines for these two countries contain stipulations and conditions upon which either may employ and feel justified to use nuclear weapons.

As one of the most powerful nuclear countries in the world, Russia will always carry an enormous potential problem to American national interests. Russia's nuclear triad consists of sophisticated and capable delivery systems for all three legs: land, air and sea-based operations. It has a significant number of non-strategic nuclear weapons, as well, which are unaffected by the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties made with the United States. Depending on how and where these assets are utilized the Russian Federation may have a nuclear capability even more disconcerting to the international community than its formal triad.

To date, Russia has maintained its tradition of being a responsible member of the nuclear club, even if always being ready to verbally remind the global community of its capabilities. What remains to be seen is how might new conflicts and tensions on the global stage – Ukraine, Crimea, Syria, DAESH, Iran – put new dynamics into play between the world's two nuclear superpowers. As this article shows, Russia is still a force to be reckoned with on the nuclear front. Forgetting that could be extremely hazardous to the global community's health.

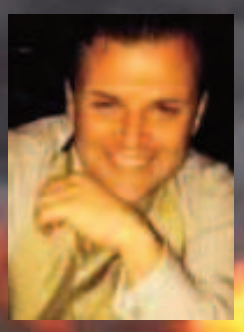
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

GLOBAL FIREPOWER IN THE CASPIAN

DR. MATTHEW CROSSTON

Senior Editor, Caspian Project Director

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The following compilation, piggy-backing on the overwhelming positive response given from the last edition of the Caspian Project where Caspian littorals were compared within various cross-indexes covering corruption, utilizes the hard work done by GlobalFirepower.com to analyze and rank the world's militaries today. Using unique databases that allow for comparison and stand-alone analyses, Global Firepower tried to ascertain a country's potential conventional war-making capabilities across the traditional tri-ad of land, air, and sea. Nuclear capability was wisely taken out of the accounting as it would clearly skew any opportunity for real comparison and objective war-making analysis.

Peripheral, but no less important, factors like financial stability, natural resources, foreign debt, oil reserves, and geography were also taken into account. In all, over fifty factors were compiled and measured in order to arrive at a final 'Power Index' in which a specific nation would receive its overall ranking. As the below data will show, the Caspian region holds quite a diversity in terms of military power and war-making capacity. A baseline rival is given for comparison by using the United States.

Overall Firepower Rankings Index (out of 126 countries total):

1. United States (0.1661)
2. Russia (0.1865)
23. Iran (0.7619)
63. Azerbaijan (1.5211)
66. Kazakhstan (1.6197)
90. Turkmenistan (2.3069)

MANPOWER RANKINGS

Active Military Manpower (out of 126 countries total):

Active military personnel are those units that are 'ready-to-fight.' These forces will naturally be the first to be committed to an actual combat situation.

2. United States (1,400,000)
4. Russia (766,055)
8. Iran (545,000)
49. Kazakhstan (49,000)
61. Azerbaijan (67,000)
89. Turkmenistan (22,000)

Manpower 'Fit' for Military Service (out of 126 countries total):

Wars come down to manpower, a population's ability to be 'fit for duty' and actually assist in the warmaking effort. This statistic is used to further refine a country's ability to do battle.

3. United States (120,022,084)
9. Russia (46,812,553)
14. Iran (39,566,497)
58. Kazakhstan (6,438,168)
76. Azerbaijan (3, 740,000)
100. Turkmenistan (2,252,187)

Active Reserve Military Personnel (out of 126 countries total):

War time resources dictate the need for reserve personnel. These numbers often favor countries that have a large base population, large defense budget, and fairly 'adventurist' approach to foreign policy.

4. Russia (2,485,000)
8. Iran (1,800,000)
11. United States (1,100,000)
24. Kazakhstan (378,000)
27. Azerbaijan (300,000)
72. Turkmenistan (35,000)

LAND SYSTEMS

Tanks

1. Russia (15,398)
3. United States (8,848)
17. Iran (1658)
27. Turkmenistan (712)
47. Azerbaijan (314)
48. Kazakhstan (300)

Armored Fighting Vehicles

1. United States (41,062)
2. Russia (31,298)
40. Turkmenistan (1,941)
44. Kazakhstan (1,613)
45. Azerbaijan (1,590)
53. Iran (1,315)

Multiple Launch Rocket Systems

The MLRS is a tracked or wheeled vehicle mounting a rocket launching system atop its hull. The MLRS offers a devastating physical and psychological effect on the enemy in a war-time situation.

1. Russia (3,793)
5. Iran (1,474)
6. United States (1,331)
12. Kazakhstan (393)
18. Azerbaijan (191)
30. Turkmenistan (110)

AIR SYSTEMS

Total Aircraft Strength
1. United States (13,892)
2. Russia (3,429)
24. Iran (471)
41. Kazakhstan (233)
63. Azerbaijan (121)
82. Turkmenistan (72)

Fighter/Interceptor Strength
1. United States (2,207)
3. Russia (769)
18. Iran (137)
25. Kazakhstan (96)
59. Turkmenistan (24)
63. Azerbaijan (18)

Serviceable Airports/Infrastructure
1. United States (13,513)
5. Russia (1,218)
21. Iran (319)
56. Kazakhstan (96)
97. Azerbaijan (37)
108. Turkmenistan (26)

SEA SYSTEMS

Total Naval Power

The listing below includes battleforce ships made up of aircraft carriers, frigates, destroyers, corvettes, torpedo boats, patrol boats, amphibious support craft, landing craft. Auxiliary vessels are included, but landlocked nations were not penalized and excluded from the listing overall.

3. United States (473)
4. Iran (397)
5. Russia (352)
55. Azerbaijan (47)
87. Kazakhstan (15)
102. Turkmenistan (4)

Destroyers
1. United States (62)
4. Russia (12)
Iran (0)
Kazakhstan (0)
Azerbaijan (0)
Turkmenistan (0)

Submarines
1. United States (72)
4. Russia (55)
5. Iran (32)
27. Azerbaijan (4)
Turkmeinsta (0)
Kazakhstan (0)

Mine Warfare
1. Russia (34)
13. United States (11)
22. Iran (7)
23. Azerbaijan (7)
Turkmenistan (0)
Kazakhstan (0)

WAR FINANCIALS

Annual Defense Budget
1. United States ($577,100,000,000)
3. Russia ($60,400,000,000)
33. Iran ($6,300,000,000)
54. Azerbaijan ($3,185,000,000)
59. Kazakhstan ($2,435,000,000)
103. Turkmenistan ($200,000,000)

External Debt (weighted as a negative factor on the Power Index)

1. United States ($15,680,000,000,000)
17. Russia ($714,200,000,000)
24. Turkmenistan ($428,900,000,000)
39. Kazakhstan ($131,300,000,000)
77. Iran ($15,640,000,000)
88. Azerbaijan ($9,552,000,000)

Reserves of Foreign Exchange and Gold
5. Russia ($515,600,000,000)
17. United States ($150,200,000,000)
30. Iran ($68,060,000,000)
51. Kazakhstan ($29,340,000,000)
54. Turkmenistan ($22,350,000,000)
67. Azerbaijan ($13,080,000,000)

Proven Oil Reserves (Barrels per Day)
4. Iran (154,600,000,000)
8. Russia (80,000,000,000)
12. United States (20,680,000,000)
19. Azerbaijan (7,000,000,000)
41. Turkmenistan (600,000,000)
75. Kazakhstan (30,000,000)

What the above compilations show is both anticipated and surprising: Russia and the United States regularly compete with each other for supremacy at the top of many indexes. However, the United States does not capture the top spot in every category and of course has the damning praise of having far more external debt than any other global rival. While it will be a very long time before anyone can even hope to challenge America in air power, there was far greater competition seen in this Caspian analysis than one would expect within both land and naval systems for war-making.



Also an interesting side-statistic, the financial strength indicators of foreign currency/gold and oil reserves clearly show far more global competition than most people would probably expect.

Iran hits both high and low across the indexes and it will be most fascinating to see how the impact of the JCPOA nuclear accord alters those rankings for the Islamic Republic in the coming future. The fact that Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan regularly occupied the lower third of the Global Firepower indexes is not a surprise, all things considered. But what should be noteworthy to researchers and analysts alike is how much their respective positions changed and altered within that bottom third across all categories.

There is clearly no one Caspian 'lesser leader' once you get past Russia and Iran. Given the ancient and profound adage that 'all politics are local' the above rankings show that the internal dynamics and competition between the smaller Caspian littorals should remain hotly contested and ever-changing for a long time into the future.

This analysis covering the Caspian in specific shows just how multi-faceted, multi-layered, and highly complex war will always be. Consequently, it will also always be unpredictable. Perhaps that alone is the greatest reason to avoid it.

CHESSBOARD STRATEGY

ZR

ZR is a full-time analyst who has worked with national security issues for almost 12 years. He is currently completing his Bachelors of Science degree with the prestigious International Security and Intelligence Studies Program at Bellevue University. Upon graduation, he will continue to provide professional support to national security issues and policies.

The Russian government has made great leaps since the collapse of the Soviet Union, "moving from a globally-isolated, centrally-planned economy towards a more market-based and globally-integrated economy." A large boost to its economy was the privatization of most industry. However two notable sectors were kept under government control: the energy and defense-related sectors. The purpose of this brief paper is to examine the current actions of Russian approaches to influence the transnational weapons market throughout the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. This will be accomplished through critically analyzing Russia's actions associated with U.N. resolution 2117, where it abstained from voting and honored instead an arms sale plan with Iran, shipping a modern-day missile-defense system, and a recent sale to Iraq that provided fighter jets for the fight against DAESH.

In 2013, the United Nations, "expressing grave concern that the illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation, and misuse of small arms and light weapons continued to cause significant loss of life around the world," felt a need to remind governments of their obligation to comply fully and effectively with Council-mandated arms embargoes.

THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN GREAT STEPS TO INFLUENCE THE TRANSNATIONAL WEAPONS MARKET THROUGHOUT THE CAUCASUS, CENTRAL ASIA, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

By a vote of 14 in favor to none against, with one abstention - the Russian Federation - the Council adopted resolution 2117. It was the first-ever resolution dedicated exclusively to the issue of small arms and light weapons. The ensuing debate marked the first time in five years that the 15-member body had taken up the issue, which had been previously deleted from its agenda.

The choice of Russian council members to abstain from this vote was an interesting move politically. A vote to abstain meant that Russian officials could avoid criticism for a negative vote but also prevented them from being obligated to follow the treaty that prohibited sales of light weapons, something from which Russia greatly benefits. One such transaction, though not small-arms in nature, revolves around Russia's plans with Iran on the S-300 air-defense system.

According to U.S. officials, "Russia is moving ahead with plans to sell Iran a sophisticated missile defense system that could undercut Washington's ability to challenge Tehran's airspace." This system, identified as the S-300, would result in a rather concrete air-defense system for Iran which would mean that "U.S. or Israeli warplanes likely couldn't sneak into Iranian airspace if they wanted to bomb Iran's possible nuclear facilities." Additionally, any attempt to launch preemptive strikes and the S-300 could provide an early warning for the Iranians and afford them time to shore up other defenses.

Iran had already fronted Russia the money for the weapons system, nearly $800 million, but there were some non-delivery disputes. In January 2015, official Russian media reported that the two sides had settled their differences after Moscow agreed to provide older Tor surface-to-air missiles with an unspecified date of delivery. Iran's state media also reported a settlement, but without providing details. At around the same time, reports emerged also that Russia and Iran were again discussing either the S-300 system or a newer system, the Antey-2500. This Russian-Iran weapons deal gives Russia a staunch foothold in an already anti-western nation and only affords additional options for future transactions. Another interesting fact: the transaction is NOT in disagreement with any current international prohibitions because the weapons system is defensive in nature. Additionally, Secretary of State John Kerry raised U.S. concerns with the Russians directly after Iranian Revolutionary Guard Commander Qasem Soleimani recently traveled to Moscow, a probable sign that the S-300 deal and future deals were back on the table and being finalized.Iran is not the only country garnering weapons sales from Russia, however. Iraq is also benefiting from Russia's proactive capitalist strategies in the weapons market.



In 2014 and 2015 the Iraqi government struggled to re-build its tactical Air Force. The Middle East government worked closely with the U.S. in an effort to purchase F-16 fighters, however the U.S. was not the only seller in the region. Due to an urgent need for close-air support and growing delays in the U.S. government's provision of 36 F-16s, the Iraq government turned to Russia and Belarus to purchase used fighter jets. Iraq Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki chastised the U.S.'s slow ways. The delay in sales allowed Maliki to turn to other sources for purchase and exacerbated an apparent bitterness within the Iraqi government, as it believed that it should not have just bought U.S. jets, but also British, French and Russian ones to provide air support and prevent the fall of Mosul. The jet purchase followed desperate requests by Maliki to combat DAESH. The fact that Russia was able to swoop in and provide assets to a struggling government not only created another revenue stream for Russia, but it also showed Iraq that Russia can be a proven ally within the region and fostered greater doubts about substantive American support for the regime.

The Russian government has taken great steps to influence the transnational weapons market throughout the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Russia's actions associated with its abstention vote of U.N. resolution 2117 was an ingenious diplomatic move. Russia is able to pursue its own legitimate national security interests (only the U.S. prioritizes the fight against radical Islam as adamantly as Russia), bolsters an important economic market that bypasses the severe sanctions levied against it, and fosters cooperative engagement in a geopolitically crucial region within which the United States wishes to remain dominant. While America clearly has criticized Russia for abstaining from the Resolution 2117 vote, it is a perfect example of how conflicted and complex global affairs tend to be.

Although America sees Russia's abstaining in purely black-and-white terms, there are many other significant players on the global stage that do not see it so clearly. In this convoluted fog of multiple interpretations, Russia so far has proven to be the more adept chess grandmaster.

TAKING A STAND

FOREIGN MILITARIES IN THE CASPIAN

LAURA GARRIDO



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It has been almost one year since the IV Caspian Summit in Astrakhan, Russia, where the presidents of the five Caspian states signed a political declaration that denied any foreign military presence in the Caspian Sea. This means that possible future deployment of NATO forces in the area will not be allowed. According to Russian President Vladimir Putin, this declaration "sets out a fundamental principle for guaranteeing stability and security, namely, that only the Caspian littoral states have the right to have their armed forces present on the Caspian." The Caspian Sea has been a relative strategic backwater for most of history, which begs the question: why are Russia and Iran, in particular, so interested in protecting the sovereignty of Caspian waters now?

In 1722, Tsar Peter the Great created Russia's Caspian Flotilla. At the Flotilla's headquarters shines a plaque still today with a quote from him that says, "Our interests will never allow any other nation to claim the Caspian Sea." This has been the case for centuries as no state dared to challenge Russia over the Caspian.

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and formal recognition of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan as sovereign independent states, things in the Caspian have begun to take a more interesting turn.

The Caspian Sea holds about 40 billion barrels of oil and is second to the Persian Gulf in regards to the size of oil and gas reserves. When Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan gained sovereignty after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, they contracted with Western oil majors to explore the Caspian's untapped potential. However, figuring out which state controls what in the area has remained an extremely fickle endeavor. Even though some of the states have settled with bilateral treaties to divide the sea, many boundaries remain uncertain. A project called the "Trans-Caspian Pipeline" is one of the issues that the states have difficulty agreeing on. Turkmenistan would like this project to begin in order for them to ship natural gas to Azerbaijan and then on to Europe but Russia and Iran do not agree.

WHY DO RUSSIA AND IRAN CARE SO MUCH ABOUT KEEPING FOREIGN MILITARIES, ESPECIALLY THE U.S AND U.N. OUT OF THE CASPIAN? DO THEY SHARE THE SAME IDEAS AND REASONING?

This tension has led to slight conflicts between the Caspian littorals. In 2001, Iran used jets and a warship to threaten a BP research vessel prospecting on behalf of Azerbaijan in an area that each country thought was their own.

In 2008, there was another case of uncertain boundaries when Azerbaijan used gunboats to threaten oil rigs operated by Malaysian and Canadian companies who were working for Turkmenistan because these companies were operating in an area close to the water border between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. In 2009, an Iranian oil rig accidentally entered waters that belonged to Azerbaijan. Rather than the show of strength it performed in 2008 with Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan instead did nothing and complained about being powerless against an aggressive Iran.

So, back to the original question, why do Russia and Iran care so much about keeping foreign militaries, especially the United States and United Nations, out of the Caspian? Do they share the same ideas and reasoning? Looking at the Trans-Caspian Pipeline, this project would allow Turkmenistan to sell natural gas in a way that exclusively benefits itself and those they sell to. If this happened Russia might see a decrease in its energy sales, since it would be available elsewhere, but the real heart of the matter would be the loss of Russian strategic soft power. It is not interested in seeing any state, Caspian or Western, compromise its ability to dictate power through natural resources. This has always been an important aspect of Caspian control for Russia.

In 2013, Russia's crude oil, petroleum, and natural gas exports made up 68% of their total export revenue for that year. 14% of this was natural gas sold to Europe. According to Dmitry Shlapentokh, professor of Soviet and post-Soviet history, "Russia is strongly against the project for a trans-Caspian pipeline carrying gas from Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan and may threaten to use military force should the two former Soviet republics decide to go ahead regardless."

This is a problem not only for Turkmenistan, but also carries over to the current issue of Russia and Iran preventing a UN or US military base in the area. If there was a Western base in the Caspian region, then Russia's expectation of being able to 'persuade' Caspian littoral states when needed could become much more complicated.

So not only could Russia be worried about the financial and strategic implications of foreign militaries in the Caspian, there might also be another factor: namely, the relationship between Russia and the United States. After Russia decided to get involved in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and allowed for the annexation referendum in Crimea, tensions have been high. The sanctions that were implemented by the West in response represented the toughest action taken against Russia since the peak of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Having a Western military forces in the Caspian area could certainly deter Russia from possibly making the same type of foreign policy decisions to its other neighbors which, if this was an option Russia wishes to keep, could be why Russia has worked to prevent foreign militaries in the Caspian.

But why would Iran care? Does Iran agree with Russia's foreign policies so much that it is willing to push as hard as Russia? Or is there another factor that is driving Iran's decisions? Recently, the nuclear accord struck with Iran and which the US Congress could not block, has been front and center in Western media. The majority of Americans believe that Iran will break the agreement. If Iran does have plans to break the deal, or wishes to have that option available to it strategically, a US or UN military base or military forces in the area could stop such plans from becoming explicitly realistic.



The decision to block foreign militaries from the Caspian Sea is a threat to the strategic interests of America and, to a lesser extent, the EU. Potentially, it could have negative repercussions on energy security. By removing any Western military influence in the region, Russia will be able to maintain the regional hegemony it considers its natural birthright. In addition to that, Iran will be able to ensure greater strategic flexibility moving forward with the nuclear accord. While in the West these maneuvers will inevitably be portrayed as dangerous and destabilizing, some credence must be given to the Caspian littoral states, especially Iran and Russia, for how dangerous and destabilizing they themselves might see foreign militaries operating freely in their own backyards upon Caspian waters. As the old adage goes, what you see depends largely upon where you stand. This seems especially apropos when trying to figure out the complexity of military life in the Caspian.

DETHRONING THE "DOLLAR DICTATORSHIP"

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has loudly projected that his nation and the other Caspian nations will leave the dollar behind. Mr. Putin has exclaimed that the United States runs a "Dollar dictatorship" when it comes to global market oil prices and affirms that his nation's currency will not become a victim subjected to its rule. In order to combat this "dictatorship" attempts have been made to enhance relations with China in order to integrate both the ruble and the yuan into the global market more dominantly. His belief is that in doing so he will weaken the dollar while strengthening both national currencies. However, Mr. Putin is potentially committing a mistake, as he is generally associating a strong currency with national strength and views the decline in the ruble's value as an offense against Russia's prowess.

These are clearly political statements used to project an aura of strength that disregard the economic realities facing the Kremlin. Rather than take meaningful counter-actions so as to create positive momentum and strong economic stimuli, Putin sometimes seems more focused on capitalizing on his celebrity status to 'tweak the American eagle' as it were.

THE LONGER MOSCOW ASSUMES THIS IS A GEOSTRATEGIC IMPOSSIBILITY AND THAT ITS ONLY CONCERN IS BATTLING THE 'DOLLAR DICTATORSHIP,' THEN THE KREMLIN ONLY CREATES MORE DANGER FOR ITSELF

Putin's "projection" as stated above can thus be observed as an attempt to manufacture a sense of Russian exceptionalism that will counter the 'insult' that he considers as a constant American exceptionalism on the global stage. However, these geopolitical playground battles do not outweigh the realities of the world economy and how Russia needs to create serious policies to deal with sanctions and weak oil prices.

While China is Russia's largest trading partner and has become the world's largest consumer of fossil fuels — a vital aspect to Russian economic health — the Chinese financial crisis that occurred in August 2015 has weakened the Yuan, consequently placing increased pressure on the Russian economy as well. The Chinese economic meltdown and the resultant devaluation of the Yuan held global implications.

From Wall Street to Venezuela to Saudi Arabia, economic downturns were observed. On Wall Street the drop in the stock market created panic among brokers/investors and in Saudi Arabia and Venezuela a drop in oil prices impacted their economies rather severely, given both have bet some of their financial futures on China's continual thirst for commodity imports.

Russia, however, which exports approximately 14 percent of its annual oil production to China, has a lot more to lose from the Chinese economic decline. This is because oil and natural gas are at the heart of the Russian economy. These commodities account for over 75 percent of export revenues and over 50 percent of government budgetary resources. The Russian ruble, which is directly linked to global oil prices, has been steadily decreasing in value throughout the last 12 months. This direct link is identified through the correlating data of the market price for oil and the value of the ruble to the U.S. dollar. For example, the market price for oil dropped from $104 USD per barrel to around $50 USD per barrel from September 2014 to September 2015. At the same time the value of the ruble, which in the beginning of September 2014 was 36 RUB to 1 USD, had slipped by September 2015 to 68 RUB to 1 USD—a steep devaluation rate not seen since the 1997 global financial recession.

In addition to having the value of its currency decline, for every dollar that global oil prices drop Russia loses an estimated $2 billion a year in revenues. When combined with other harmful realities like Western sanctions, Russia's relative dependence upon a singular commodity market, and lavish spending rather than modernizing its energy sector during high oil prices, it is clear that Russia pontificating about a 'dollar dictatorship' should not be its focus.



Indeed, there is something of a flawed logic in the premise: why does President Putin believe he can leave the dollar behind by tying the punished ruble with the declining Chinese yuan? In the near-term at least this strategy is destined to fail.

One regional influence Russia is also somewhat disregarding (or making too many positive assumptions) in this endeavor and that will potentially become of greater geopolitical importance is the Islamic Republic of Iran, now that the new nuclear accord has been struck and many sanctions lifted. By hedging their bets too heavily on China and disregarding up-to-the-minute regional economic shifts, Russia is possibly inflicting its own monetary wounds while uselessly blame-shifting on America for its economic woes.

The lifting of Iranian sanctions would mean that Russia could face a newly invigorated, oil-producing, heavyweight regional competitor, one that could reshape the power balance in the Caspian Sea Region and may not necessarily be willing to be as close an ally to Russia as Russia assumes it will be.

A more economically and politically independent Iran, and its ability to influence regional power shifts, would allow for the other Caspian states to modernize and diversify their economies. This would mean that Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan may finally be able to break free of the Russian influence that has basically engulfed them since the Soviet era by building the Trans-Caspian pipeline.

Likewise Kazakhstan, a nation whose economy is also built upon the same commodity market as Russia, may finally be able to lessen the havoc that the Russian currency decline is playing within its own borders. Right now there are few analysts seriously considering these potentialities, both here in the West and within Russia. This is an error. Russia clearly thinks the new nuclear accord will lead only to improved ties and deeper economic prosperity for both itself and Iran. But there is ample historical evidence to consider that an emboldened and newly stabilized Iran simply might not need Russia as much as Russia needs it. This future reality could signal a dramatic change in the Russian-Iranian relationship, and not to Russia's favor.The longer Moscow assumes this is a geostrategic impossibility and that its only concern is battling the 'dollar dictatorship,' then the Kremlin only creates more danger for itself.

We already know that a devalued yuan is further assisting oil prices to drop on a global scale, placing great strain on the Russian economy as well as on some bordering Caspian states. Historically, when the Kremlin feels threatened, it shifts blame to other scapegoats rather than seriously tackling its problems. The current sharp slowdown of Chinese economic growth has already impacted multiple Russian economic sectors, including energy, metallurgy, timber, and agriculture.

The future alliance with Iran is not an automatic guarantee. Western sanctions still grind along. The Caspian littorals may see opportunities to loosen Russia's economic grip over their local economic standings. Clearly, plenty of 'real' problems exist. So it would behoove Russia to stop spending time on economic fantasies of 'dethroning the dollar dictatorship.' That seems to be the least of its real problems.



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NAVIGATING THE IRANIAN-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

AN ISLAMIC COLD WAR

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Could Iran and Saudi Arabia's willingness to use fellow Middle Eastern nations, like Syria and Yemen, as proxies in their conflicts against one another threaten to move the world closer to the brink of an Islamic Cold War? In their efforts to win the battle to be the dominant regional power within the Gulf and to control the world's oil markets, the history of the Saudi Arabian and Iranian relationship has taken many forms. With the Saudis claiming the cultural high-ground based on it being the birthplace of Islam and the Arabic language, and the Iranians feeling a cultural supremacy based on civilizational and historical legacy, the animosity each side feels toward the other does not appear destined to wane any time soon. The winding road of the relationship, and the security approaches taken by the two nations, seem to be largely based on Arabic tribal tendencies:

A disposition to appease rather than resist a powerful opponent if at all possible, and to avoid irreparable confrontation if a clash is inevitable.

A tendency to wait for events to unfold before reacting, rather than seek to anticipate them.

A propensity to give priority to immediate, clear demands rather than to long-term strategic considerations when the two come into conflict. (Safran)

Further complicating this relationship in the modern day have been the roles that the United States and Russia play. Both the United States and Russia have played politics within Iran and the surrounding region, supplying many of the weapons and money that have been used in various conflicts.

BOTH THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA HAVE PLAYED POLITICS WITHIN IRAN AND THE SURROUNDING REGION, SUPPLYING MANY OF THE WEAPONS AND MONEY THAT HAVE BEEN USED IN VARIOUS CONFLICTS

The United States has also been pushing Saudi Arabia for years to strengthen mutual military ties in an effort to gain a bigger foothold in the Middle East. It is the US 'meddling' in this way that Iran has repeatedly used as a rallying call for many of the Shia fundamentalists rising up within the region, trying to push out the "Great Satan" and not coincidentally point to Saudi Arabia's complicity in facilitating this 'evil' as an equal transgression.

It is the Syrian conflict, however, that appears to be the key crisis with the biggest global impact. When the Arab Spring moved into Syria the Assad regime came under siege from the majority Sunni community. Seen as an opportunity by Saudi Arabia to weaken the Iranian sphere of influence, it was quick to back Syrian rebels. Iran could not afford the loss of the Assad regime and so it engaged on his behalf.

The intervention of both Iran and Saudi Arabia, however, has now seen this civil uprising become a war based on opposing Islamic ideologies and has ultimately fostered the unintentional rise of the Islamo-fascist group, DAESH. Meanwhile, the United States still sits with the 'original rebels,' desperately trying to convince everyone to keep the conflict as a purely civil insurrection against the Assad regime. The stakes could not be higher for all sides.

Currently the mass exodus of people from Syria trying to escape the violence threatens both the United States and all nations that are taking in the massive influx of refugees. Lacking even basic infrastructure to properly vet the tens of thousands of refugees flowing across borders, this represents a major threat not only to the immediate region but also to host nations as the oblivious importing of terrorist agents hidden within the refugee population is highly plausible. Currently the Sunni Gulf states have not accepted any of the refugees for just these reasons. With the instability that many of those countries already have at home, they are not keen to now import potentially even more security problems.

Also in January of 2015 Russia and Iran signed a military cooperation deal. According to the Associated Press, Iranian defense minister Hossein Dehghan emphasized that, "Iran and Russia are able to confront the expansionist intervention and greed of the United States through cooperation, synergy and activating strategic potential capacities. … As two neighbors, Iran and Russia have common viewpoints toward political, regional and global issues." With Russia now moving military capabilities into Syria under the auspices of "fighting DAESH," this now puts the United States and Russia firmly at odds and potentially face-to-face on the battlefield.



Russia, however, does not find itself in quite the quandary that the United States does. Keen to continue its support of Saudi Arabia and not lose control of its relations with the other Gulf States, the United States must continue to engage in the fight against DAESH while still needing to support the Syrian rebels attempting to overthrow the Assad regime. This is the same regime, however, that Russia has declared support for and whom Iran also supports. America and Russia might find themselves in the very situation that they spent decades trying to avoid during the Cold War: direct military engagement against one another.

Aside from the obvious military threat that America now finds itself in, it also finds itself both target and victim of an artificial suppression of oil prices by Saudi Arabia. In a direct assault on American shale oil and natural gas producers, the Saudis have worked to keep production high and prices low. "When the price per barrel remains so low, these 'alternative' industries in America…have no choice but to cash in on the opportunity and refocus on its traditional industrial models.

This slows down advancement in alternative fuels and repositions the Saudi-American energy juggernaut back into a place of primacy." (Crosston) Additionally this suppression of oil prices also works to adversely affect Iran. As Dr. Matthew Crosston further states, "There is no doubt that Saudi Arabia enjoys keeping Iran in check and does not wish to see the wanna-be regional hegemon ever truly compete for supremacy in the region.



Keeping world oil prices low does this quite succinctly and efficiently, without even having to engage in any verbal or diplomatic animosity with the Shiite Republic."

Additionally, the recent Iranian nuclear accord (JCPOA) is clearly seen by Saudi Arabia as the biggest threat going forward. The deal paves the way for Iran to aspire to the role as dominant player in the region, leaving Saudi Arabia to feel backed into a corner. The deal also opens up Iran's pipelines for the sale of oil and the added revenues would allow Tehran to flow even more money into Syria, Hezbollah, and possibly entertain new initiatives in the Gulf (many in Saudi Arabia feel the Houthi rebellion in Yemen is exactly what this kind of initiative could look like). There is almost no scenario where the nuclear agreement and an easing of the strife between the U.S. and Iran can be seen as a good thing for Saudi Arabia.

And with many of the negotiations having happened behind closed doors the Saudis have long felt a sense of betrayal. If the situation within the Saudi monarchy worsens in terms of its own internal dissension and unrest, then America could find the royal finger pointed straight at it.

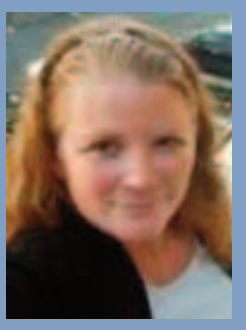
For Tehran the deal with the Americans is a political tightrope. It has an aging military and its economy has been hard hit. So there was tremendous internal pressure to make a deal. With the Russian agreement firmly in hand, Russian troops on their way to shore up Assad, and the nuclear deal struck, Tehran has to at least feel like maybe some breathing room is finally available. What remains to be seen is whether this breathing room is a new opportunity for global assimilation and responsible behavior or simply a respite before beginning in earnest an Islamic Cold War with its hated Wahhabist rival.

LEAVING THE EURONEST

WHY AZERBAIJAN IS UNHAPPY

DAYNA RICE

Dayna Rice is a recent graduate of the International Security and Intelligence Studies Program at Bellevue University in Omaha, NE, USA. She is also a veteran of the United States Army.



The European Union may have found itself deeper into a conflict than it had originally planned when it invited both Armenia and Azerbaijan into the Euronest. Recently, Azerbaijan has felt as though it was dealing with unfair persecution from a select group of members in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly and decided to formally withdraw from the union. According to the resolution that was drafted on 10 September of this year, the Milli Mejlis (the Azeri Congress) cited:

They [Euronest members] slander Azerbaijan, trying to damage the image of our country and isolate it. Since last September when this institution began to operate with a new staff, Azerbaijan hasn't managed to begin a dialogue with it due to the fault of several European Parliament members, including its President.

Many of the members of the Euronest have been plaguing Azerbaijan with accusations of human rights violations. These violations stem from the treatment of prisoners that are being held in Azeri prisons. The accusations came soon after Azerbaijan refused to participate in the session that was held in March 2015.

Azerbaijan claimed that the reason for non-participation in the session held in Yerevan, Armenia stemmed from the continuing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, the horrendous state of the Sarsang Reservoir, and the continued blockade of Nakhchivan. Azerbaijan has continued to voice concerns over these three regions over the years, but seems to be especially irritated that little progress has been made through Euronest in obtaining any type of satisfactory solution or even substantive progress.

AZERBAIJAN DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THE EURONEST WOULD CLAIM SUCH ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY THE AZERIS WHILE TURNING A BLIND EYE TOWARD THE ARMENIANS' BAD BEHAVIOR AND EVEN GIVING THEM A GREAT HONOR BY HOLDING THE NEXT SESSION IN THEIR STATE

The Nagorno-Karabakh region is a part of Azerbaijan that is run by the ethnic Armenian population. In the summer of 2014, clashes between the Armenians and the Azeris rose to the highest levels since 1994. The area is still prone to frequent commando raids and sniper fire, which makes the lives of residents there difficult to say the least. Russian President Vladimir Putin attempted to reign in the leaders by calling them both to Sochi. Putin was able to stop the rising tension, but was not able to bring either party closer to a resolution. When the Euronest decided to hold the 2015 session in Armenia, it left Azerbaijan feeling like it had no place within the assembly.

Azerbaijan did not understand how the Euronest would claim such atrocities committed by the Azeris while turning a blind eye toward the Armenians' bad behavior and even giving them a great honor by holding the next session in their state.

Azeris also felt slighted when Russia persuaded Armenia to join Putin's Eurasian Union. It is this alliance, where Russia is providing a security backing to Armenia, which has increased the Azeri feeling of insecurity. In response, Azerbaijan has been utilizing its hydrocarbon revenues to increase the size and strength of its military. Combine this with a new more nationalist defense minister and diplomatic problems are arising in all areas. The Azeris have lost trust in the West to deal fairly with its issues with Armenia. The reason for this can be attributed to how the West has dealt with President Putin over Crimea: Azeris do not seem to understand how the West can try to punish Putin for that, but continue to ignore the alleged illegalities and immoralities committed by the Armenians against them.

The second reason that Azerbaijan decided not to attend the session in Yerevan is the increasingly dilapidated status of the Sarsang Reservoir. Since 2013 it has been known that the dam at the reservoir was in an emergency condition. Since the dam was seized over 20 years ago, it has been under the control of Armenia. The problem is that if—more likely when—there will be a failure at the dam, it will threaten the lives of over 400,000 people that live downstream, who are predominantly Azeri. The Azerbaijani Government continues to make evacuation plans in the event the dam fails, but the estimates of engineers give less than one hour from the catastrophic collapse of the dam to the whole area being submerged underwater.



The other issue that revolves around the Sarsang Reservoir is that the Armenians continue to use the reservoir as a way to threaten the livelihood of the inhabitants on the Azeri side. Since the dam is controlled by Armenia, it can decide when to turn the water and power generation features on and off. It uses this control to leverage threats against the Azeris. This is serious enough that the Chairman of the Azerbaijani Delegation to the Euronest PA, Elkhan Suleymanov, forwarded his concerns about the physical status of the dam as well as the way Armenia uses the dam against Azerbaijan not just to Euronest but to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). Suleymanov included in his reports that during the summer months Armenia would shut the dam down, depriving the people downstream of the commodity of water. During the winter months Armenia would open the floodgates, causing agricultural lands to flood and roads to wash out.

The last reason that Azerbaijan protested attending the last session of Euronest in Yerevan is because of the blockades that have been in effect against Azerbaijan's autonomous province of Nakhchivan. The blockades proved severely detrimental: Azerbaijan was unable to supply food and fuel and the gas, rail, electrical, and radio lines were all cut to the province.



During the harsh winter there was not enough fuel and some of the people resorted to burning their furniture in order to stay warm. The only lifeline in the early days of the blockade that sustained Nakhchivan were the two small bridges that were built by Heydar Aliev. It is a testament to the province and the people of Azerbaijan that the province is now a growing, self-sustaining region.

The increasing hydrocarbon wealth of Azerbaijan has also helped significantly to revitalize and supply the area. The future endeavors of the province include spiritual and ecological tourism. Therefore the accusations that have been made against Azerbaijan in the recent past by Euronest members threaten the continued prosperity of the region.

These newest claims by Euronest against Azerbaijan only further ignite the fury of the Azeris. Unfortunately, some of that anger has fueled a Baku crackdown that has led to many anti-government activists' arrests and non-governmental organizations finding their accounts suddenly frozen. The growth of Azerbaijan's wealth has rebuilt its confidence so that it no longer wants to be controlled by any organization, whether that is European or Russian. But Europe choosing to ignore the faults on the Armenian side and continuing to prosecute those on the Azerbaijan side relatively exclusively, while Russia provides additional economic opportunity to the Armenians, is taking a negative situation and fanning into a full-on future inferno of hostility. Consequently, in this instance, the 'Euronest' is something the Azeri bird is eager and happy to leave.

ILLICIT MATERIALS-TRAFFICKING ACROSS THE GREATER CASPIAN

RADIOACTIVE

NORBERTO MORALES ROSA

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The global impact of transnational crime has risen to unprecedented levels. Criminal groups have appropriated new technologies, adapted horizontal network structures that are difficult to trace and stop, and diversified their activities. The result has been an unparalleled rise in international crime. As many as fifty-two activities fall under the umbrella of transnational crime, from arms smuggling to human trafficking to environmental crime. These crimes undermine states' abilities to provide citizens with basic services, fuel violent conflicts, and subject people to intolerable suffering. (CFR) The Russian government is known to benefit from ties to the transnational weapons market. In this paper we will discuss the Russian approach to the weapons market throughout the Greater Caspian region.

After September 11, 2001 it became more difficult to express precisely what was meant by the term "weapon". That event forced a re-examination of the traditional definition of weapons and, with it, a new concept of what constitutes a weapon. Illegal commerce in weapons, by whatever definition, is widespread throughout Eastern Europe and the former USSR. (Bowers)

THE REGION'S POROUS BORDERS, GOVERNMENT INSTABILITY, AND ENDEMIC CORRUPTION PROVIDE FERTILE GROUND FOR TRAFFICKING OF WMD MATERIALS

The conventional illegal arms trade across the Greater Caspian is one of the most significant in the world. The airports of the Caucasus are also among the most vulnerable in the world and may, at some future date, constitute an equally threatening factor in this new environment. There is one basic fact about weapons traffic in this region: the Caspian has always been armed and therefore was always destined to be a hub of concern, post-Communism, for the international weapons trade market. Therefore, the efforts of the greater Caspian states to remedy this problem will always be paramount to the security of the global community.

Illicit nuclear materials have been interdicted on numerous occasions in Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. If seizures are an accurate indication, most material on the nuclear black market has been of FSU or Eastern European origin.

The region's porous borders, government instability, and endemic corruption provide fertile ground for trafficking of WMD materials. This may be partly due to the heavy drug trafficking across the region, which provides a smuggling infrastructure useful for other illicit items. (NTI) Central Asia's extensive smuggling network arises from the two major smuggling paths that pass from Afghanistan through Eurasia to Western Europe – known as the "Northern route" and the "Balkan route." (NTI) Though an explicit connection between the drug trade and WMD material trafficking has not been made explicitly apparent by academia, two of the major consequences of this trade are the criminalization of state structures and the normalization of smuggling practices.

The facilitation of freer trade of goods across borders and the creation of a customs union and common economic space between Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia have also provided opportunities for criminal trafficking activities. The Deputy Head of Russia's border service, Yevgeny Inchin, has asserted that 43 percent of smuggled goods in Russia first enter through Kazakhstan. Border post removals between Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia have allowed smuggled and pirated goods flowing into Kazakhstan from China to disperse more easily throughout Europe via Russia.(NTI) The main WMD material trafficking routes in the region flow in three main ways: north-south from Russia through the Caucasus toward Iran; east-west from Central Asia through the Caucasus and out through Turkey after crossing the Black Sea; and west-east entering the Caucasus from Turkey and continuing on to Central Asia. Trafficking takes place in all of the countries of the Caspian region, but the critical points along the primary trafficking routes are Tajikistan, Turkmenistan (particularly Caspian ports), and Georgia. (NTI)



Russia has well-established and extensive strategic trade control legislation and regulation: Russian implementation of UNSCR 1540 ranks 'above average' in the NTI's Nuclear Materials Security Index. However, there are also ongoing implementation challenges stemming from a weak export control culture and underdeveloped internal compliance programs. While most states have a single body to license the export of both military and dual-use goods, Russia's export control system consists of two agencies: the Federal Service for Technical and Export Control (FSTEC) licenses the export of dual-use items, and the Federal Service on Military-Technical Cooperation (FSMTC) authorizes transfers of other defense items. Russia's FSTEC maintains six lists of dual-use items to be regulated. (NTI)

Several states in the greater Caspian region, including Kazakhstan, which also ranks 'above average' in implementation of UNSCR 1540, created control lists modeled on the lists of the European Union and Russia. Other states, such as Georgia, adopted the established control lists of multilateral export control regimes such as the Nuclear Supplier Group. Under the provisions of the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, member states should require IAEA Additional Protocol safeguards agreements as a condition for nuclear supply.

In 2012, Georgia and Armenia ratified the 2005 Amended CPPNM and passed nuclear security and safety-related regulations, enabling them to strengthen the physical protection of radioactive materials.

Azerbaijan reinforced its system to prevent illicit trafficking of nuclear materials by creating a national registry of all radioactive sources. Kazakhstan also made significant progress in physical security by upgrading protection at the former nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk, converting a research reactor to use of LEU fuels and relocating the equivalent of several weapons' worth of spent nuclear fuel to a more secure facility.

So there are contradictory forces in play on this issue across the Caspian region: on the one hand, all states are actively trying to improve regulations and security protocols to prevent the illicit trafficking of weapons and, especially, nuclear materials; on the other hand, weapons and materials are still being found on the black market and the dark net. Are there opportunities for the global community, the United States in particular, to intervene or 'positively pressure' said states to greater vigilance? According to Daniel Cohen the U.S. government should lead the global community in doing the following:
Reexamine the "reset" policy with Russia on Middle East issues. The U.S., in cooperation with Western European allies and the Arab League, should pressure Moscow to support U.N. Security Council sanctions on Damascus and Tehran.

The President should suspend the reset policy and direct the National Security Council to form a task force to conduct a bottom-up reassessment of U.S. policy toward Russia in view of Moscow's counter-policies toward Iran and Syria.
Pressure Middle Eastern states to stop their nationals from funding and training terrorists. The U.S. needs to apply significant pressure to Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Middle Eastern states, whose nationals are funding and training insurgents in the North Caucasus, bankrupt the North Caucasian insurgency, and prevent its integration into the worldwide Islamic extremist movement.

Intervene with the governments of Turkey and Italy to boost support of the Nabucco gas pipeline and gas interconnectors to Greece and Italy. Italy is a main stakeholder in the South Stream pipeline project. The U.S. should seek to postpone the deal on South Stream between Gazprom and Turkey's state-owned Botash. The prohibitively costly and economically ineffective deal will only increase EU and Turkish energy dependency on Russia and deny revenues to the pro-American states of the Southern Caucasus.
The global impact of transnational crime has risen to unprecedented levels. The direction of Russia's armament policy and regulation protocols will significantly affect not only Russia and its deeply rooted bilateral relations with countries in the Caspian region, but will also significantly engage U.S. interests and policies from Tangier to Tehran. Whether that engagement is positive or negative on the illicit transnational weapons market is something still remains to be seen. Hopefully, the individual geopolitical interests of all the parties involved will not conflict so stridently as to make the only true winners those who profit from death and destruction.

THE WEST SHOULD ENGAGE IN A COURSE CORRECTION STRATEGY WITH RUSSIA

ANTONY CLEMENT



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In the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation felt vulnerable because of the cooperation between the former Soviet states and Europe. The US has initiated expansion towards Eastern Europe, through its backyard NATO, by assuring security which has caused grave concern in Russia.

This expansion has finally tried to absorb Ukraine but this has been met with a crisis. This crisis has been burning like a flame of fire since the time of the Crimean referendum. Russia felt that the 'enemy would soon be at the gate' in the form of NATO in Ukraine, given that Ukraine shares a 1576km long border with Russia. Its response to this perceived threat has led to the deaths of more than 5400 lives, according to BBC. However, Russia failed to comprehend that the replacement of Ukraine President Viktor Yanukovych sin 2014 primarily occurred because of an increasing pro-EU outlook in the minds of the majority of Ukrainians.

Russia's strategic perception was that if Ukraine became part of NATO, the next logical step would be for it to join the EU, which could be a permanent threat to Russia.

THE SANCTIONS GAVE MORE ADVANTAGE TO THE CHINESE WHICH HAS GAINED $400 BILLION WORTH OF NATURAL GAS DEAL AGREEMENTS FROM RUSSIA SINCE THE SANCTIONS WERE IMPOSED

President Vladimir Putin's stance on Russia's compliance with international law on the annexation of Crimea did not help Russia but instead it led to sanctions from the US and EU.

However, there was no support for the sanctions from the largest emerging markets like China and India. India's stance with Russia on the Crimea issue is possibly a ratification of their long standing friendship. Further, the global economic power house China has not directly condemned the issue, because the Chinese are the largest beneficiary of the Ukrainian crisis. This demonstrates that present international system is moving towards a more contested topic. The rationale behind decisions in international relations are not so easy to ascertain. According to Bloomberg, the sanctions gave more advantage to the Chinese which has gained$400 billion worth of natural gas deal agreements from Russia since the sanctions were imposed. Controversially, India received Russian President Putin, who accompanied the Crimean leader Sergei Aksyonov to India.

Many commentators were emotionally surprised by India's diplomacy, since the Crimean issue is a hot topic. While the sanctions have closed the door to the flow of capital to Russia from the west, the traditional Asian channels remain open to Russia.

The present US led international system tries to isolate Russia but this is not a winnable strategic doctrine. Moreover, isolation is not a strategy but instead it is a trajectory for countries like China in this multipolar world to thrive from the isolated country. Multipolar demonstrates that sanctions have no genuine influence. When the sanctions are not working, it is true that the international system is in multipolar world disorder. The best example would be India's relations with Iran during the western sanctions on Iran's nuclear issue.

As with India's relations with Iran during the sanctions, the Chinese doing the same with Russiaon its sanctions. Moreover, the sanctions have pushed Russia closer to the Chinese and these new relations would pull the world order towards the East. This trajectory is dangerous for the future world order. With increasing instability in the Middle East, the major powers must reach a consensus on how to maintain peace and security in the region. Otherwise there would be a prolonged setback for western diplomacy in global governance.

If the west believes that the cold war was won by and for its own values, then the US and its allies have the considerable responsibility to give Russia the space which it deserves in the world.With regards to the Ukraine crisis, the debate as to the winners and losers cannot be answered now. The material consideration at present is the extent to which the setback will further damage the credibility of the US and the EU's diplomacy.



NATO's attempt to expand further into Eastern Europe is the root cause of the Ukraine crisis. If Russia had been invited to join NATO this crisis would have been avoided. Further, this would have been a chance for negotiation between the US, EU and Russia on the NATO framework of collective security. However,Russia absorbed Crimea to protect itself against NATO expansion towards the east. For Crimea, it has no meaningful remedy in the international system. Once Crimea acceded to Russia by the artificial memorandum, the debate over Crimea's remedies inevitably ended. There will be no real chance for any reunification of Crimea with the Ukraine in future. This will be a constant impediment in future US–Russia relations.

Without an answer to the Ukraine's membership of NATO and EU membership there will be no solution to the crisis. Russia is restless because of this unanswered question. For the time being the NATO expansion towards the east should be postponed. Meanwhile, Moscow can try to better understand Kiev's public opinion. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who is the leading power in the EU, can influence this decision, especially given that the UK is currently undergoing an identity crisis over its EU membership. As a chief communicator with Putin, Merkel has articulated that any consensus with the Russian leadership is a question of choice.The West should engage in a course correction strategy with Russia. This change in policy must occur given the present complex security environment. An opportunity was missed but it is now a good time for the west to retrieve a productive relationship with Russia.

The best channel for conducting this renewal would be through NATO. If this cooperation is actualized then it will affect China's potential accumulation of power in the coming years. Perhaps it is the right time to invite Russia to join NATO. However, can the west and Russia cooperate? If so, on what terms? These are big questions and the answers are not at all visible. The conflicting strategic approaches of the US and Russia is most evident in how they have flexed their muscles in the Middle East. Syria is moving towards devastation, as experienced by Iraq and Libya. If this continues, critics will contend that the US is a declining power because it can no longer fulfill its responsibility to maintain peace and security in the world. Finally, the pledge of Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko to apply for membership of the EU in 2020 is a future point of tension for Eurasia.