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COMBINING THE INCOMPATIBLE

I sometimes pity the Russian diplomats. Try as they might, they cannot combine the incompatible—and that is exactly the feat they are often asked to pull off. There are five fundamental contradictions in Russian foreign policy.

First, there is a conflict between the real (and recognized) need for Russia's economic modernization, and the policy of isolationism, which has been coming to the fore in recent months.

Second, there is an incompatibility between the shift in geographic priorities (the Eurasian Union; the Asia Pacific Region; and BRICS) and Russia's stubborn perception of the international system as a tug of war between two superpowers, with the United States still being viewed as the main adversary and also the main partner. And as for Asia Pacific—what about Asia Pacific? The APEC summit is already a thing of the past. The bridge to Russkiy Island has been built; the money has been spent; the leaders have come and gone—and everyone seems happy with the way things are. . . .

Third, there is an incongruity between Russia's grandstanding in the international arena, with its ambitious and unwieldy initiatives on a regional and global scale, and its utter inability to bring any of those initiatives (which all sound grand on paper) to any kind of fruition. A case in point—one of many—is the concept of the European Security Treaty. Each one of these failed initiatives only serves to devalue all the subsequent Russian proposals and declarations.

Writing in the *Izvestiya* newspaper in 2011, Vladimir Putin set out his foreign policy vision ahead of the presidential election in an article headlined ''New integration project for Eurasia—the future is being born today.''[1] He unveiled a new and very ambitious strategy for building the Eurasian Union. The article was probably the most comprehensive, thoughtful, and inspirational of his pre-election announcements. By proposing this new ''open project,'' he set out a vision of Russian foreign policy in the former Soviet space which focused on the future, as opposed to wallowing in the memories of lost Soviet grandeur.

It has now been more than a year since the article came out. What has been achieved? Precisely nothing. The visionary idea set out in *Izvestiya* now seems to have been little more than a throwaway election slogan. Twelve months have passed since the writing of the article, of which Putin has spent six in the president's office, with a clear mandate to implement his election promises. But progress in building solid integration mechanisms has been nonexistent. Worse, in the summer of 2012 Uzbekistan suspended its membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. That slap in the face has served the Kremlin as yet another reminder—if any were needed—that inspiring declarations and elegant concepts require hard day-to-day work to put them into practice. No one has bothered to do that work. The very best Russia can realistically hope for is a union of three, with Belarus and Kazakhstan. Such a union would actually be an achievement for Russia—but an achievement on a totally different scale from Moscow's lofty aspirations.

Fourth, there is a contradiction between the obvious need for advanced, non-nuclear, high-precision weapons to underpin Russia's defense capability, and Moscow's outmoded reliance on nuclear deterrence.

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And fifth, there is an incompatibility between the recognition (at the level of declarations) of the growing role of weapons in outer space and cyberspace, and the absence of any flexible diplomatic instruments to defend Russian interests in these two areas (please see articles on the outer space problem by Anatoly Antonov and Pavel Luzin, and analyses of the situation in cyberspace by Galiya Ibragimova, Oleg Demidov, and Maksim Simonenko in this issue of *Security Index*).

The list of fundamental contradictions that stand in the way of implementing the generally sound principles of Russian foreign policy is by no means complete. But even if we look at these five, one thing becomes clear: each of these contradictions is like a pair of horses galloping in opposite directions. Riding both of them at the same time is an impossible feat of acrobatics—especially since diplomats are no acrobats (or are they)?

LEAFING THROUGH THE OLD PAGES

FROM THE EDITOR: Today, when Russia has strong voice in the world arena, it can afford the luxury of speaking about integration . . . but quietly and softly. There is no need for exclamations— enough is enough. Moscow should progress slowly, without agitation, calmly and with self-confidence— this will be the reflection of Russia's dignity instead of boasting, playing muscles and rattling the saber.

President Putin has a few options in front of him. One of them is a road for Russia's national leader. He can perform these functions inside the power system or at some (let's say, pseudo) distance— exploiting the experience of Deng Xiaoping or Ayatollah Khamenei.

Another way ahead is the road of *redintegrator* of broken links in the post-Soviet area. This will be a much more difficult and thorny path in comparison with the domestic road to glory. In the last seven years Putin did nothing but rebuilding of a derelict house. Now it is seemingly time he started to make improvements inside this refurbished building. He could do well by reaping the fruit and not thinking about a new journey to a dangerous land, where he failed to win laurels in the recent past. But his authority of an architect provides him with a unique chance— to vitalize the entity called CIS, whose body is reaching the end of its days. This could be a new designer project for Putin for the coming years.

''Wanted: an Architect'',
***Security Index*, 2008, No 1, pp. 7–8.**

The time has come to choose our horses. Even more importantly, the time has come to decide whether we actually need to take part in this chaotic race.

And do we really need other peoples and nations to give us a wide berth as we gallop away? Because that is exactly the outcome being achieved so far.

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In this issue we offer our readers a view from the United States concerning the future of American nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament policy, and Russia's place in that policy. In a series of emails, two experts—a Democrat and a Republican—exchange their opinions on some of the key questions, such as: Is the idea of nuclear disarmament realistic, given the current international situation? What are the prospects for U.S. participation in the process of nuclear reductions? Is nuclear zero achievable? What is the perception of Russian initiatives and steps in the United States? The two experts are: Thomas Graham, a prominent American specialist on nuclear nonproliferation who took part in the negotiations of the START, SALT, NPT, INF, ABM, and other treaties; and Christopher Ford, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute who had previously served as special U.S. representative on nuclear nonproliferation; Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State responsible for arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament verification and compliance policy; and general counsel to the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

Dr Graham endorses President Obama's policies on nuclear weapons, and argues that his pronouncements on this subject are sincere. Dr Ford, on the other hand, is rather skeptical of these policies; he believes that, in all honesty, the United States and the rest of the world should abandon the disarmament rhetoric of recent years as unrealistic. In my view, the emails sent by Dr Ford to Dr Graham are a quintessence of the Republicans' position on the distant prospect of a nuclear zero, as well as some far more pressing issues, such as missile defense. As I was reading

these emails by Dr Ford, I could not help thinking that the Russian generals, who sometimes appear overcautious and over-suspicious, may have a point after all. If Washington chooses to adopt the stance proposed by Ford—be it in 2013 or four years down the line—then would it not be fair to say that the overcautious Russian policies on missile defense are actually laying the foundations for Russian security over the coming decades?

The future of the U.S. policy in the Middle East, including the fate of Afghanistan after the American pullout, is discussed in an interview with Zamir Kabulov and in an article by Vadim Kozyulin. And I have to say that after reading the interview with Mr Kabulov, I am not at all sure that the Americans are really going to leave Afghanistan.

Vladimir Orlov

NOTE

[1] Vladimir Putin, ''New Integration Project for Eurasia—The Future is Being Born Today,'' *Izvestiya*, October 3, 2011, < http://izvestia.ru/news/502761#ixzz29M0yX7pi>, last accessed December 6, 2012.

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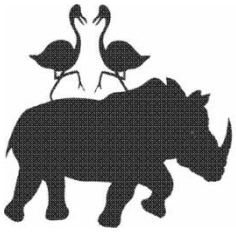

Zamir Kabulov

LEAVING AFGHANISTAN THE UNITED STATES WANT TO STRENGTHEN THEIR PRESENCE IN ASIA PACIFIC

What is the current disposition of forces in Afghanistan? Are there any prospects for a return to normalcy in the country in the wake of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) drawdown, and how will it affect the security situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia? Why is Washington in such a hurry to pull out large troop numbers, while at the same time retaining the military bases in the country? And what are Russia's key interests in the region?

We have put these questions to Zamir Kabulov, Director of the Second Asia Department at the Russian Foreign Ministry, Special Presidential Representative for Afghanistan, and the Russian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Afghanistan in 2004–2009.

SECURITY INDEX: What is the current political landscape of Afghanistan? What are the most influential forces within the country? What are the most powerful regional groupings? Is there any pan-Afghan political force capable of keeping the situation in the entire country under control with little or no foreign assistance?

KABULOV: The Afghan political landscape is actually very similar to the country's geographic landscape. There are mountains, valleys, gorges, and gullies—geographic as well as political ones. The Afghan society is split, but this multi-ethnic nation is united by its determination to keep Afghanistan as a united country. Most of the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and other ethnic groups see themselves as Afghans first. Every one of these groups has its own distinctive features, as well as grievances and reasons to be unhappy with the way things are in the country. On the whole, however, they want to live in a united country, with its long and rich heritage. That is why there is no clear answer to the question of which political groups are the most influential. The situation is very fluid.

But the immutable facts on the ground are these: there are four main ethnic-political groups in the country, i.e. the Pashtuns, the Tajiks, the Hazaras, and the Uzbeks, with their numerous smaller sub-groupings.

The Pashtuns are Afghanistan's largest ethnic group. It has several distinct centers of political influence. The two most powerful of them are the government of Afghanistan led by Hamid Karzai, an ethnic Pashtun, and the Taliban, whose members are almost all Pashtuns. These two centers have very different views of the current situation in the country and its political future. The Karzai group wants to build a secular country. The Taliban want a theocracy, or at least a country dominated by Islamists. This aspiration is expressed in slogans such as ''The Sharia law is our Constitution,'' etc. Both of these groups want to rule the country, so they are fighting each other. The only thing they agree on is that they both want to preserve the political dominance of Pashtuns in Afghanistan.

The second ethnic group is the Tajiks. It is also very large, but divided into numerous subgroups. They don't really see themselves as Tajiks. Their language is very close to the Iranian, Persian, and Tajik languages. The Afghan Tajiks are very numerous, but they lack a single political center.

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For a while they did have such a center, led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, the head of the Islamic Society of Afghanistan. Rabbani positioned himself as a religious-political leader rather than a politician. He worked closely with the late Ahmad Shah Massoud, a talented field commander who united many ethnic Tajiks. In previous years those various Tajik groupings didn't really see eye to eye; in the years of Jihad and the Soviet military presence they were affiliated with different political groups (let us recall, for example, the seven different Mujahidin parties). The Tajiks clearly want more political power in the country, especially because they used to be the closest political partners of the Pashtuns and were tightly integrated into the Afghan political system.

The Hazaras are a Mongoloid, Persian-language group. The vast majority of them are Shia Muslims. They don't have the same level of internal divisions and splits as the Tajiks, but they are not a closely knit group, either. During the Jihad period and for several years afterwards they were fairly united politically, but there were many internal rivalries as well. One of the main reasons for these divisions within the Hazaras ethnic group is that the Iranians have some influence on their fellow Shia Muslims in Afghanistan. This has caused a split within the Hazara community. Some of the Afghan Hazara leaders recognize the Iranian principle of the rule of the faqih; essentially they recognize that they are accountable to Khomeini, to put it bluntly. Others have refused to do so, arguing that even though they are Shia Muslims, they are also Afghans and must be led by the national interests of their own country rather than take orders from a foreign spiritual leader, albeit a very respected one. The Hazaras—as well as the Tajiks—are united in their desire to see the end of the traditional dominance of the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Ideally they want an equal role in the running of the country, commensurate to their numbers and economic weight.

The fourth Afghan ethnic group is the Uzbeks. Sometimes the country's Turkmen tribes are also held to be part of that group. The Uzbeks live mostly in the north and northwest of Afghanistan. They are also internally divided, mostly for historical reasons. First, numerous Uzbek groups and tribes have always lived in Afghanistan (in the Durrani Empire, which officially began its existence in 1747). After the Russian Empire conquered Central Asia there was no mass exodus of Uzbeks from that region to Afghanistan. There was a lot of cross-border trade between the Bukhara, Kokand, and Khorezm khanates. The Uzbeks were heavily involved in that trade, they were a nomadic people, but they mostly kept to the area east of the Amudarya river. After the Soviets crushed the local rebels (in the early 1930s) many Uzbeks fled from Central Asia to Afghanistan, where they settled in several large pockets. The largest group of Uzbeks made their new home in and around the Jowzjan province. An influential group of merchants went to Mazar-i-Sharif, a large trading hub. Others went the Takhar and Kunduz provinces, where they formed Uzbek enclaves. During the anti-Taliban resistance (Abdul Rashid) Dostum was a widely respected, if not undisputed leader. He had a pretty well organized fighting force, the former 53rd Infantry Division, which the Soviet Union helped to form. It was better armed, organized and trained compared with the forces of the other Uzbek groups. Those groups did not have proper fighting units, they had gangs. Also, the Uzbeks and their field commanders were members of different Mujahidin political parties.

In addition to the four big ethnic groups, there are several others which aren't big enough to be independent political players. They merely align themselves with one of the big four groups, depending on the situation.

I would also like to mention a relatively new phenomenon: all these groups usually have two regional leaders, three at the very most. The most powerful and influential of these regional leaders is Atta Mohammad Nur, the governor of Balkh Province. He aspires to be—and indeed is, to a certain extent—the leader of Afghanistan's northeastern region, which consists of five provinces, including Balkh. The second such regional leader, less powerful but still very influential, is Gul Agha Sherzai, the governor of Nangarhar Province, the capital of which is Jalalabad. The third is the current energy minister, Mohammad Ismail Khan—the very same Capt. Ismail who was one of the first to lead an uprising against Soviet troops in Afghanistan. He killed many Soviet soldiers, by the way. He was a capable field commander, and was formerly a member of the Islamic Society of Afghanistan. He spends most of his time in Kabul, serving as a government minister. Previously he was the governor of Herat (from which post he was removed lest he become too powerful).

To summarize, the current politics of Afghanistan is a hodgepodge. There is no single political force powerful enough to resolve all the problems. After more than 30 years of wars, revolutions, and a general breakdown of law and order the Afghan society has become very weak. The old structural ties have frayed, the new ones are still crystallizing, and it will take some time before

they can play any significant role. These new ties do exist, of course, but they have an ad hoc nature. When some regional problem emerges, the regional ethnic powers start to act. But when a serious problem emerges which concerns the whole nation—well, I cannot say these forces are completely passive, but neither do they play any visible role. Such fragmentation has in some sense helped Karzai, who was installed by the Americans, with the UN Security Council's consent. It was especially useful in the early years; it essentially helped the government to stay afloat. Through its political and other kinds of maneuvering the government has managed to keep Afghanistan as a single country. Unfortunately, after 11 years of American presence the country still does not have an effectively functioning government system. There is still a lot of work to be done to correct numerous mistakes and errors. Some of them are already being corrected, but this will take a lot of time, money, and other resources.

SECURITY INDEX: Is the role of the central government likely to weaken following the ISAF drawdown?

KABULOV: It definitely is. Also, the Americans will need to go to the Security Council once again to get a new mandate. The contingents serving as part of the ISAF, which has a Security Council mandate, are supposed to cease their existence. We are hearing our partners say this, but so far nobody has tabled a new resolution. The issue is being discussed in the media and in the expert community, but there has been no serious (official) discussion, as the UN Charter requires.

The United States came first; they were followed by their loyal allies, with their own troops. That's how the ISAF format emerged. They asked for a UN Security Council mandate, and we supported that request based on the notion that this is a question of war and peace, a question of regional and international security, and the UN Security Council must control any foreign troops deployed in a third country. Russia and the other Security Council members (not just the P5) gave the mandate. We expect that because this entity is now leaving Afghanistan (having entered the country with the Security Council permission), it should report to the Security Council about its achievements or lack thereof. It should receive a proper assessment before leaving. Why? The answer seems obvious to me: the tasks set all those years ago have not been achieved. Well, they can leave without first securing the Security Council go-ahead (just as they entered the country). But this is a very important issue of principle for the world order. It is important because in the future, when any of our Security Council partners have the temptation to send their troops somewhere else, we will say to them: we have already had a similar situation in the past, we gave our consent out of the very best intentions, but look what happened in the end! So let us not hurry, let us develop a set of rules, principles and criteria. This is very important for the future.

So, by early October 2012 the 33,000 extra troops which Obama sent to Afghanistan have to be pulled out. Another 68,000 or so U.S. troops will remain in the country until the end of 2014. The Americans say all combat units will be pulled out; the remaining troops will only train the Afghan security forces. To that end the Americans will keep five to seven training bases. But these bases are, in fact, not just for training. They are proper military bases, they are there as part of a clear regional agenda, and we understand that very well. The Americans are trying to dodge the question, they just keep repeating their usual mantra: ''no, no, we don't want any permanent bases, we pose no threat, these are merely training facilities.'' But let us imagine a situation where there are no combat units left. The Taliban remains undefeated. It is 100,000-strong. Over the past 10 years it has turned into a real military-political force. So how will the remaining training units defend themselves at those bases, with only 20,000 or 30,000 soldiers? Obviously, they will be besieged, or even destroyed. So we are trying to obtain a direct answer to a direct question. The Americans do not have a clear strategy in Afghanistan, and, frankly speaking, it is hard to imagine any such strategy emerging. A strategy is a vision of the process for the next decade or even several decades. The American strategy is limited to the remaining term of office of the serving president. As soon as the new president arrives in the White House, all the existing plans are re-jigged. This is gyration, not strategy. But the overall goal seems clear. It was announced by George W. Bush: for the first time in NATO's history the United States has brought the alliance to the part of the world we are talking about. We understand very well that, ideally, the Americans would like to keep those bases as their powerful leverage in the region. Also, in the event of a large regional conflict those bases can be used to support a military effort in the entire region.

The Americans have a clear reason for trying to extricate themselves from Afghan as soon as possible. They are shifting all their resources to the Asia Pacific theatre, where they will act as a

counterbalance to China. That is why in Afghanistan they are now shifting the security responsibility onto the Afghan army and police, and doing so in such a hurried, rushed, and haphazard manner. The security handover has already been completed on 50 percent of the Afghan territory; the figure is to rise to 75 percent before the 2012 year's end, and to 100 percent by mid-2013.

SECURITY INDEX: Has sufficient ground been laid for such a handover?

KABULOV: No. Even as we speak, many of the territories handed over to the Afghan forces are no longer controlled by the Afghan government (although this is not being admitted at the Republican or Democratic Party congresses). Some of these territories are now in the hands of the Taliban; others are being ruled by tribal chieftains. These chieftains have no fixed political affiliation; one day they can work with the Taliban, the next day they can work with the government. There are also territories being run by bandits and drug traffickers.

I am not trying to say that the entire 75 percent of the territory transferred under Afghan control is being lost. But some fairly important, strategically significant areas are. They include areas along major roads, such as the Kabul–Kandahar, Kandahar–heart, and Jalalabad–Kabul highways, and they are very important for the continued stability and resilience of the regime. This is clearly a worrying development, which could have very serious consequences.

SECURITY INDEX: Is there an understanding among the Afghans that Afghanistan is a single country, or do they exist as separate regional groups? Do members of the various tribes and regional groupings think of themselves as Afghan citizens?

KABULOV: As I have already said, this single country does exist in the minds of the Afghans, in some kind of nostalgic *parallel* world. But the reality is very different. The country consists of separate regions; it is not a united powerful nation. The connection between the center and the provinces is tenuous. It holds only so long as the central government keeps the money flowing to these provinces, and maintains some military strength. Unfortunately, I can't say at the moment that there are any strong links between the provinces and the center.

SECURITY INDEX: How likely is the Northern Alliance to be resurrected in some shape or form?

KABULOV: It is not unlikely. If the Pashtuns led by Karzai unite with the rest of the Pashtuns, i.e. those still not involved in the running of the country, the other ethnic groups may see that as a threat. If that happens, the Northern Alliance, which has ceased to exist for the time being, may well rise again under the leadership of the regional strongmen. Such a scenario would lead to a civil war. Unfortunately, it cannot be completely ruled out.

SECURITY INDEX: Do you believe that the Afghan army and police will be able to provide security after the ISAF drawdown in 2014? Does Moscow believe that it is necessary to keep some foreign military presence in Afghanistan after 2014?

KABULOV: The Americans themselves admit that of the 300,000-strong Afghan forces, no more than 10 percent are combat-ready, i.e. capable of conducting independent operations and of maintaining security on their territory. The Afghan army and police are better armed than the Taliban, there is no doubt about it. Nevertheless, they are still losing this war.

One of the reasons for that, I think, is the lack of motivation. Many if not most Afghan officers (let alone ordinary soldiers) do not believe that they are defending their country's interests. They think of themselves as instruments of American strategies. Such an army can never be a good fighting force because it is not ready to risk their lives and die, if need be, to achieve the objectives set before it.

Another strength of the Taliban (and the government's weakness) is that the Taliban view NATO as an occupying force and a threat to Islam. That view is shared by many in the Afghan army and

police. A case in point is the increasingly frequent shootings of American and NATO personnel by rogue Afghan soldiers and police. The Americans have put themselves in a silly situation by first declaring that only about 10 percent of these incidents (of which there has been 30–32 this year, with about 50 people killed) were committed by the Taliban or their agents. Are we to understand, then, that the remaining 90 percent are not even Taliban, but they are still killing Americans? The very same people who were armed, trained, and paid by the Americans are now killing American soldiers? Look what you have brought this country to, I want to say to the Americans. Well, they later said than a further 15 percent of the cases were attacks by people who are not Taliban but are affiliated with the Taliban. So a quarter of these incidents can be blamed on the Taliban. That figure is still an indictment. The attacks have not yet become a truly common occurrence, and the Americans are now hurriedly trying to screen the people they have recruited—but it's already too late.

They have built a 300,000-strong army, but the level of desertion is extremely high at 30 percent. This is another indication that the whole venture has utterly failed. On top of the 30 percent figure there is another 15–20 percent who are absent depending on the season, i.e. the so-called temporary deserters. Many of the ordinary soldiers are from the rural areas. They have been issued with weapons and kit, they have left their families—but when the time comes to bring the harvest in they need to go back to their villages. If they are allowed a few weeks' leave, well and good. If not, they just disappear anyway, and then return a couple of months later (nothing is done very quickly in Afghanistan). The Afghan army is very different from what a proper army is supposed to look like. How an army like that will fight is anyone's guess.

Most Afghans dislike the Taliban, but they also remember that in some respects life was better under the Taliban. For example, a Pashtun from some small village knows that if he does not fight the Taliban, if he just minds his own business, the Taliban will leave him alone and will not cause any trouble. They will force him to pray and abide by stringent [Islamic] rules, but he does not see that as something very onerous. The ethnic minorities, on the other hand, i.e. the non-Pashtuns, really do have a good reason to fear for their future.

Another weakness of the Afghan army is that it is very lopsided in terms of its ethnic composition. In previous years Pashtuns traditionally made up about 90 percent of the Afghan officer corps. Now they are in a minority. The non-Pashtun officers find it more difficult to control their units stationed in the Pashtun-dominated areas. These officers are being seen as aliens. If it ever comes to the break-up of the country, all these armed units will leave for their homes in northern and central Afghanistan and make their stand there. A civil war will break out. Another danger is that if the country collapses, these 300,000 people (in the Afghan security forces) will be left unemployed and unpaid. They may well end up becoming bandits.

SECURITY INDEX: How capable is the Afghan army? Does it have any armor, artillery, and aircraft?

KABULOV: One cannot compare the present Afghan army with the army the country had built with Soviet assistance. In the early 1980s the Afghan army was the strongest in the region—and I mean not only in terms of firepower, but structurally as well. The present Afghan army has some armor, but most of it is old Soviet-made hardware. In 2004–2005 Russia supplied large amounts of non-lethal weapons, including spare parts, communication equipment, etc. The Afghan army has been reformatted to comply with NATO standards, which require a certain level of equipment. These standards, however, are not being met. The situation in the Afghan air force is even worse. In theory, the country has an air corps, but it does not have a single combat aircraft. Most of the existing Mi-17 helicopters are from Eastern Europe; some were bought from Russia with American money. The Afghans don't have any Mi-35 helicopters, but they do have a few Mi-24s.

In any event, the Americans don't have any plans to build a capable Afghan air force—and without an air force no army can be truly capable.

SECURITY INDEX: But that must be part of some larger strategy?

KABULOV: That is correct. But the Americans are saying that they are pulling out of Afghanistan, and that they are leaving behind a capable Afghan army. How is that army supposed to fight when

even the American ground troops, which are far better equipped than the Afghan forces, cannot fight without air cover? How can the Afghan forces achieve the same objectives?

In guerrilla warfare, victory cannot be achieved by using only regular troops. It also takes a lot of relevant experience and expertise, and that is yet another problem. The Americans have belatedly realized this. They are now training special task forces in an effort to create an Afghan *spetsnaz*. But it takes decades, it takes a lot of work in many areas, including morale and discipline. Well, something will be done in the end to address this problem, but it may be too late.

SECURITY INDEX: What will be the risks and security implications of the foreign troop pullout from Afghanistan for the Central Asian states?

KABULOV: The risks are quite clear. An unstable Afghanistan, with Islamists fighting on its territory, inevitably raises the risks in Central Asia, especially Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The less economically developed and socially stable the country, the higher the risks are. We are worried by the general situation in Afghanistan, as well as by the large concentration of militants and Islamists in the north and especially the northeast of the country. Over the past 3–4 years the number of armed rebels there has increased from about a thousand to 7,000–8,000. Some of them have moved to Afghanistan from their camps in Pakistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is also very active there. We are not yet seeing any mass infiltration of rebels to Tajik territory, but the process is well under way. They are crossing into Tajikistan in small groups to foment unrest. For example, these rebels were involved in recent fighting in the Gorno-Badakhshansky autonomous region of Tajikistan. They are also coming to other parts of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. For now they are not numerous enough to be a formidable power that can threaten the stability of the regimes in those countries. But they can act as a catalyst of various crises. The situation in these republics is like a tinderbox—one spark can be enough to set off a conflagration. That is exactly how it happened in Andijan, and how it is happening in Fergana Valley and elsewhere.

The very fact that the Americans have been forced to declare victory and are packing their bags is seen by the pro-opposition Tajiks, Uzbeks, and others as a victory won by their fellow Islamists in Afghanistan over the infidels. They start thinking, ''if they can do it, we can do it, too.'' That is the real danger—radical Islamist ideology is becoming more attractive to fellow Muslims in Central Asia. This is not a problem likely to blow up tomorrow, it's not yet imminent—but we need to prepare ourselves for the possibility of regional problems caused by radical Islamist ideology, perhaps even a region-wide conflict.

SECURITY INDEX: Some believe that the CSTO is not making sufficient preparations for such a contingency. What can the organization really do to help resolve the Afghan problem? And what are the difficulties it is facing?

KABULOV: The CSTO is a military alliance, which has its own charter and rules, as well as some limitations and restrictions imposed by these rules. There are things which the CSTO members have agreed to, such as joint exercises, training, and preparations. Russia is arming them; CSTO members can buy Russian arms and military supplies at discounted prices, etc. But as for joint defense, the problem is not just that some members don't want to engage in such military cooperation. There are also some restrictions in the actual charter, which sets out the decision-making process. This is a young organization; it is still in the early phases of its existence. It is very difficult to compare it to NATO, which has much higher standards of military cooperation.

SECURITY INDEX: The cross-border projects that can be implemented in Afghanistan—such as power lines, pipelines, and transport hubs—are often seen as a way of engaging Afghanistan in regional cooperation. Do you think that the implementation of such projects should come after the consolidation of the country, or vice versa?

KABULOV: Unfortunately, all these things must happen simultaneously. When the United States was ramping up its troop numbers in Afghanistan we kept saying that they cannot win the war unless they pay attention to the country's economy. At first they brushed it aside, but eventually

they were forced to turn to the experience of the Soviet Union (which did try to improve the Afghan economy). At that point it was already too late. After the Taliban crumbled, the entire north of Afghanistan was calm. There were only small local gangs there, whose members had to resort to crime so as to be able to feed their families. Had the Americans created even basic conditions for the development of small local projects, these projects would have absorbed large numbers of the local population, including men of fighting age. But they didn't do it, and correcting that strategic mistake is very difficult at this point.

When I was the Russian ambassador to Afghanistan, President Karzai liked to reminisce about Soviet aid. I was obliged to explain that, to begin with, the Soviet Union no longer exists. And second, if one travels 100km from Moscow, one can find Russian villages where people are living in no better conditions than in Afghanistan. Once we have realized our potential and become richer, we will discuss help to the Afghan farmers. For now, however, Russia simply cannot afford such help.

For example, the power transmission line project is an interesting one, but Russia alone cannot pull it off. Let the Americans and the Japanese join in—then it will become feasible. During a visit to Moscow by Hamid Karzai the two sides discussed the CASA-1000 project, which involves producing electricity in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and then supplying it to Afghanistan and on to Pakistan. Naturally, Afghanistan will not be receiving electricity free of charge, but it will be able to make some money on transit to Pakistan. Russia was ready to invest in this project on the condition that its own INTER RAO UES become the operator of the power line, and that other countries also join the project. Several years on, nothing has been done. The main problem is building the power plants in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. There is not enough money for that, and the two countries also expect Russia to supply the necessary funds.

Are there risks involved? Of course there are. Had there been no risks, Western companies would have already been there—they are nimbler than Russia's own. China is another competitor. It is quite possible that at some point in the future the region's market will become rather crowded.

We want to maintain the ties established in Soviet times, but we are not coping. The Chinese, meanwhile, are working very energetically. This is competition. What should Russia do in this situation? Logic dictates that Russia should enter with a lot of investment to improve the Central Asian economy, to make our investments more attractive. But in order to invest in Central Asia we must cut investment programs here in Russia. No sensible manager will agree to that in the current circumstances. We will help our neighbors develop their economy, but not to our own detriment. We still have the whole of Siberia to develop. There are many interesting ideas, but we cannot afford to implement them because our resources are very limited. And in those cases where we do invest, we must at least receive some political dividends, which will lead on to economic profit. That is the only sensible approach to justify Russian participation in those cross-border projects in Central Asia which include Afghanistan. We should act pragmatically and calmly. Most importantly, we should not throw money around.

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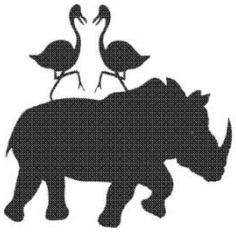

Vadim Lukov

BRICS ECONOMIES: IN SEARCH OF A BASIS FOR MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

As the world continues to struggle with the aftermath of the 2008–2009 economic crisis it becomes increasingly reliant on traditional and new formats of economic policy coordination and cooperative approaches to reforming the international system. What is the role of such formats as the G8, the G20, and BRICS? What are the Russian interests in each of these formats? And which one looks the more promising?

We have put these questions to Amb. Vadim Lukov, Deputy Representative of the President of Russia in the G8, the Russian Foreign Affairs Ministry Coordinator for G20 and BRICS Affairs.[1]

SECURITY INDEX: What is your assessment of the G20 group's activities and prospects?

LUKOV: The G20 accounts for about 85 percent of global GDP and 75 percent of global population. These figures alone make the world's governments, diplomatic services, and the public in general pay particular attention to that group. There have never been any clear criteria for gaining membership of the G20. When it was hastily set up in 1998–1999 after the Asian crisis, there was no careful weighing of the economic role of each individual country on the global stage or in its particular region. That is why from time to time questions are being asked as to whether that or another country really belongs in the G20 club. On the other hand, a number of countries are hoping to gain membership; there is even something of a queue at the club's door.

In January 2010 it was decided to impose a moratorium on discussing candidates for membership. That is because there is no consensus in the G20 as to who the potential candidates are. During the first decade of its existence the group was a discussion club for the member states' finance ministers. Alas, even though the ministers were proposing some very sound and competent ideas, they were not heeded by the member states. Take, for example, a statement made by the G20 finance ministers in December 1999—it reads like a quote from the recent G20 meeting in Cannes, or from yesterday's article in the Moscow Journal. Unfortunately, owing to the financial and economic hubris of those who determined the future of the global financial architecture, those reasonable proposals were ignored. The IMF has failed to establish any viable crisis prediction mechanisms or to accumulate sufficient resources to counter these crises on a global scale. No anti-crisis mechanisms were created; as a result we had a tragic collapse of the global economy in 2008–2009.

But let is give credit where credit is due: the G20 has tried to learn lessons from that sad story. It quickly established a new structure led by the heads of state rather than finance ministers. This new body has a comprehensive operational structure which includes working groups on reforming the monetary and financial system and the energy sector, achieving greater stability in the supplies of raw materials, fighting corruption, and achieving global development goals. The core G20 mechanism is the Sherpa meetings. The G20 acts on the basis of a general plan proposed by the IMF. Under the projections made in that plan, if the G20 takes coordinated action to kick-start global economic growth, over the next five years this will result in the creation of 30 million jobs, an

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increase of 2.5 percentage points in GDP growth, and a reduction in the number of people living below the poverty line by 33 million.

Of course, these figures must be taken with a pinch of salt. Global economic growth has visibly slowed since 2010, and there is less coordination within the G20 group. The main reason for this is that the developed economies have found themselves between a strategic rock and a hard place. On the one hand, there is a need for consolidation—but that consolidation leads to lower government spending. On the other, the economies must grow faster, but that cannot be achieved without increasing the size of the market. The current state of the Eurozone is a classic example of that dangerous situation. We are of course very glad that the European Central Bank and the European Financial Stability Fund have managed to allocate over €150 billion to save Greece from defaulting on its debts. But on the other hand, the Eurozone is now growing at just 0.5 percent. That is clearly not fast enough to resolve the strategic problem, which is reducing sovereign debt.

SECURITY INDEX: Do Russia and the BRICS nations have an agenda to address this problem via the G20?

LUKOV: A key function of the G20 group is to serve as an instrument of mutual economic learning, an instrument of harmonization of the different schools of economics. Of course, the first steps made by the G20 to produce a common economic strategy were marked by serious differences and heated debates. But the ongoing crisis has helped it quickly to overcome the initial culture shock. As a result the G20 has achieved the Pittsburgh Agreement on sustainable and balanced growth. Right now this function is very important because a debate still flares up within the group from time to time about the ways of reducing the global imbalances which led to the 2008–2009 crisis, and which have yet to be eliminated.

The second key function of the G20 is even more fundamental, in my view. The West is facing the prospect of a deep transformation of its economic and social policies. That requires a safety net to ease the transition. Solidarity between the G20 states, political as well and economic solidarity, can help to prevent the outbreak of new crises, which will hit the Eurozone the hardest no matter where they come from. Unfortunately, the Eurozone is currently the weakest link in the global economy. That is why the G20 is a very important segment. That is also why Russia insists that the G20 should focus, first and foremost, on its key objective, which is resolving financial and economic issues. We are skeptical about the proposals to expand the remit of the G20 into new areas, such as tourism, foreign policy, or the environment. There are other forums to address those particular issues, and they have the necessary mandate from the national governments to seek practical solutions.

Russia and the rest of the BRICS members are proposing that the following measures be adopted in the G20 format: implement a plan of action or a framework strategy for achieving sustainable economic growth; ensure strict implementation of the Cannes Plan by every G20 member; bolster the IMF's resources to counter possible new shocks to the global economy.

It must be taken into account that the nature of the global economic cycle has changed owing to the profound changes in the investment cycle in the developed economies. The crisis is a major obstacle to a profound transformation of the economic and social models of the developed countries. Such a transformation is long overdue.

To come back to the question of the pressing tasks facing the G20, Russia and the other BRICS nations are ready significantly to increase the resources at the disposal of the IMF—but on several conditions. First, our voluntary contribution must be accompanied by a review of the IMF quotas. The principle of ''the bigger the contribution, the more votes'' must be observed. Second, the IMF and the BRICS countries must receive from the ECB and the EF some clear evidence that these two bodies have done everything they can, using their own resources, to eliminate the causes of the sovereign debt crisis. On the whole, such a position is accepted by the IMF leadership and by our EU partners. We are somewhat concerned, however, that our European partners are not showing the required flexibility at the talks on reviewing the IMF quotas; they are failing properly to take into account the new economic realities.

The Russian position is based on the tasks that must be resolved by the G20. The task I have just outlined can be defined as crisis management. Another task facing the G20 is to promote

a long-term reform of the global financial and economic system. The group has already done quite a lot in this area. It has implemented a reform of the World Bank quotas. Reform and review of the IMF quotas is also under way. The new Basel III banking regulatory standards have been agreed, with more stringent reserve capital requirements.

But it is too early to say that the financial reform has been completed. Russia and its BRICS partners believe that the reform should continue. Unfortunately, not everyone at the G20 agrees. I hope, however, that through patient dialogue we will be able to persuade our partners that continuing the reform would be in our common interests. Continuation of the reform will be one of the main priorities of the upcoming Russian presidency at the G20.

SECURITY INDEX: Let us move on to the subject of the G8 and the relationship between the G8 and the G20. What are the areas in which the remits of the two organizations overlap? And what is the outlook for the G8, amid the growing importance of the G20?

LUKOV: The G8, the successor of the G7, has in some ways been upstaged by the G20. Nevertheless, it has retained its importance as an element of global governance. It has acquired a very extensive system of working organs in areas which range from international security to infant mortality.

Some politicians and analysts say the G8 will gradually decline and disappear. I do not think that such an outcome is predetermined. If the G8 can find an optimum niche for itself in the new system of global governance which is now being formed (the G20, BRICS, and several regional bodies) it will continue to play a useful and indispensible role.

Other specialists, whom I would describe as hyper-optimists, believe that the G8 will become the nucleus of the G20. I do not share such optimism because such a body would merely reproduce, in a somewhat more palatable shape, the old mono-centric economic system. Attempts at creating such a system would cause a split and a confrontation within the G20, which must be avoided at all costs, for reasons which I have already outlined.

There is a vigorous debate going on within the G8 itself about the group's current and future role. The participants are trying to identify the best way forward. As I have already said, one of the proposals is to turn the G8 into the headquarters of the G20. But that is unrealistic, for economic as well as political reasons. The rest of the G20 will never accept such an approach.

Another proposal is to arrange a division of labor between the G20 and the G8. Under that proposal, the G20 should deal primarily with financial and economic issues, i.e. crisis prevention and settlement, as well as promote the reform of the financial architecture. The G8, meanwhile, should discuss political problems and security issues, as well as facilitate action by the G20 and the broader international community in the social and humanitarian sphere—for example, in fostering international development.

There is also a third model, which is based on cooperation between the G7 and BRICS in the G20 framework. There has already been a precedent, a successful precedent of such cooperation. Thanks to direct talks between the finance ministers of the G7 and BRICS in October 2010 the leaders managed to reach an agreement on the first phase of reforming the IMF. But I don't think we need a repetition of such experiments, whereby the G7 and BRICS negotiate while the rest of the countries merely observe the proceedings. Such a repetition risks alienating from the G20 many of the countries—primarily the developing countries—which currently participate in that group. Besides, there is a risk of the G20 losing its legitimacy for the rest of the world. That is actually a serious problem at this moment. The G20 is being criticized as an unelected elitist club which is trying to foist its decisions on the rest of the world. That is why such a mode of cooperation would be justified only in cases where all the G20 members recognize that achieving a solution to some urgent problem at a plenary session, with all the representatives taking part, would not be possible. Such situations require a smaller group to take the initiative, draft a solution, and propose it to the rest of the members. But that is the only kind of situation where such an approach would be acceptable—otherwise the G20 could just fall apart.

SECURITY INDEX: What are the current dynamics within BRICS? Are there some new items on the agenda?

LUKOV: BRICS accounts for a quarter of global GDP, by purchasing power parity. It also accounts for 44.5 percent of the world's population and 30 percent of the planet's land mass. Over the past decade the BRICS economies have been generating half of the global GDP growth. The BRICS economies themselves have grown by 420 percent over the same period, compared with a 67-percent growth in the G7 countries. This year BRICS will generate an estimated 56 percent of global GDP growth. All of that makes BRICS the planet's rising star.

Some might say that the BRICS countries are too far apart from each other geographically, and they don't agree between themselves on many things. But in an era of economic globalization the question of distances becomes a minor consideration. What's really important is economic and financial muscle. Let us look at the situation in a broader context: the BRICS nations have a lot more shared interests than conflicts. These shared interests fall into four broad categories.

First, all the BRICS countries have an interest in a profound reform of the world's financial and economic architecture. In fact, that is why BRICS was born.

Second, we all want stronger international law as an alternative to unilateral use of force in international relations; we want to strengthen the central role played by the United Nations.

Third, our countries are facing the challenge of modernization in all areas, including the economy, the social sphere, and environmental policy.

Fourth, our economies are mutually complementary, which gives us a good basis for developing multilateral economic cooperation.

In November 2010 I spoke on the subject of BRICS at the European parliament; it was a workshop, not a plenary session. After my remarks one British MEP asked me with a fair degree of sarcasm, ''So BRICS is more of a state of mind?'' I had to tell the respected parliamentarian, ''You know, there are no waiting lists for admission to a state of mind.'' A month after that exchange South Africa joined BRICS.

BRICS currently has as many as 14 different formats of cooperation, which include meetings at the level of heads of state, national security advisers, foreign ministers, and finance, trade, and economics ministers. This mechanism is becoming especially important following Russia's accession to the WTO. Now all five BRICS members can coordinate their positions during the Doha round of talks.

One important format of cooperation is the meetings of the BRICS ministers of agriculture. We have adopted a six-year program of cooperation in such areas as developing new agricultural technologies to ameliorate the effects of climate change; strengthening our positions on the global market; and encouraging investment in agriculture. Another available mechanism is the meetings focusing on energy security and energy efficiency. There will soon be another forum on urbanization, because the BRICS nations have some of the most densely populated cities in the world.

SECURITY INDEX: Would you, please, comment on the outcomes of the BRICS summit held in Delhi in March 2012.

LUKOV: First, the leaders of the BRICS nations have reiterated their shared position on reforming the international monetary and financial system: these reforms should continue, with a special emphasis on reforming the IMF.

Second, the BRICS countries have agreed a coordinated approach to international trade. Such coordination will now become even more effective because all five BRICS nations are members of the WTO.

Third, we have achieved practical coordination of our approaches. The essence of our approach is that there is no point debating new G20 action plans for extricating the world economy from its current near-crisis state. We should focus instead on implementing the plans we have already agreed, such as the Cannes plan of action. That plan should not end up the same way as the decisions made in 2010 in Toronto have—I mean the decision on fiscal consolidation, which the parties have failed to implement.

In foreign politics, the BRICS nations have adopted a coordinated approach on the Syrian crisis. This is very important, and this is well known, we are not making any drama or any secret out of it. Everyone is well aware of the differences which existed between us in November 2011–February 2012 on the issue of Syria. We have also achieved a coordinated approach on Iran. We have agreed to work together on defusing tensions and preventing any artificial escalation of these tensions over Iran.

The summit has adopted a plan of action. It is broader than any of the previous plans, which is only logical for a growing organization such as BRICS. Let me highlight some of the key decisions: the summit has approved the Russian proposal to begin drafting a development strategy; the summit has approved the Indian and Russian proposal to begin dialogue on energy problems; the summit has approved the Indian proposal to launch a forum on urbanization problems; the summit has approved the South African proposal to begin studying the problems facing densely populated countries.[2]

BRICS is open to new members and to cooperation on the basis of strategic partnership. This is not a closed club. In 2011, when Greece was in the middle of mass protests against the government's budgetary and social polities and against the decisions made in Brussels, our television showed these protests. I noticed one short but telling episode: the Russia Today TV channel showed one of the demonstrators shouting, ''Greece should quit the EU and join BRICS.'' People have started to notice BRICS, because BRICS is the next big thing.

SECURITY INDEX: Would you agree with those who say that the BRICS nations are now creating new conditions for the global financial market? I am talking about the dollar being replaced as the global reserve currency. Russia and China made a proposal to that effect back in 2009. What are the positive and negative trends in this area?

LUKOV: To begin with, BRICS is not a headquarters of monetary or financial revolutionaries. Our goal is not to dismantle the Bretton Woods system, or to undermine the current role of the euro, the dollar, the yen, or other currencies. Our objective is to bring the Bretton Woods system, and the basket of currencies now being used as the main global reserve currencies, more in line with the current economic and financial realities. In particular, we believe that the role being played in the international monetary and financial system by the dollar requires a serious revision. The over-inflated role of that currency has a negative impact on the United States itself and on the rest of the world. The answer we propose has absolutely nothing to do with declaring a war on the dollar. Our answer is a gradual and economically rational increase in the role played by our own currencies in order to facilitate mutual trade and to increase the credit resources available to our economies. That is why at the Delhi summit the BRICS nations' development banks signed an agreement on extending cross-country credit in local currencies, and on mutual guarantees for credit in local currencies. As for increasing the role of our currencies in the IMF basket, the IMF special drawing rights basket, the situation here is more complicated. We have to recognize that, for now, none of the BRICS national currencies can be a part of that basket, for a variety of reasons. But I am sure that we will gradually achieve a situation whereby the yuan, the rouble, the rupee, the real, and the rand will all be part of that basket. In the global economic system, the BRICS motto is peace, friendship, and pluralism.

NOTES

[1] The text of the interview is based on remarks by Vadim Lukov at the Trialogue Club International meeting held by PIR Center on April 11, 2012 in Moscow.

[2] The details of the South African proposal to begin studying the problems facing densely populated countries can be found on the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry, http://www.mid.ru

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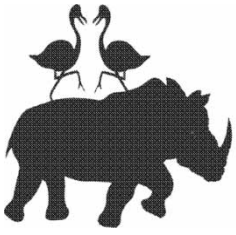

Dmitry Feoktistov

IRAN, *THE BLACK LIST* AND RUSSIA'S UPCOMING FATF PRESIDENCY

Recent events—including the investigation of* HSBC*'s links to the financing of terrorism, the discovery that* Standard Chartered *concealed numerous transactions with the Iranian government in circumvention of economic sanctions, etc.—indicate that the situation with financial crime is becoming very serious. This affects the international security situation, since one of the most dangerous uses illegal financial flows are being put to is* WMD *proliferation and terrorism.

What are Russia's priorities in countering money laundering? What is the state of Russia's cooperation with the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) and FATF-style regional bodies (FSRBs)? And what will the Russian priorities be when the country assumes the rotating FATF presidency?

We have put these questions to Dmitry Feoktistov, Deputy Director of the Department on New Challenges and Threats of the Russian Foreign Ministry.[1]

SECURITY INDEX: Why is it important for Russia to be a member of FATF? And what are the objectives of the FSRBs?

FEOKTISTOV: The Financial Action Task Force is an intergovernmental organization set up by the G7 in 1989. Later on the G7 was replaced by the G8 as the FATF parent organization, and now the FATF mandate derives from the G20.

Russia is one of the 36 FATF members. There are two reasons why it is important for us to participate. First, Russia is currently facing the threat of terrorism, and terrorism cannot be effectively suppressed without cutting off its financial underpinnings. That requires greater multilateral cooperation.

Second, in recent years FATF has turned into a powerful organization, whose clout is in some respects comparable to the power and influence of the UN Security Council.

Of course, Russia proceeds from the notion that the main responsibility for upholding peace and international security, in accordance with the UN Charter, lies with the Security Council. International sanctions can only be legitimate if they have been imposed by the Security Council. But I am sure you are aware of the existing FATF grey lists or black lists of countries which have serious shortcomings as far as countering money laundering and the financing of terrorism (MLFT) is concerned. For any individual country, being put on the FATF Black List is not just a blow to its international reputation. If a country remains on the Black List for a long period, other countries are asked to take financial countermeasures against the offender. It means that all banking operations with such a country will be meticulously X-rayed for anything suspicious. Strictly speaking, this does not amount to sanctions, but in practice such a situation makes life for the country in question very difficult. Russia has first-hand experience of such difficulties—the country itself was put on the Black List in the early 2000s because it did not have a law on countering the financing of terrorism; such a law is a must-have for every nation. In the past 8 or 10 years, however, Russia has not only got itself removed from the list after adopting the

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necessary legislation—it has in fact begun to play a leading role in the international arena in countering MLFT.

In further recognition of our country's growing reputation in this area, FATF has unanimously voted to pass the rotating presidency of the group to Russia in 2013–2014. We already have the name of the future FATF president. In line with an established tradition, he will serve as vice-president for a year before assuming the rotating presidency. I am talking about Vladimir Nechayev, who currently serves as head of the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL). This is one of the nine FSRBs.

Such organizations have a combined membership of some 180 countries. Working under the FATF umbrella, they are helping FATF to conduct effective analysis of the MLFT situation in individual countries and to facilitate the necessary cooperation in this area.

Several years ago Russia initiated the establishment of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism (EAG). In additional to Russia itself, the group's membership includes all the Central Asian states, Belarus, China, and India. It is chaired by the head of the Russian Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring), Yury Chikhanchin. Russia is also an observer at the Asia-Pacific Group, the largest FSRBs. The group has 41 members.

In recent years FATF has been expanding beyond its traditional MLFT remit. It is now also focusing on countering other illegal financial flows which can threaten the integrity of the international financial system, such as the flows generated by corruption, WMD proliferation, piracy, and drug trafficking. Russia supported the adoption of an updated mandate of the group, under which FATF is also tasked with dealing with new challenges and threats. Therefore it would probably make sense to focus in greater detail on two issues: countering the financing of WMD proliferation, and the priorities of the Russian FATF presidency, which, in my personal opinion, could include the identification of illicit financial flows.

SECURITY INDEX: What can you say about the expansion of the FATF group's remit? In recent years it has come to include new problems, such as countering WMD financing. Do you believe FATF should get involved in WMD nonproliferation efforts?

FEOKTISTOV: The UN Security Council has declared that WMD proliferation and terrorism pose a grave threat to peace and international security. WMD nonproliferation is a separate item of the UN Security Council agenda. The council's nonproliferation resolutions can be divided into three categories: country resolutions (Iran, North Korea); resolutions on preventing WMD from falling into the hands of non-state actors (Resolution 1540); and resolutions on the overall subject of disarmament and nonproliferation (such as Resolution 1887).

Several years ago we were also asking ourselves the same question. When some of our partners said that perhaps FATF should get involved in these issues, we said no to such proposals, believing that FATF should stick to its own business. But over the past two or three years the situation has changed in a very radical way. In the broader sense, the problem is that the UN Security Council cannot always keep track of the implementation of its own resolutions. And when gaps are identified, it often turns out that the UN Security Council has neither the time nor the energy to change the situation. Article 25 of the UN Charter says that every UN member has an obligation to abide by the Security Council resolutions. But the actual statistics which describe the state of affairs with compliance in the area of nonproliferation resolutions are very worrying for Russia and for other countries. Only about 40 percent of the states have submitted their compliance reports to the UN Security Council with regard to these resolutions. Nothing is known about the remaining 60 percent. Such a situation is a blow for the reputation of the Security Council, and Russia is not happy with it.

When FATF said it wanted to get into these issues in 2008, there was a debate as to whether this was necessary. In the end, members decided in favor of such a step because it enabled FATF, using the Grey List and Black List instruments, to try and approach this problem from the other end, and prod governments towards compliance with at least the financial part of the UNSC nonproliferation resolutions. Russia, China, and several others managed to convince the rest of our partners that the role of FATF in these issues should be auxiliary. It should be limited to monitoring, and to providing countries with assistance in achieving compliance with the financial

requirements of the UNSC nonproliferation resolutions. The only thing the new FATF recommendation stipulates is that countries must freeze assets and prevent the transfer of funding to individuals and entities who have been put on the UNSC sanctions list under the nonproliferation resolutions—nothing more. In actual fact, that is nothing new; FATF is merely drawing governments' attention to their own obligations. But failure to take action can now lead to inclusion on the FATF lists.

We are aware that the United States and several other countries which initiated this debate at FATF had other objectives in mind; first and foremost, they wanted to put additional pressure on Iran and North Korea. But the Russian objective was to defend the prerogatives of the United Nations Security Council, to take additional steps so as to avoid any damage to the council's reputation, and to make sure that FATF decisions remain within the scope of the decisions made by the UNSC.

A new round of assessments in the FATF framework will begin in 2013. This means that FATF experts will visit different countries so as to assess their compliance with FATF standards, including the standards for countering the financing of WMD proliferation. The new standards do not make it compulsory for governments to criminalize the financing of WMD proliferation. For example, the Russian Penal Code does not contain any separate penalties for individuals or entities who finance proliferation. The situation is similar in the vast majority of other countries. Only Australia and France have such clauses. Russia is committed to full compliance with all the UN Security Council resolutions. After the adoption of each resolution, the Russian Foreign Ministry drafts a presidential decree, which is usually entitled ''On compliance with the UN Security Council sanctions Resolution Number. . . .'' Two or three months later the president signs the decree, and we inform the relevant sanctions committee of the Security Council.

SECURITY INDEX: What does Russia intend to do in order to ensure full compliance with the UN Security Council resolutions?

FEOKTISTOV: Russia has an inter-agency commission, chaired by the head of Rosfinmonitoring, to deal with the problem of money laundering and the financing of terrorism. It includes representatives from 17 government agencies. You can see from the name of the commission that its remit currently does not include measures against the financing of WMD proliferation. But after the adoption of the new recommendation the government will discuss their inclusion on the commission of those agencies which are directly responsible for that particular area.

It will be important to strengthen comprehensive exchange of information between the relevant agencies (Rosfinmonitoring, export control, intelligence, law-enforcement, the Foreign Ministry, the Justice Ministry, the Ministry of Finance, and other financial agencies). Without such exchange it will be very difficult to catch the proliferators red-handed, as the UNSC urges us to do.

It will also be necessary to ensure a more responsible attitude to this problem on the part of the banking sector, because nobody likes restrictive measures. I am talking about proper checks on the clients, increasing the transparency of electronic transfers, proper controls over suspicious operations, and other measures which banks will have to use on a systemic basis in order to ensure Russian compliance with FATF standards.

Of course, we must also remember that there are non-state actors, such as terrorists, who can also be involved in illegal trade in WMD or their components and delivery systems. UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which was passed in 2004 at the initiative of Russia and the United States, aims to prevent WMD from falling into the hands of terrorists. If at some point FATF begins to discuss the possibility of becoming involved in dealing with this problem—the financial aspects of it, of course—Russia will back such a proposal.

SECURITY INDEX: What will be the Russian priorities during its FATF presidency? What will be the main emphasis?

FEOKTISTOV: Russia assumes the rotating FATF presidency on July 1, 2013, so it is a bit too early to speak about the priorities. I believe, however, that these priorities could include one issue which Russia has always focused on at FATF. I am talking about our proposal to involve FATF

experts in a comprehensive study of illegal financial flows generated by the trafficking in Afghan drugs.

At present, 90 percent of the world supply of heroin and morphine originates in Afghanistan. About 17 million people in countries all over the world, including Russia, take drugs produced in Afghanistan. In 2011 revenues generated by illegal circulation of Afghan drugs stood at $60 billion; the figure is expected to reach $70 billion this year. Only about 10–15 percent of the global drugs supply is intercepted—but that percentage is even lower for the drugs money. According to various estimates, only about 0.5–1 percent of dirty money is intercepted; the rest becomes part of international financial flows.

Resolution 1943, which the UN Security Council passed in 2010 on the initiative of Russia, describes the trafficking in drugs from Afghanistan as a threat to international peace and stability. In 2012 we proposed the idea of involving FATF in studying this problem. That proposal has been backed by a number of key delegations, including the United States, China, India, and South Africa. No one has spoken against it.

The main objective will be to determine the main routes of the financial flows generated by Afghan drug trafficking. We already have some idea as to what countries the billions of dollars of Afghan drug money is being channeled through—but we need to know for certain. Russia would like its EAG partners to join this initiative. For most of the EAG members, consumption and trafficking in drugs from Afghanistan represent a national security threat. It is encouraging that at the recent EAG meeting in Moscow the member states agreed to set up a working group on financial countermeasures against the drugs trade, crime, and terrorism.

Another problem we are facing is illegal financial flows generated by maritime piracy. This is a colossal business, which has spread its tentacles all over the world. Russian navy ships are patrolling the Gulf of Aden. The problem of piracy is the focus of our attention. The Russian delegation at the UNSC has proposed an initiative to create court mechanisms with international participation to prosecute pirates, who are now acting with total impunity in the vast majority of cases. The mechanism of studying this issue at FATF can be the same as with Afghan drugs because piracy and the drugs trade are both actively using alternative, non-banking financial systems.

FATF will continue to pay attention to other issues related to effective controls over cash circulation. For Russia, the problem of cash and papers payable to the bearer being moved across borders by individuals is especially pressing. In essence, it is a black hole, because nobody knows for sure how much cash is being moved (and we're talking about billions of dollars), or to what purposes, including criminal purposes, this cash is being put to.

SECURITY INDEX: Russia, which was once on the Black List, has now become one of the leading members of FATF. Although Russia has many common interests with its Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) allies and provides assistance to them, there are several CIS states which have been less successful on this path. What are the dynamics, and what are the main problems being faced by these countries as they try to implement FATF recommendations?

FEOKTISTOV: Russia is helping its Central Asian partners to bring their national laws on MLFT into compliance with the international standards. Rosfinmonitoring, the Russian financial intelligence agency, constantly keeps in touch with similar agencies in the EAG states. We are providing these countries with technical assistance and share our expertise with them. We have often visited these countries as part of FATF missions in order to assess their national systems.

The analysis system used by FATF is fairly complicated. The essence of it is to determine how well the countries comply with the 40 FATF recommendations (there used to be 49 of them) which have become an international standard in countering MLFT. Our joint efforts are already yielding results. As of today, there is not a single EAG member on the FATF Black List. Only two countries, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, remain on the Grey List. Turkmenistan was dropped from the Grey List, with Russian support, at the latest FATF meeting in June 2012.

In other words, the MLFT situation in the EAG area has seen a clear improvement. It looks fairly optimistic compared with the situation in other regions. For example, in the most problematic ASEAN region, seven countries out of 10 are on the Black List. The trends in the EAG and ASEAN

are opposite; three large ASEAN countries—Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam—were recently put on the Black List. Our own priority, of course, is the EAG; the region will remain at the center of our attention.

SECURITY INDEX: In the world of finance there are ways of monitoring budget spending, banks, etc.—the so-called white mechanisms. From the technological point of view, are there enough traditional instruments for monitoring grey or black mechanisms? Or do we need to develop some radically new and different instruments and methods? In every sector, both legitimate and illegal, there are incoming and outgoing financial flows. Are these flows being monitored in different ways? What are the most effective approaches? What is easier to control? And what is the current focus of FATF?

FEOKTISTOV: The job of monitoring financial transactions—white as well as black—requires instruments operated by the financial intelligence agencies and banks. It is very difficult to monitor operations which bypass the official financial systems. That is why we need to continue improving the relevant mechanisms. And that is exactly why Russia wants FATF to conduct case studies of these pressing issues so that the experts who represent the various institutions—i.e. intelligence agencies, financial intelligence, banks, and other state institutions—could make progress on resolving these difficult problems. The new FATF Recommendation 1 effectively says that governments must figure out the origins of the main MLFT threats they are facing, and prioritize their efforts accordingly. Russia intends to do just that. Only then can our efforts against financial crime become more effective.

As for the incoming or outgoing financial flows, given the globalized nature of the world financial system, there is no great difference between the two as far as technical monitoring is concerned. Every year, Russian financial intelligence receives thousands of reports from banks about suspicious operations. At the initial stage we employ special automatic screening mechanisms—in other words, not all of these thousands of reports are being scrutinized. After that natural screening, the remaining reports are studied individually. Now that FATF has issued updated recommendations, financial intelligence agencies will have even more work on their hands.

Rosfinmonitoring is not a very large organization, so checking such a huge volume of operations is a serious challenge for its specialists.[2] But there are plans to strengthen that organization, which has been designated as the national center for assessing and countering MLFT threats—in May 2012 the Russian government made a decision to that effect. Let us hope that thanks to that strengthening Russia will be able to allocate additional resources to fighting money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

NOTES

[1] The text of this interview is based on the non-confidential parts of remarks by Dmitry Feoktistov at a meeting of the Trialogue Club International held by the PIR Center on July 10, 2012 in Moscow. The text was edited by the author in September 2012.

[2] See: Interview by the Deputy Head of the Russian Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring) Alexander Spiridonov for *Security Index* journal: ''Electronic Payment Systems Make Money Laundering Much Easier,'' *Security Index* No. 2 (99), Spring 2012, pp. 7–10.

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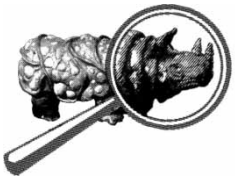

Pavel Luzin

OUTER SPACE AS RUSSIA'S SOFT-POWER TOOL

In the political sense, the success of a space exploration program is not defined solely by its specific results that can be used to achieve various foreign policy objectives. Another important criterion of success is the program's ability to bolster the country's international standing in various indirect ways. These indirect dividends open up a broad range of opportunities. They give the country in question a lot of say in shaping the international space agenda; they give it an ability to influence the objectives other players set before themselves; and they are very good for the country's international reputation in a broader sense. For now, Russia is not making the full use of its ''soft power'' potential because the Russian government lacks a clear political strategy in this area.

The government needs to understand that space exploration results will not yield long-term foreign policy capital unless the objectives of the Russian space program are based on clearly articulated national objectives, and unless these objectives also sound engaging to the international decision-makers.

SOFT POWER AND ITS SPECIFICS IN SPACE EXPLORATION

The ''soft power'' concept proposed by Joseph S. Nye is very relevant to discussing whether and to what extent the international political elite is interested in the Russian space program, ready for cooperation in this area, or willing to accept the Russian political approaches in this area. This concept also clarifies the role of space exploration in bolstering the country's national prestige. Soft power is defined as ''an ability to get what you want through co-opting others, rather than coercing them or inducing them with payments.''[1] At the same time, ''soft power resources often work indirectly by shaping the environment for policy, and sometimes take years to produce the desired outcomes.''[2]

In recent history, the clearest example of Russia using its space program as a foreign policy soft-power instrument came in 1993–early 2000s as part of the International Space Station (ISS) project. Russia used its formidable experience in long-duration manned space flights and inhabited orbiting spacecraft to bolster its own standing in the international arena at a time when it had very few other instruments to achieve that objective.

But the ISS example has also demonstrated that in every specific space project the soft-power potential tends to diminish over time, even if the project itself is long-running. By the mid-2000s Russian involvement in the ISS had all but ceased to exert any positive influence on the country's relations with its Western partners and with Japan. A similar erosion of the soft-power potential has been observed in bilateral U.S.–Russian projects, such as the AMROS satellite program, the development and manufacture of the RD-180 rocket engines for the Atlas-5 space launchers etc.

The same principle applies to Russian cooperation with other foreign actors. This has been borne out by the examples of cooperation with Europe in launching the Soyuz-ST (Soyuz-2) space carriers from the Kourou space center in French Guiana and by Russian participation in Europe's unmanned space missions to Mercury and Venus; with China in launching a Chinese micro-satellite as part of the failed Fobos-Grunt mission; with India in the Luna-Resurs program, etc.

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Despite the positive outcomes of these projects (with the obvious exception of Fobos-Grunt) they have failed to produce any systemic positive effect in the foreign policy area because, in all these joint projects, Russia and its partners were pursuing mainly economic and technological objectives. As a result, the soft-power potential, which was quite discernible at the beginning, i.e. during the talks and at the time of the signing of the bilateral agreements, also began to erode over time.

There are two main reasons for such erosion:

- As soon as the project enters a routine operations phase or reaches its end without yielding any results (as was the case with the AMROS system), it loses most of its political relevance.
- As far as political dividends are concerned, all the aforementioned projects aimed to achieve some immediate short-term benefit as opposed to long-term political results.

It therefore becomes clear that every soft-power resource needs some fresh fuel from time to time, and a long-term planning horizon.

As for how soft power can be applied, the soft power generated by space programs can be effective in engaging the political, economic, and intellectual elites as opposed to society as a whole. This is because the results of various space projects seldom affect the public mood—and when they do, they are mainly seen as a success or failure of the respective national government.[3]

It is also important to remember that leveraging the ''soft-power'' dividends of space programs in foreign policy can be effective in achieving the following outcomes:

- strengthening international partnership and/or good-neighborly relations, and bolstering the country's standing among the leading world powers;
- securing greater access to foreign markets for space products and services;
- shaping the international agenda and securing a greater say in drawing up the international rules regulating the use of outer space;
- attracting foreign expertise and financing, and fostering joint projects which can help to develop the country's own high-tech industries.

It is worth emphasizing that soft-power dividends can be generated not only by joint space projects, but by purely national endeavors as well—provided that these endeavors have an obvious scientific or applied value, and that they are sufficiently advanced in terms of technology.

BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Russian space program is currently facing a number of structural conflicts which have obvious foreign-policy repercussions.

First, it is largely thanks to Russian efforts that the service life of the ISS was extended in 2010 until 2020. However, the Russian segment of the space station is fairly limited in terms of its research capability. Meanwhile, the United States is using its own segment as a test bed for private American space companies, and as an international institution which gives Washington some control over the space programs of its partners. Meanwhile, the EU and Japan are rapidly building up their own expertise in long-duration space flights and in operating orbital laboratories. In that sense Russia needs to have a fresh look at the scientific, applied, and political principles of its involvement in the ISS program.

Second, there was a series of failures and delays of Russian space missions in 2009–2011, including the KORONAS-Foton, the Fobos-Grunt and the Luna-Glob spacecraft, and the Ultrafiolet orbital observatory. This highlights the need for a change of approach to the planning and implementation of the Russian space program, and for a clear strategy of reforms in the Russian space industry.

All these problems are having a negative impact on Russian potential in outer space and, by extension, on Russia's ability to make use of that potential in international affairs.

There are, however, several new space projects scheduled for the next five to seven years which look fairly promising in terms of research as well as soft-power dividends. These include the Spektr-RG astrophysics satellite, the Astrometriya space complex, the Venera-D interplanetary probe, and several others.[4] All of them can make a great contribution to fundamental science on an international scale. One R&D area worth a separate mention is the development of new space-launch vehicles, manned spacecraft, and nuclear-powered spacecraft.[5]

Success in these areas would help Russia achieve the foreign-policy outcomes outlined earlier in this article.

EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

Apart from the domestic aspects of space exploration, there are several external factors that need to be taken into account. For example, about 60 countries currently have space programs.[6] As a result, there is a clear demand for a global space agenda to outline the key priorities and the main long-term goals in this area.

The United States is the source of the key items on that agenda, including: exploring deep space and celestial bodies in the Solar system; the asteroid threat; space junk on the Earth orbit and the deficit of a frequency spectrum for satellites; private-sector space programs, etc.

This not only reinforces America's positions in outer space, but also shapes the space programs of other countries and creates the preconditions for further development of international regulation in outer space.[7]

Nevertheless, every global agenda inevitably undergoes change and erosion. Leading players such as the EU and China are generating and implementing their own strategies of space exploration, which enables them to gain political clout in this area and to bolster their soft-power capability.

In such circumstances Russia also needs to play an active role—insofar as its situation allows—in leading an international political discourse on space exploration. For now, the only issue on which our country is showing a lot of activity is opposing the militarization of outer space. But because the actual problem does not have any serious practical manifestations which would generate some international response, that Russian activity has not achieved any substantial results. As for the integrity of the Russian space policy, such integrity is currently in short supply.

First of all, Russia does have the potential to achieve positive results in this area. Most importantly, the country can generate long-term goals for fundamental space research. These goals will not only set the direction for Russia's own space program and serve as criteria of its success, but will also shape the space programs of foreign actors.

Second, Russia needs to take the initiative in addressing the problem of space junk.[8] Given that the country is one of the world's main producers of that junk, such initiatives would bolster its international reputation in space exploration.

Third, Russia could become a leader in private-sector space programs. In practice that would translate into space efforts undertaken outside the framework of the federal space program by non-governmental actors, including companies, universities, and private funds—although that does not rule out government co-funding.

Given the nature of the Russian economy, private involvement can be encouraged by fostering peer-to-peer links between the Russian entities involved in the space effort, as well as links between Russian and foreign partners. An excellent example of such an approach is the participation of the Russian company Selenokhod in the Google Lunar X-Prize competition, which aims to send a privately developed lunar robot to the Moon. It would be fair to say that the company is working despite the prevailing conditions in Russia, rather than thanks to them.[9]

WHAT COULD BE THE NEXT STEPS?

The following recommendations would help to ensure effective use of the Russian space program as a soft-power instrument in foreign policy.

There needs to be a clear space strategy for the period after the ISS is decommissioned. The idea of extending the life of the ISS beyond 2020 should be abandoned because it acts as a brake on the Russian space effort as a whole.

The criteria of success for the participation of Russia and Russian companies in international space cooperation should center on to the acquisition of new knowledge, expertise, and technologies by our nation.

Russia would do well to expand its space cooperation with Canada, Brazil, India, Australia, and Japan. In addition to research projects, such cooperation could include equal participation in joint efforts in outer space monitoring and automated space exploration missions. Politically this would also strengthen Russia's position in further dealings with the United States, the EU, and China.

There is a lot of room for political action in space cooperation with the EU. For the foreseeable future the European Union's space program will be facing economic and organizational difficulties, which presents an opportunity for Russia to develop both bilateral and multilateral agendas for space research and exploration in pursuit of its own foreign policy goals. More specifically, Russia must develop the kind of space projects that the Europeans would want to join. At present, it is Russia who is participating in European space projects, not the other way around.

Russia should prioritize the development of peer-to-peer cooperation between its own companies, universities, and research centers, as well as cooperation between civilian Russian universities and research centers abroad. This will require substantial changes in the current secrecy regulations. Rather than classifying all space-related research, the government should apply secrecy requirements only to key technologies and solutions which really warrant such treatment. In the foreign policy arena Russia must play an active role in developing and improving the international legal framework for such peer-to-peer cooperation and private space initiatives as a whole.

New Russian initiatives in the area of international space cooperation must be of interest to the political, economic, and/or R&D decision-makers of the potential partners.

The possible scenarios for the development of the Russian space program over the next 5 to 10 years in view of its foreign policy interests are as follows:

- *The modernization scenario*: Russia launches deliberate and systemic efforts to improve the institutional, scientific, and economic aspects of its space program. This will enable to country to secure and to strengthen its position in outer space, and to participate as an equal in making key international decisions in this area.

- *The coasting-along scenario*: Russia keeps the structure of its space program largely unchanged. The 2011 project of establishing vertically integrated, highly specialized holding companies in the space industry is well in line with this scenario. The country will gradually cease to play an important role in international space affairs; its policy in this area will be largely reactive, meaning a much greater risk of losing its current position in the foreign-policy arena.

- *The decline scenario*: The establishment of highly specialized state-owned holding companies in the space industry and the reinforcement of barriers to private initiative in this area will lead to further decline of the Russian space-rocket, space-engine, and satellite industry. In line with the bureaucracy theory, such holding companies will tend to compete mostly with each other in an effort to secure a greater share of state funding; they will also work hard to bar entry to the sector to private companies and universities.

The choice of scenario will determine whether and to what extent Russian opinion and Russian interests will be taken into account internationally in space-related activities, where relations take the form of cooperation as well as fierce competition. It will determine Russia's ability to attract external resources for its own development, and the long-term sustainability of the country's positions in such space-related areas as control and regulation of the four spaces: the sea, the air space, the outer space, and the information space. The use of outer space as a soft-power instrument in foreign policy can be more effective if it is aimed at achieving all these goals.

NOTES

[1] Joseph S. Nye, ''Soft Power and U.S.–European Relations,'' *Svobodnaya Mysl XXI* , No. 10 (2004), < http://postindustrial.net/en/2004/11/myagkaya-sila-i-amerikano-evropejskie-otnosheniya/>, last accessed June 14, 2012.

[2] Joseph S. Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[3] See opinion polls: VTsIOM, < http://www.wciom.ru/index.php?id= 1#>, last accessed June 14, 2012; Levada-Center, < http://www.levada.ru/>, last accessed June 14, 2012; Gallup, < http://www.gallup.com/home.aspx>, last accessed June 14, 2012; Pew Research Center, < http://www.pewresearch.org/>, last accessed June 14, 2012.

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[6] ''Profiles of Government Space Programs,'' Euroconsult, < http://www.euroconsult-ec.com/research-reports/space-industry-reports/profiles-of-government-space-programs-38-37.html>, last accessed June 14, 2012.

[7] See, for example: ''National Space Security Strategy Outlines Rules of the Road,'' U.S. Department of Defense, 2011, February 11, < http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id= 62791>, last accessed June 14, 2012.

[8] At the very least Russia has begun to raise the issue at the UN. See: ''Report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. 54th Session'' (June 1–10, 2011), UN General Assembly, *Official Reports*, Addendum No. 20, p. 12, < http://www.oosa.unvienna.org/pdf/gadocs/A_66_20R.pdf>, last accessed June 14, 2012.

[9] Apart from all else, the very possibility of launching a privately owned Russian lunar robot on a Russian carrier is still in doubt. See: official website of the Selenokhod company, < http://selenokhod.com/ru>, last accessed June 14, 2012.

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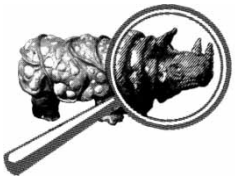

Galiya Ibragimova

CENTRAL ASIAN ATTITUDES TO INTERNET GOVERNANCE AND CYBERSECURITY

The Internet, which is essentially just a data transmission technology, would not have become such a hugely important phenomenon and a key instrument of information exchange, were it not for its users, who have filled it with content. This second reality, which has come to life thanks to its users, has destroyed boundaries and created vast opportunities for global communication. Freedom of speech, which seemed to be an unattainable dream for people in many countries, has suddenly become a reality. It has also become a major headache for censors, and spurred certain developments which often threaten to destabilize the existing social and political systems in many countries and regions all over the world. The Orange revolutions in the former Soviet republics and the revolutionary events in the Middle East have amply demonstrated the power and influence of Internet communications in this day and age. Virtual reality has barged into the social and political processes that seemed immutable, and begun to transform the world order.

Central Asia,[1] a region where digital inequality was one of the most pressing problems only a few years ago, is now rapidly adopting information and telecommunication technologies. The Internet has not yet become ubiquitous in this region—but it has definitely ceased to be an exotic novelty. By early 2012 some 16.1 million people in the Central Asian states had Internet access.[2] Uzbekistan, which has often been criticized and accused of trying to limit access to the World Wide Web, actually has by far the highest number of users in the region (7.55 million).[3] As a result, it has become rather difficult effectively to restrict access to those users who have reached more than a beginner's level of proficiency. What is more, any attempts to keep millions of users from accessing various Internet resources are pointless and doomed to failure, especially in the absence of any systemic solutions such as the Great Firewall of China.

One example of the Internet's impact on social and political processes in the region came in 2010 amid tragic events in southern Kyrgyzstan. Information about violent unrest was being spread primarily through social networks on the Web, while state-owned media outlets mostly kept silent about what was going on. Users of social networks were organizing patrols of volunteers to protect Osh and Bishkek from looting. The Internet was also used to arrange the provision of humanitarian assistance to the displaced persons and victims of ethnic clashes. Apart from the Kyrgyz themselves, humanitarian aid was provided by people in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, who were mobilized via the Facebook, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, and Moy Mir networks. These events constitute clear proof that even though Internet penetration figures in Central Asia remain relatively low, the overall trend is well in line with the growing power of the Internet observed throughout the whole world.

Nevertheless, the development of Internet infrastructure in the region is facing obvious difficulties. Attempts are being made to restrict access to websites of opposition parties and media outlets. DDoS attacks are being launched against sites which criticize the government. Some news reports about events in the region are being filtered out. The authorities are monitoring bloggers and users of social networks, and there are fierce battles being waged with Internet trolls.[4] All of these problems stem from a very distinctive information security policy the Central Asian governments have adopted in their efforts to defend national interests.

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Every Central Asian state has its own approach to information security, as reflected in their national legislation. Every country in the region has a special commission for information security, and their governments have signed bilateral and multilateral agreements on protecting what is described here as the information space. But it must be recognized that the issue has not been properly researched at the theoretical level.

Information security is usually defined in Central Asian states as protecting the national information space from negative and destructive information impact by external forces. The authorities often categorize as negative external influence any criticism of themselves. Laws in these countries seldom have any clear definition of information security. At the same time, the governments tend to ignore various Internet governance problems. Such an approach exacerbates the region's vulnerability to external information challenges and threats. Even in the absence of any preliminary analysis it seems clear that the Central Asian states need to develop their national segments of the information space and to formulate a common regional approach to providing information security. Progress in this area would make a substantial contribution to the development of the region's information space and to strengthening its national security.

This article offers a brief comparative analysis of the approaches adopted by the five Central Asian states to information security and Internet governance.

TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan was the first Central Asian republic to adopt a national Concept of Information Security back in 2003, when the document was drawn up and approved by the government. The concept emphasizes the importance of information for national development, and describes the information sphere as crucial for the functioning of society. The document is often used as a source of many definitions and mechanisms of providing information security. Various government agencies use its clauses to formulate and implement national policy in this area.

Tajikistan defines information security as a state of affairs in which its national interests are protected in the information sphere, with a proper balance between the interests of individuals, society, and the state. The government of Tajikistan plays a leading role in providing information security. It bears the responsibility for the development of information infrastructure in accordance with the country's national interests. A fairly distinctive feature of the concept is that it categorizes the strategic objectives of Tajikistan's domestic and foreign-policy efforts on information security. The key principles of information security include upholding the constitutional right of individuals to receive information; providing information support to various government programs; and making sure that accurate information about the Tajik government's policies reaches the country's own citizens and the international community.

In addition to setting out these goals, the Concept recognizes the need to overcome a number of problems—primarily social and economic—which are hampering the development of information and communication technologies in the country. It is worth noting that Tajikistan aims to address the problem of digital inequality by increasing imports of information and communication technologies, whereas its neighbors in the region want to reduce their dependence on foreign IT. They want to develop their own industries in this area as one of the key mechanisms of national information security. The Concept dwells at length on the development of the Tajik information industry, including the mass media sector, as a way of providing ideological protection from modern information challenges and threats to the state, society, and individuals.[5] The document also outlines the information threats which can jeopardize the country's foreign policy. They include intentional spreading of false information, propaganda, information wars, and informational impact by foreign political, economic, military, and information bodies on the implementation of Tajik foreign policy.

The Concept lists the legal, organizational, technical, economic, and political instruments for providing information security. The legal framework for the provision of information security in the country is based on the existing set of laws and regulations, which currently need greater cohesion.[6]

Another priority of the Tajik information security policy is ensuring secure functioning of the Internet. The spread of the Internet in the country began in 2001, when the Tajiktelekom company began rolling out a national network. In the same year the government adopted a resolution

''On building a national data transmission network and regulating access to global information networks.'' The document was one of the first Tajik pieces of regulation in the area of Internet technologies. In 2011 the number of Internet users in Tajikistan reached 600,000 people, with more than 600 websites in the Tajik segment of the World Wide Web. These figures are a lot lower than in the neighboring Central Asian republics. The country continues to have a serious problem of digital inequality; more than 70 percent of its population has no access to the Internet whatsoever. But the current growth rates in the Tajik segment of the Internet give reason to believe that most Tajiks will soon have access to the Web.

One of the distinctive features of the Tajik information space is that although the state has a dominant position, it demonstrates willingness to encourage the appearance of new privately owned media outlets and to cooperate with them on an equal footing. The government prioritizes the development of electronic media, including news websites. Tajikistan is attracting investors, including foreign ones, to finance various information projects. One example of foreign investment in the Tajik media sector is the Asia-Plus news agency. The agency's website has more than 7,000 unique visitors every day. In addition to providing online access to its own information, the site also carries electronic versions or selected articles from the Asia-Plus newspaper and the VIP-zone journal, a catalogue of photo news galleries, video reports, blogs, and a lot of reference information. Another popular news web site is the Asia-Plus site, which is part of the Avesta media holding. The site has 3,000 visitors a day. The popularity of these resources owes much to the fact that they have a Russian, English, and Tajik-language version. Most of the other Internet media registered in Tajikistan lag well behind them in terms of the range and quality of the services they provide.[7]

Some of the Tajik businesses are heavily involved in the electronic media industry and have become significant players in this market, thereby competing with the state-owned outlets. For its part, the government is showing willingness to treat some of the privately owned media as equal partners. This can be largely explained by the events of the Arab Spring, which have demonstrated that new media are becoming an important factor in domestic social and political discourse, as well as one of the most important instruments for positioning the country and forming its image in the international arena. The Tajik media are in the middle of a transformation from being an instrument of the ruling party's policy and ideology to a relatively independent and influential public institution.

Social networks and blogs are also quite popular in the country. But the Tajiks use them not just as a communication and recreation medium but also as a platform for free expression of their political views. Until March 2012 Facebook, which has 26,000 registered users in Tajikistan, was the only platform in the country where Tajiks could discuss the most controversial political issues and criticize the government.[8] But Tajiks did not stop at merely criticizing the government on the Internet. They used Facebook to organize tens of various protest actions all across the country. The most notable one was held in the spring of 2011. Spring brings some notable seasonal difficulties for people in the country because that is when the government imposes strict rationing of electricity. In spring 2011 a group of young activists gathered outside the corporate HQ of Barki Tochik, the state-owned energy utility and the main supplier of electricity in Tajikistan, to hold a symbolic funeral of the energy sector. The organizers of the flash mob expected a forceful response from the authorities, but the event went off relatively calmly. It also attracted a lot of coverage from the local media, thereby becoming a good advertisement for the Internet as a mass communication medium. The Tajik users of the Internet realized that even in the prevailing conditions in the country they can still use Facebook as a potent instrument for mobilizing the masses and articulating—as well as resolving—pressing social and economic problems on a local and national scale.

Tajik activists have also used social networks to organize dozens of charity events for orphans, old people's homes, and the disabled, as well as clean-up exercises in public spaces and at various cultural events. Tajik users of Facebook have repeatedly appealed to the government and the president, urging them to find solutions to some of the country's most pressing problems. To that end they set up a special community on Facebook, called Platforma, where users could ask a question or send a message to the authorities, express their opinion about political, social, and economic events in the country, or share their problems. But they failed to engage government representatives in any meaningful discussion. Officials continued to avoid any debates with bloggers or social network users. The Tajik authorities have also been alarmed by the Arab Spring, which has amply demonstrated that social networks, mobile communications, and blogging

services can be used to mobilize the population and depose the ruling regimes. On March 5, 2012, in accordance with a decision by the state commission for telecommunications, the Tajik authorities blocked access to Facebook on the republic's territory. In addition to the social network, they also blocked access to the websites TjkNews.com and Zvezda.ru, in apparent retaliation for criticizing the Tajik government.[9] Another pretext commonly used by the government to block access to various websites is disseminating extremist materials, including information published by the Islamic Party of Tajikistan. But despite the government's attempts at Internet censorship and filtering, Tajik users find ways round these measures through the simple expedient of proxy servers.

Meanwhile, several indigenous Tajik social networks have recently been set up in the country's .tj domain. One of the largest of such projects is the mymlt.tj social network. Its contents and concept, however, are mostly limited to entertainment and recreation. Another popular website the Tajiks use to keep in touch is from.tj. The site has a discussion board for registered users and offers blogging functionality. The most discussed topics include various social issues, cultural events, and national history.

KAZAKHSTAN

Until recently the Kazakh policy on information security was based on the Information Security Concept adopted in 2006.[10] The document offered a rather general categorization of threats to the republic's information security, dividing them into internal and external, as well as technological and ideological. The strategic objective set out in the 2006 Concept was to form a universal information space of Kazakhstan and to create the necessary conditions for its rapid development.

It is worth noting that even before the adoption of the Concept in 2006, information security issues were covered in a whole number of laws and regulations.[11] But such a multitude of laws existed prior to 2006 that this resulted in the government's information security policy being in a rather chaotic state, and an absence of any clear strategy. Some of the laws contained conflicting clauses, thereby further disorganizing the work of the government bodies in charge of this policy area. Such a situation convinced the authorities of the need for a single national Concept in order to streamline national legislation on information and telecommunication technologies and clearly define the rules of the game for the IT sector.

One of the distinctive features of the 2006 Concept was that it contained the definition of Internet governance, thereby setting a precedent for the CIS countries. The term was defined as the development and adoption by the government, the private sector, and the entire civil society of the general principles, rules, and decision-making procedures which regulate the use of the Internet.[12] The Concept, which was Kazakhstan's first strategic-level document on information security, contained certain flaws as well, such as the vagueness of some key definitions. For example, the actual term ''information security'' lacked any definition whatsoever.

The next phase in the evolution of Kazakh legislation in this area began on September 30, 2011, when the president signed a decree approving the Information Security Concept until 2016. The new document was a significant step forward on several key fronts. First, it made use of the latest international experience in the area of information security, including the experience of the United States, Britain, Canada, Russia, India, and Estonia. The government's determination to learn from countries which have a highly advanced and diversified IT sector is an indirect indication of the fact that Kazakhstan's own IT sector has also made a lot of progress. In addition, the latest Concept reflects and partially incorporates the results of international cooperation in the area of information security, including the Yekaterinburg Agreement, signed in 2009 by the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and ratified by Kazakhstan the following year.

Another feature of the 2010 Concept is its dual understanding of information security as such. The document ''considers the two mutually related aspects of information security: technological and social-political.''[13] The first aspect incorporates the Western idea of cybersecurity, such as protecting information systems and infrastructure from unauthorized access, use, and other actions, including opening, damaging, changing, reading, verifying, recording, or destroying information, in order to ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of that information. Highlighting this separate aspect of information security is something of an innovation for Central Asia. The second aspect of information security outlined by the Concept covers all the traditional

issues of protecting the national information space and information dissemination systems from destructive external informational impact.

One final distinguishing feature of the 2011 Concept is its emphasis on the problem of cybercrime. In the previous documents adopted by Kazakhstan and other countries in the region that problem was mentioned only in passing, if at all. On the whole, the Concept has not addressed some of the theoretical questions regarding the Kazakh approach to information security. But it has clearly demonstrated that the Kazakh national approach to regulation of the IT sector has become more mature.

In Kazakhstan, the Internet has long become an integral part of public life. The key goal of the government's IT policy is the development of the Kazakh national segment of the World Wide Web, dubbed Kaznet. The history of Kaznet began on September 19, 1994, when ICANN registered the.kz top-level domain. The first (and now defunct) catalogue of Kazakh websites, *Kazakh Internet Yellow & White Pages*, appeared in June 1995. Currently the most popular catalogue of Kazakh web resources is Catalog.Site.KZ, which was launched in December 1997.

By the second half of the 1990s Kaznet had evolved into a more or less integrated national segment of the Internet. It is usually defined as a combination of networked information resources, information and telecommunication systems and networks, and related technologies. All of these information systems function on the basis of a single set of rules and principles. The main element of Kaznet is the websites, which fall into the following categories of information resources:

- independent websites of the .kz domain;
- websites which belong to other domains but are hosted by Kazakh service providers;
- foreign websites aimed at the Kazakh audience;
- websites of Kazakh companies hosted in other domains.[14]

Kazakhstan uses a three-tier Shared Registry System (SRS), which consists of the Administrator, the Registrars, and the Registrants.[15] Two organizations are in charge of managing and regulating the.kz domain: the Kazakh Network Information Center (KazNIC), which oversees the technology side of things, and the Kazakh Association of IT companies, which draws up the registration rules and the development ideology for the national domain. There are currently nine active registrars accredited in the.kz domain. Such a model allows for an unlimited number of registrars, which can register domain names using the SRS system.[16]

Kazakhstan's own Internet legislation has not yet become completely mature. That is why the government's policy on the development of the information space is based on the norms and principles of international law, and on compliance with international treaties and other pieces of international legislation ratified by the Republic of Kazakhstan. But that policy also takes into account the need to ensure information security and protect legitimate interests of the Republic of Kazakhstan, its regional and local authorities, as well as the rights of individuals and legal entities. Though far from mature, Kazakh legislation in this area is rapidly evolving. The country was the first in Central Asia to pass Internet legislation and regulation.

Kaznet governance and coordination of the various actors in the Kazakh Internet space is based on the Concept of the Formation and Development of a Universal Information Space of the Kazakh Segment of the Internet (Kaznet) for 2008–2012. The main objective of the Concept is to develop measures for sustainable development of the country's universal information space. To that end the Concept speaks of the need to develop and implement government policy on the development of the national segment of the Internet; improve national legislation in this area; develop the Kaznet infrastructure; and provide information security. The priorities also include developing a system for monitoring and assessing the development of the universal information space, as well as ensuring Kazakhstan's participation in building and using global information networks and systems.[17] To summarize, the Concept defines the main development priorities for the Kazakh segment of the Internet, lists the main participants in that process, and outlines measures to facilitate the development of the national segment of the information space.

Although there are some positive trends in the development of the Internet in the republic, that process is being hampered by a number of problems—and the Kazakh legislators are well aware of them. One of these problems is weakness of the Kazakh websites, which often suffer from a

deficit of regularly updated content. These websites are often filled with content in an ad hoc manner, in accordance with short-term interests and requirements of whoever disseminates that information, without properly taking into account the legal, moral, ethical, and other norms—or indeed national interests. As a result, many of these sites do not rank high in such search engines as Google, Yahoo! and MSN, or the Cyrillic search engines such as Yandex and Rambler. Unsurprisingly, the visibility of these sites for users in Kazakhstan and beyond is fairly limited.

Another major problem for Kazakhstan is that the national Kazakh language is seldom used in Kaznet. In previous years the introduction of the Kazakh language was facing problems with encoding and language settings in the browsers. That problem has already been resolved. Nevertheless, Kazakhs tend to use only Cyrillic content. The national segment of the Internet has very few electronic libraries, or science and education resources. Kaznet's multimedia content tends to be used only by mobile users. Finally, the Kazakh national domain still does not have an official website devoted to the use of the national language in government and daily life, or offering dictionaries and glossaries.

Just like all the other Central Asian states, Kazakhstan is facing a serious problem with digital inequality. Not all the regions of the country have the opportunity to use information technologies in daily life. As of 2011, more than half of the Kazakhs (53.1 percent) had no idea about any of the available technologies for accessing the Internet. In order to increase computer literacy, in 2006 the government adopted the Program for the Reduction of Digital Inequality in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2007–2009. One of the causes of the digital inequality problem is that the national focus is on the development of national rather than local information resources. Such an approach hampers the development of the local and regional information and media markets, and results in the absence of any systemic work on the external information market.

The government plays a leading role in developing and implementing national programs on Internet governance and the development of the national segment of the Internet. It is seen as the initiator of various Internet programs and as a coordinator of all Kaznet participants. At the same time, government agencies have undertaken the role of the main censors of the virtual space. For example, the national Internet communications operator, Kazakhtelekom, is controlled by the government. Nevertheless, the government also encourages the participation of the private sector and civil society in government consultations on the development of Internet technologies.

Another important document which regulates the functioning of the Internet in Kazakhstan is the Concept of Improving the Competitiveness of the Information Space of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006–2009. The concept analyses the main problems in the development of information space in the republic. The main goal set out in the document is to foster competition between the various media outlets in order to improve the quality of their output. It also aims to identify the key obstacles to competition in the Kazakh information markets. Fostering a competitive environment is seen as a primary objective of the government's strategy in the information space.

Clear progress has been made in this area. What makes Kazakhstan different from the other Central Asian republics is that the government is not the only player in the country's information space. Other players include commercial entities, transnational IT corporations, NGOs, and socially oriented means of mass communication (i.e. blogs and social networks). They offer stiff competition to state-owned information systems. The leading electronic media outlets include Kazakhstan, Pervyy Kanal-Eurasia, and Caspionet. All these outlets have their own websites, which make a substantial contribution to their growing popularity. These media corporations have audiences not only in Central Asia itself but also in the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa. The nature of the relations between the Kazakh government and the transnational IT and media corporations is gradually evolving towards equal partnership.[18] Especially noteworthy is not just the fact of such cooperation but also the government's readiness to partner with large media corporations and to delegate to them some of its functions in developing the Kazakh segment of the information space.

Social networks, blogs, and various web platforms that offer online interaction functionality to its users are becoming active participants in Kazakhstan's information space. The size of the Kazakh blogosphere tripled in terms of its main numerical indicators over the period 2006–2011. The three most popular blogging platforms in the country are: Your Vision, which is a clear leader; Afftor.kz, which hosts blogs by many celebrities; and Blogos.kz. The most popular social networking sites include Vseti.kz, which is almost identical to the Russian VKontakte service.

Another popular portal is LiveInternet.kz. There is also the socially oriented community On.kz; the Pautina.kz network, which targets scientists and researchers; and Kiwi.kz, the Kazakh equivalent of YouTube. Russian and Western social networks also enjoy much popularity in Kazakhstan, including Moy Mir (preferred by 62.4% of Kazakh users as of early 2012), Odnoklassniki (25.9%), and VKontakte (22.7%).

Social networks and blogs are popular not just with ordinary Kazakhs but also with some senior government officials. All the members of the Kazakh cabinet of ministers have their own blogs on the official websites of their ministries; many also have Twitter accounts. Even the (former) Prime Minister, Karim Masimov, describes himself as an active blogger. But although many government officials appear to be fairly advanced Internet users, they also tend to be rather wary of social networks and blogs in the political sense. Their mistrust of modern Internet communications was reinforced by the events in Moldova in the spring of 2009, when social networks, blogs, and mobile phones were used to mobilize anti-government protesters, and fuelled further by the revolutions in the Middle East in 2011.

On June 24, 2009 Kazakhstan passed the law ''On changes and additions to some pieces of legislation in the area of information and telecommunication technologies.'' The law focuses on Internet regulation, so it is commonly known in the country as ''the Internet law.'' In accordance with that law, all the Kazakh websites, including blogs, chats, and discussion boards, have the same status as the mass media. As a result, these websites, as well as their users, can be made to accept criminal, administrative, and civil responsibility in the same way as media outlets for violating the laws of Kazakhstan. It is particularly noteworthy that the law covers not only information posted by the websites themselves, but also comments made by their users. Bloggers are also responsible for the information they disseminate and for the comments published on their blogs. All online chatrooms are required by law to have a moderator. At the same time, in accordance with the Kazakh legislation on the mass media, an entity can be regarded as a media outlet only if it has obtained proper registration and license from the authorities.

These requirements, however, do not apply to Internet resources; websites do not have to register or to obtain a license. That is a clear case of conflicting requirements in the law. In accordance with ''the Internet law,'' if a website disobeys a court order access to it may be blocked, and its owner may lose the right to the domain name, as well as to all similar-sounding names, for at least three months. A court may also order access to be blocked if the website has broken the law. Plaintiffs are also able to file suits at Kazakh courts against websites hosted abroad. Meanwhile, the Internet law is in clear conflict with the Concept of the Formation and Development of a Universal Information Space of the Kazakh Segment of the Internet (Kaznet) for 2008–2012. In accordance with the Concept, legal relationships on the Internet have a global nature, which is why applying national laws to them without taking into account the laws of other countries could be counterproductive.

One of the main reasons for the decision by the Kazakh government to adopt the Internet law was their anger at the Posit.kz website. In the opinion of Kazakh government officials, comments by the website's users contained unacceptable statements and incitement to ethnic and religious hatred.[19] Even before the adoption of the law Kazakhstan had a history of restricting access to some information on the Internet. For example, access to the Russian blog site Livejournal was blocked on several occasions. In another measure to restrict access to the Internet, on September 2010 the Ministry of Communications and Information issued a decree ordering all companies which use the Kazakh national domain (.kz) to host their servers on the territory of Kazakhstan. Previously the owners of the.kz domain sites preferred to host them on servers abroad because foreign ISPs offered more competitive rates and better service. The government said the purpose of the decree was to support the Kazakh ISPs and improve the quality of their services—but the new regulation has also given the authorities greater control over sites in the.kz domain. After a barrage of criticism, including by Google, in June 2011 the authorities said the new rules would apply only to newly registered.kz domains. As a result, the already existing domain names were able to renew their registration, which the law requires them to do every year.

The Kazakh government filters Internet traffic mainly with the help of Kazakhtelekom, which is the country's dominant provider of telecommunication services. On frequent occasions the websites which displease the authorities are taken down with the help of DDoS attacks. One of the sites which have suffered such attacks is Guljan.org, a popular news portal. It went offline after its servers were overloaded with spurious information requests sent from infected computers. Soon

after restoring its work the site suffered another attack. It is impossible to demonstrate a direct link between such attacks and their targets being critical of the authorities—but suspicions usually fall on the government.

UZBEKISTAN

Development of information and telecommunication technologies is an important priority of the Uzbek government's policy. The use of modern information and telecommunication systems in national development programs is becoming a decisive factor of political modernization.[20] But the use of narrow technical definitions of the term ''informatization'' limits its practicality. The definition contained in the Concept of Informatization of the Republic of Uzbekistan covers not only organizational, technical, and technological, but also political, social, and economic aspects of creating the preconditions for meeting the various demands of society with the help of information resources, technologies, and systems. The Concept says that the objective of informatization is to ensure proper development of the national information space and to foster growth of the information society in Uzbekistan.[21]

The main players in the republic's media and information space are: the government; non-governmental not-for-profit organizations (NGOs); and privately owned commercial companies. NGOs and businesses acquired that status in the Uzbek media market relatively recently, so the role of the main moderator of the informatization and media liberalization processes is being played by the government.[22] At the same time, there are clear geopolitical factors and growing threats to regional and national security, and the Uzbek government has no choice but to react to them in a timely and appropriate manner.

Protecting the information space from threats posed by various external forces is an integral component of the Uzbek government's information policy.[23] But the government is not yet ready to view the media outlets owned by privately owned companies or NGOs as equal partners. For their part, the privately owned media outlets which appear in the Uzbek media market ate not yet ready to take responsibility. As a result, important social and political issues do not receive adequate coverage in the Uzbek media, and the country's media space itself is not really open to the outside world.

The legal framework for the provision of information security in Uzbekistan consists of several laws, concepts, and other documents which outline government policies on informatization, protection of information resources, and information security itself.[24] The current state of that framework can be described in the following way. It:

- contains clear definitions of such terms as information, informatization, information resources, and the national information system;
- outlines the key government policies on informatization and measures being taken to foster the development of information and telecommunication technologies in the republic;
- defines the mechanisms of using and protecting information resources;
- sets out the principles for the formulation of national policies on informatization and telecommunication;
- recognizes the Internet as an important element of the national information network.

In practice, however, the steps being taken by the various agencies whose job it is to protect the national interests of the republic in the information sphere are not always coordinated or coherent because the ideas concerning information security and for protecting the national interests in the information sphere are not sufficiently established in the republic. Since Uzbekistan is a participant in the global information space, and since the country is developing in line with the global trends in the area of informatization, sustainable development requires a concept of information security to regulate the activities of all the participants in information processes in order to provide protection from modern information challenges and threats. That concept should clearly define the basic ideas, objectives, goals, and methods of protecting the national information space, and regulate the activities of the main players responsible for the development of the information sphere in the country. The document should also categorize the information

threats in the military, political, economic, and innovation spheres, and outline the required protection measures.

Because the globalization and informatization trends are becoming stronger, and the influence of information and telecommunication technologies on the modern processes is becoming one of the development factors, it would make sense to consider the possibility of adapting Uzbek legislation and regulation to the task of providing information security in order to protect the country's national interests. The basic principles of information security are availability, integrity, and accuracy of information, as opposed to restriction, bans, and filtering of information. One of the priority tasks for Uzbekistan in the context of security challenges in connection with the development of information and telecommunication technologies should be to develop new Internet projects which would serve the interests of national and international security.

The Internet is showing fairly dynamic growth in Uzbekistan. The republic has more Internet users than any other Central Asian country (7.55 million people[25]); it ranks fourth by that indicator in the CIS. This suggests that Uzbekistan has a lot of potential for further development of services in the area of Internet communications. One of the main tasks is to ensure that Internet services are available all across the country's territory. Digital inequality is a problem Uzbekistan shares with all the other countries in the region. Only 30 percent of the republic's population have Internet access; most of the users live in big cities (Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara). In rural areas mobile phones are often the only means of accessing the Internet.

Government regulation of the telecommunications sector, including the Internet, is the remit of the Uzbek Agency for Telecommunications and Informatization. The agency has the power to propose new laws and to draw up regulations which are compulsory for all the players in the information market. The Uzbektelekom joint-stock company is the only top-tier national Internet service provider. It provides access to the Internet to other ISPs via the International Packet Switching Center.

High Internet tariffs are one of the main reasons why penetration is growing at a fairly slow rate outside the big cities. The high tariffs, for their part, are explained by the high cost of accessing data channels to the outside world. To illustrate, renting a data channel with a bandwidth of up to 10Mbps costs $3,400 per 1Mbps. Only the operators and ISPs who rent high-bandwidth channels can afford such tariffs. That results in oligopoly on the market for Internet services. The country has only four large ISPs: UzNet, Sharq Telecom, Sarkor Telecom, and TPS. They are in no rush to develop Internet infrastructure in the provinces. In other words, the high cost of access to data channels leads to high Internet tariffs which are unaffordable for rural residents due to social and economic factors. In essence, Uzbektelekom must stimulate competition among the ISPs and create a market climate in which new ISPs can appear, leading to lower tariffs. But the national operator wants to preserve the current oligopoly because that way it can regulate access to data channels to the outside world.

Dial-up remains the most common method of accessing the Internet in Uzbekistan,[26] but the number of broadband users continues to grow. In 2009 it reached 100,000 people. In 2011 the capital Tashkent saw the beginning of the rollout of a WiMAX wireless network and fiber-optic channels. The number of websites in the national.*uz* domain is also rising. The domain was registered on April 29, 1995. The domain's administrator is Uzinfikom Center. The.uz domain has seven accredited registrars[27] and, as of early 2012, 13,400 domain names.[28]

One distinctive feature of the.uz zone administration is an official ban on cyber-squatting.[29] Administration of the domain zone is completely transparent; in addition to real-time statistics, various aspects of that administration are constantly being discussed via the Internet with all interested parties.[30]

The government plays the leading role in the development of Internet technologies in Uzbekistan. The legal framework in this area consists of the laws ''On communications,'' ''On the radiofrequency spectrum,'' ''On telecommunications,'' ''On electronic commerce,'' etc. The government's IT policy makes a special emphasis on the need to develop the.uz national domain. In March 2012 the government adopted the Program for Further Rollout and Development of Information and Telecommunication Technologies in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2012–2014. The program highlights the need to develop the national segment of the Internet, including Uzbek social networks and other information resources.[31]

Uznet has all the usual problems faced by the national segments of the Internet in Central Asia. The main problem is that there is not enough content, especially in the national Uzbek language. More than half the Uzbek websites (64 percent) are available only in Russian; a mere 21 percent have an Uzbek-language version. The most popular news websites include Gazeta.uz, UzReport.com, Anons.uz, Olam.uz, Vesti.uz, Afisha.uz, and Kultura.uz. They focus mainly on political, economic, social, and cultural affairs. Their popularity owes much to the fact that the information they publish is largely free of the influence of state ideology, which has a strong presence in the output of most of the traditional Uzbek media outlets. The traditional printed and electronic media, as well as information agencies, also have their websites, which mostly carry official information about events in Uzbekistan. The most popular of them are the UzA National Information Agency of Uzbekistan (http://www.uza.uz), which covers domestic political affairs; and the Jahon News Agency (http://www.jahonnews.uz), which focuses on international news. The vast majority of government agencies also have their websites. The government portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan (http://www.gov.uz) is the most popular virtual platform hosting news and information about the Uzbek government and its structure, the government's policies, and national legislation.

Just like in most of the other countries in the region, the most popular websites in Uzbekistan are social networks and blogs. The large transnational social networking sites have the greatest number of Uzbek users. Some 850,000 Uzbeks have accounts on Odnoklassniki, 625,000 on Moy Mir, 55,000 on Facebook, and more than 1,000 on Twitter.[32] Livejournal is another popular blogging platform. The country has an annual competition, ''The Best Blogger of Uzbekistan,'' which says something about the popularity of blogs in the republic. Even some government agencies—though not many—have accounts on social networking sites. The opposition to the Uzbek regime is also very active in the blogosphere; many opposition organizations have their own pages on Facebook. But such openness does not actually mean that social networks and blogs are working freely and without hindrance in the country.

The Orange revolutions in the former Soviet republics and the Arab Spring in the Middle East have been a cause for great concern for the Uzbek authorities. The country's political elite has come to realize that the information and telecommunication technologies which were used to mobilize the masses during these events can also be used for destructive purposes in Uzbekistan. That is why the government has taken measures to strengthen controls over the Internet. Website filtering and blocking were stepped up after riots in the Uzbek city of Andijan in the spring of 2005. All information containing criticism of the government is usually blocked. Several websites, such as Ferghana.ru, Uznews.net, Centrasia.com, and Uzmetronom.com, have earned the government's particular displeasure. Others are blocked only partially. There is no particular censorship effort against social networking sites; Facebook, VKontakte and Odnoklassniki can be accessed without any problems. But the government monitors user groups on those networks if they disseminate negative information about Uzbekistan. For example, the Yetar! (''Enough!'') youth organization used social networks and blogs to urge Uzbeks to join an anti-government demonstration in Independence Square in Tashkent[33] on June 1, 2011. It created an account on Facebook to mobilize the protesters. Several months ahead of the expected date of the protest, members of the group were urging people to come to the square well prepared for a long sit-in, with food, bedding, tents, and radios.[34] But the event never took place because the security services learned about those plans. They conducted a persuasion campaign, urging people—especially young people—to stay away, and stepped up security measures. Nevertheless, the episode has demonstrated that mobilization of protesters via social networks is possible in Uzbekistan as well. It has made the authorities even more wary of the Internet; the government has stepped up censorship and the practice of blocking access to some websites.

The Uzbek authorities frequently resort to Internet trolling in an effort to control the content of various websites.[35] As soon as someone posts information critical of the authorities, hundreds of comments supportive of the government are immediately posted by anonymous commentators, so-called trolls, hired by the government for just that purpose. One common characteristic of trolls is that all of them hide their true identity and use nicknames. The government has been forced to resort to their services because even the most sophisticated methods of censoring, filtering, and blocking websites are not always effective. Even blocked websites can often be accessed via proxy servers. The Uzbek government is not the only one in Central Asia to use Internet trolling; the Kazakh, Tajik, and Kyrgyz authorities have been known to resort to that practice as well.

Nevertheless, the likelihood of the Uzbek population being mobilized via the Internet in the same way as the population of some Arab countries remains fairly low. The main reason for that is digital inequality; most Uzbeks have limited access to the Internet or no access at all. In the rural parts of the country access to foreign media outlets is also limited. Meanwhile, the local media are not providing adequate coverage of many international events. For example, they mostly kept silent about the so-called Arab Spring. In addition, even those people who have Internet access are aware that the authorities are monitoring websites, so they tend to avoid discussing politics on the Internet.

Still, the government's policy of blocking access to certain websites does not always achieve its goals. Uzbek users frequently resort to proxy servers in order to bypass the restrictions. In addition, it is not always practical for the government to monitor and filter all the information published on social networks and blogging services based in foreign countries. In an effort to foster public morals and virtues, the Uzbek government is encouraging the creation of the country's own social networking sites. The first such network to be established in the republic is Muloqot (which means ''Communication'' in Uzbek). Launched on September 1, 2011, it targets young people. To create an account, users must pass a registration procedure which requires them to give their mobile phone number. As a result, operators of the website can get in touch with the user via his/her mobile in the event of any violations of the terms and conditions. That enables them to keep tabs not just on anonymous nicknames but on real people who use the website. Muloqot has an Uzbek and Russian-language version. The number of registered users stood at 20,000 as of early 2012. The network is finding it difficult to compete with the likes of Facebook, VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan's information and telecommunication infrastructure is developing at a fairly dynamic pace; on the whole, that process is well in line with the global trends in the information space. Significant challenges remain, however, in the area of information security; the issue is covered by some individual pieces of regulation and legislation, but the country lacks an overarching concept or doctrine.[36] Meanwhile, the domestic political situation, the instability of the country's political system, and various social and economic problems are exacerbating external threats, which manifest themselves via the information space, first and foremost. Events in the summer of 2010 have demonstrated that confrontation between the various political forces within the country and ethnic clashes are actively reflected in the information space. The republic's media outlets became active participants in that confrontation, and on many occasions they failed to deflect information attacks by the Western and regional media. This owes much to the fact that, unlike its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan is not a central participant in the Central Asian media space, and cannot always react to the processes going on in that media space in a timely manner. There has long been a public debate on the problems of government policy in the area of information security because the existing multitude of laws and regulations on IT and the media contain many ambiguous or conflicting definitions. Meanwhile, lack of coordination between the various agencies responsible for information security prevents the government from formulating and pursuing a clear policy in this area. The government needs to adopt a universal conceptual document to clarify many definitions in the information sphere, delineate the responsibilities of the various actors, and determine the methods of providing information security.

At the same time, Kyrgyzstan is well ahead of its Central Asian neighbors in terms of Internet penetration. There are more than 2 million Internet users in the country, which comprises 39 percent of the population. But Internet access is easily available only in large cities, such as Bishkek, Osh, and Jalal-Abad. Most of the growth in Internet penetration is generated by mobile technologies; 20 percent of the Kyrgyz users rely on them for Internet access. Penetration rates remain very low in remote parts of the country; there are few computers there, and most people do not speak Russian, which is by far the most popular language in the Kyrgyz segment of the Internet. The problem of digital inequality is being addressed with the help of certain foreign agencies, which are spending their own money to set up Internet centers in the remote provinces, where people are offered free access. Another instrument for overcoming digital inequality is mobile access technologies. Some 6 millio people in Kyrgyzstan (90 percent of the population) have mobile phones.[37]

Kyrgyztelekom is the national Internet service provider. But there are also more than 37 privately owned ISPs, which compete head to head with the state-owned operator. The largest of them are ElCat and Saima Telecom Aknet. These two companies actually have more financial and human resources than Kyrgyztelekom, and are therefore in a better position to invest in the provision of Internet access services. Such a situation has forced the government to privatize Kyrgyztelekom, which was put up for sale on March 27, 2012.[38]

Even though there are many ISPs in the country, Internet tariffs remain high. The reason for that is the same as in Uzbekistan: data channels owned by international operators are expensive, whereas the Kyrgyz customers are very price-sensitive. Most Internet tariffs in the republic still include a limited amount of traffic. Only corporate clients can afford unlimited high-speed access. In 2009 Kyrgyz providers began offering access using a fiber-optic cable between Tajikistan and China, which passes through the country's territory. That has led to a notable reduction in tariffs. But the cable does not reach the north of Uzbekistan and the capital Bishkek, which has the highest number of users in the country.

The .kg national domain was allocated to Kyrgyzstan in 1995. The number of first-level domain names registered in the.kg zone is less than 4,000. Low popularity of the national domain has much to do with the high price of registration. A domain in the.kg zone costs $50, whereas the price for the.com,.net,.org.ru, and.info domains is only $7. Until three years ago the administrator of the.kg zone was the AsiaInfo company. But in 2009 the administration rights were transferred to Kyrgyzpatent, a government agency in charge of patents.[39] The decision was made by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who argued that a national domain zone belongs to the whole country and should therefore be administered by the government.[40] As a result the government now has greater control over the Internet.

Most of the websites in the.kg zone are in the Russian language. Kyrgyz-language content is scarce and not really organized into a meaningful system of information resources. At the same time, most of the national media outlets have websites and regularly update them. In accordance with Kyrgyz laws, websites are not categorized as media outlets, so media laws and regulations do not apply to them. The vagueness of the legal status of such resources makes it easier to turn them into instruments of information wars and campaigns. For example, the Kyrgyz opposition actively uses the Internet to proclaim its goals, to criticize the authorities, and even to call its supporters to action. Such practice existed under the rule of former president Akayev, and it continued to exist under the Bakiyev regime. The most popular Internet media outlets include the Vesti.kg news website, and the Comment.kg, 24.kg, Kabar.kg, and Parus.info analytical portals. The most popular Kyrgyz-language sources are the Super Info online newspaper and Azzatyk radio. These sources are quite popular, thanks to the relatively unbiased and timely reporting they offer. In addition, the online media outlets often publish articles critical of the government, thereby winning an audience among opposition supporters and people in other countries who follow the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

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During Kurmanbek Bakiyev's time in office the government made attempts to limit freedom of speech in the media and on the Internet. It used such methods as website blocking and filtering, and tried to restrict anonymous commenting by users of media websites. Nevertheless, the Internet still offers Kyrgyz citizens the greatest opportunities for freedom of expression. In the run-up to the coup in the spring and summer of 2010 the Internet was used to disseminate harsh criticisms of the government and president, which helped to prepare public opinion for the deposal of Bakiyev. A particularly noteworthy role in mobilizing the masses for a coup was played by social networks and blogs. According to the Kyrgyz Committee for National Statistics, more than 900,000 Kyrgyz citizens have accounts on Twitter, Facebook, VKontakte, Moy Mir, and Odnoklassniki. That is an impressive figure for a country of only 5.4 million. Many political and social activists, including members of parliament, have their own pages on the social networks. The country does not have any national or local social networks of its own. In addition to international networks, information is channeled via blogging platforms offered by some popular news websites. The most popular political discussion board in the country is Diesel Forum, which hosts busy discussions of various protest actions as part of election campaigning. As of January 2012 the site had about 70,000 registered users.

At the same time, social networks, blogs, and Internet forums have played an active role in organizing the provision of help and assistance to the victims of clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the south of the country. Websites were often a lot quicker to break news during the crisis than the traditional news agencies. Social networks and blogs were used to organize groups of volunteers who provided help to the victims. Calls for help were answered by bloggers not only from Kyrgyzstan but also from Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan.

TURKMENISTAN

The development of the IT sector in Turkmenistan picked up pace after the arrival of President Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov in 2007. The country is now connected to the Internet, and there have been encouraging developments in the media market. Previously Turkmenistan allowed only state-owned media to operate in the country; these were almost completely shut off from the outside world, and did not play any role in the global information space. Such a situation stemmed from the previous government's principle of neutrality. The arrival of the new president has brought some changes in the country, including changes in media sector regulation. Turkmenistan's natural gas riches attract foreign investors, which are showing interest in various energy projects. The authorities realize that cooperation with strategic investors will require the country to be better represented in the global information space. This is why they are making efforts to encourage the development of Turkmenistan's media industry, including its online segment.

Until recently the country's laws and regulations were little changed compared with Soviet times. For example, the law ''On the press and other mass media in the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic,'' which regulates the dissemination of and access to information, still remains in force.[41] The law is clearly outdated, and fails to reflect even the very basic ideas from the age of IT.

The government is well aware of this. It is trying to speed up the development and implementation of new laws and regulations in this area.[42] Nevertheless, Turkmen laws still lack any clear definition of information security, and do not reflect its importance for the country's development as a fully-fledged actor in the international arena. Turkmenistan could make use of the experience and expertise of other countries in providing information security.

The change of government in 2007 has also led to another important event which has speeded up the development of IT in the republic. The coming to power of President Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov has, without exaggeration, brought about the arrival of the Internet in Turkmenistan. The.tm national domain was registered back in 1997, but in practice its active use began only a decade later. In 2007 Turkmenistan saw the appearance of its first Internet cafes and resource centers, which help members of the public to learn the basics of using the Internet. As of June 2012 there were 120,000 Internet users in Turkmenistan, and 3,800 domain names registered in the.tm zone.[43] That latter number appears disproportionately high, but that is only because the national domain name looks similar to the TM (trademark) sign. That brought about the idea of selling.tm domains to foreign companies. But the.tm zone was soon frozen, and the right to register domain names in it (limited to third-level domains) was given only to Turkmen residents and organizations. Open registration was resumed in 2003; it became available to all individuals and legal entities, and the government attempted to make some money by selling domain names in the national.tm zone. But owing to poor quality of services, stifling controls by the government, and the high cost of registration ($1,000), demand for domain names in the.tm zone remains low.[44]

Turkmenistan remains one of the world's least connected countries. The main monopolist in the provision of Internet services is the state and the state-owned Turkmentelekom company. Russia's MTS also has a presence in the republic; in addition to mobile telephony it has also begun to offer access to the Internet. But the work of Internet service providers and the content of websites are closely monitored by the authorities. The government controls the licensing of independent ISPs because it views their work as a potential threat to national security. Even a single case of criticism against the Turkmen government can be enough for a website to be blocked on the country's territory. This applies to the websites of newspapers and magazines, especially Russian ones, as well as sites operated by international rights organizations and media outlets such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle, the Voice of America, Liberty, the Turkmen service of Radio Liberty, and websites of Turkmen opposition and dissident organizations abroad. In addition to blocking certain websites, the country's secret services monitor users' attempts to visit these sites, and even their personal correspondence. There are strict control procedures at

the country's Internet cafes; users must produce an ID before they are allowed access to the Internet. Internet tariffs in the country are several times higher than in the neighboring states.[45]

There is next to no Turkmen-language content on the Internet. International social networks and blogging services do not have many users in the country because the authorities have banned all such services and blocked access to them. Nevertheless, several indigenous social networks, blogging sites, and discussion boards have appeared in Turkmenistan in recent years. The most popular of them among Turkmen users and members of the Turkmen diaspora abroad are the Teswirlar.com forum and the Talyplar.com blogging site.[46]

There are no independent privately owned media in Turkmenistan, and the Internet is no exception. Every news report and article must be vetted by government officials. Controls over materials published on the Internet were stepped up in 2011 after explosions at a munitions depot in Abadan. The authorities tried to prevent any reports about those explosions reaching the outside world. Nevertheless, someone leaked the information, and the foreign media severely criticized the Turkmen government, which was accused of covering up a serious accident with many casualties. The Turkmen secret services tried to identify the people suspected of giving this information to the foreign media via the Internet and mobile phones. The website of the Turkmen Human Rights Initiative, which is based in Austria, was attacked by hackers after it published an article about the explosions. A Radio Liberty correspondent who wrote about the blasts in his blog was jailed on trumped-up charges; he was later released under amnesty. The government has also launched a fresh campaign against satellite dishes, which are one of the few remaining means of getting access to unbiased information in the country.

INFORMATION SECURITY OF CENTRAL ASIA ON AGENDA OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Analysis of the approaches adopted by Central Asia states to information security and Internet governance demonstrates that each of the republics formulates its own approaches to these issues. Although they use similar methods to overcome the problem of digital inequality, encourage the development of their national Internet segments, and develop the legal and regulatory framework in the area of information security, they lack a common regional approach to addressing these problems. This is explained by the fairly complex and difficult relations between the Central Asian countries, which pursue a divergent set of domestic and foreign policies. Until seven years ago the five republics were part of the Central Asian Cooperation Organization, which aimed to encourage regional integration and to help in the settlement of regional problems. But the organization ceased to exist in 2005, when it was subsumed by the Eurasian Economic Community.

The Central Asian countries are facing mounting global information threats, which jeopardize their integrity and stability. These countries' political elite is well aware that measures being taken on a national level are not always effective or sufficient. The transnational nature of the information space means that the challenges and threats do not recognize national borders. As a result, providing information security on a national level requires a comprehensive regional or global set of measures. Coups in the former Soviet republics and the Arab Spring in the Middle East have convinced the Central Asian leaders that they need to pool their efforts in the area of information security.

One of the platforms for energetic discussion of international information security (IIS) in which the Central Asian states are taking part is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. All the region's republics are SCO members. The 2006 SCO summit in Shanghai set a precedent by putting information security issues on the agenda. The participants adopted a ''Statement by the SCO member states on information security,'' which stressed that, in this day and age, information and telecommunication technologies can be used for criminal, terrorist, or military-political ends. This poses a threat to international security and can destabilize countries in the region.

In order to counter such information threats, SCO member states have set up an expert group for international information security. The urgency of ensuring IIS as one of the key elements of the entire international system was stressed in the Yekaterinburg Declaration made by the SCO summit in Russia in 2009.[47] The Tashkent Declaration, adopted by the Tashkent summit of the SCO in 2010, views information security as an important factor of state sovereignty, national security, and social-economic stability.[48]

Another instrument for countering information threats is the initiative to create a universal SCO information space, which was announced in Uzbekistan in 2007.[49] Proponents of the idea say that it will help in the formation of a single set of cultural and moral values in the SCO countries. To that end they propose a harmonization of laws and regulations governing the information sphere, including the search, collection, storage, analysis, and protection of information in the SCO states.

Another important element that is required for a universal SCO information space to take shape is the formation and implementation of coordinated policy on the mass media and Internet communications. But the member states already have their own models of information space, which often rely on diametrically opposed methods and instruments for encouraging IT growth and development; contrasting cultural and moral values being promulgated by their national media; and different national approaches to information security and Internet governance. For all these reasons, the formation of a universal information space shared by all SCO members appears to be a very difficult task.

In September 2011 several SCO states, including Russia, China, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, submitted an IIS proposal for the consideration of the UN General Assembly. In a letter sent by permanent envoys of the four countries to the UN secretary-general on September 12, 2011, they proposed the so-called ''Code of Conduct in the Provision of International Information Security.''[50] The proposed document aims to regulate sovereign states' conduct in the information space. Among other things, it highlights the inadmissibility of using information and telecommunication technologies in pursuit of objectives that undermine international security. It calls on UN members to cooperate in fighting criminal, terrorist, and extremist activities which rely on IT, as well as in countering actions which undermine the political, economic, and social stability and the cultural and spiritual traditions of sovereign states.

The document speaks of the need for establishing multilateral and democratic mechanisms of Internet governance which would facilitate its secure and stable functioning. It proposes a ban on using the Internet for military purposes, and argues that governments should be given freedom of action within their national segments of the Internet. But the Code of Conduct proposed by Russia, China, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan has so far won little support among the UN General Assembly delegates. The United States and its Western partners have adopted a critical stance; they view the mechanisms proposed in the draft document as an attempt to establish government control over the Internet.[51]

Another regional body in which the Central Asian states participate and which deals with the issue of information security is the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Cooperation in this area between the CSTO states began in September 2008, when the body approved a program of joint action on establishing a system of information security of member states. The program covers such important areas as cooperation in the political sphere, harmonization of laws and regulations, joint research and development, information exchange, training specialists, providing security for critical infrastructure, and various joint events. The document also highlights the need to develop a common set of terms and definitions in the area of information security; joint efforts to counter information threats; cooperation between the secret services and law-enforcement bodies of member states in providing security of classified information; and countermeasures against efforts by foreign secret services.[52]

In 2010 the CSTO adopted a resolution on cooperation in the area of information security. The main objective of the document is to lay the organizational and legal foundations for cooperation in this area between the member states. As part of its efforts to prevent IT-related crime, the CSTO has launched an operation codenamed PROKSI.[53] Its main goal is to counter cybercrime and the dissemination over the Internet of information which causes political damage to national and allied interests.[54] Another important task the CSTO has undertaken is training information security specialists.

Information security also features prominently on the agenda of the CIS. In 2008 the body adopted a concept of cooperation between the CIS States in the area of information security, and a comprehensive plan of action for the period 2008–2010.[55] The documents contain a list of categories of information threats, with special emphasis on preventing actions by third countries to destabilize the social-political situation in the CIS states. It highlights legal, organizational, technical, and economic methods of providing information security, and calls on states to take greater responsibility for the development of information technologies and Internet communications.

Analysis of the doctrines and strategies adopted by such regional bodies as the SCO, CSTO, and CIS on information security issues indicates that the leading role in the processes of informatization is being played by the governments. The idea of ''information security'' is interpreted mainly as protecting and shielding the information infrastructure of member states from negative external impact. In appears that such an interpretation largely contradicts the approach which emphasizes the availability, integrity, and accuracy of information.

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Based on this analysis of the approaches of Central Asian states to information security and Internet governance, it is safe to conclude that the maturity of government policy in this area in all these countries is at an early to intermediate stage. Each of the five republics wants to pursue its own approach to information security, as reflected in their national laws. They have set up special commissions for information security, and adopted intergovernmental agreements on the protection of information space. But it must be recognized that a lot more work remains to be done in this area on the theoretical and doctrinal levels.

To illustrate, the laws of all five Central Asian republics insist on various iterations of the approach whereby information security is understood to mean protecting the national information space from destructive impact by external forces. The Central Asian governments often categorize as destructive impact any criticism of themselves. At the same time, such an approach tends to neglect the issue of Internet governance. It would not be fair to say that the situation is not improving. One good example of such changes for the better is the information security doctrine of Kazakhstan, which was recently updated. In addition, such an approach is, to a very large degree, both a projection of and the basis for such a vision of these processes which prevails in regional organizations such as the SCTO and the SCO. As a result, the region's countries are partially addressing the problem of harmonizing their approaches to information security issues—but often to the detriment of the scope and depth of these issues. As the national IT sectors in the Central Asian republics continue to grow, these countries will increasingly have to prioritize such problems as security of critical infrastructure, cybercrime, etc. That will necessitate a modernization and partial revision of the existing doctrinal approaches.

It is worth reiterating that in all five Central Asian states the central role in the informatization processes is being played by the government. In particular, government agencies regulate the development of Internet communications and control the operations of privately owned Internet service providers. Internet censorship is a distinctive feature of the Central Asian states, although it is less widespread in Kyrgyzstan. The authorities regularly resort to filtering and blocking access to certain websites. As a rule, such measures are applied to sites which contain criticisms against the country's political leadership or its overall political system. High Internet tariffs, underdeveloped infrastructure, and the resulting problem of digital inequality are some of the main obstacles which hamper Internet penetration and development in the Central Asian countries. It is worth noting, however, that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have made steps in recent years to liberalize the market for Internet services.

Another priority for countries in the region is to develop their own national domains. Not a single one of them has enough systemic content in the national language. Most of the websites registered in the national domain zones are in Russian. One of the reasons for the problem with content in the national languages is the high price of registering a website in the national zone.

Social networks and blogs are quite popular in almost every country in the region. New electronic forms of mass communication are becoming a platform for citizens to express their views on pressing political issues. The governments of the Central Asian states tend to regard this as a cause for major concern. The authorities in these countries view control and regulation of social networks and similar Internet services as one of the top priorities in the area of information security. But the indigenous social networks created in the Central Asian republics remain far less popular than international rivals such as Facebook, Twitter, VKontakte, Odnoklassniki, or Moy Mir.

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On a regional level, the Central Asian countries are trying to address their problems in the area of information security with the help of various integration projects, mainly in the framework of the

SCO, CSTO, and CIS. The approach adopted by these bodies boils down to greater government controls over the IT sector and efforts to shield the Central Asian countries from negative information impact from the outside.

Successful development of the national segments of the Internet in the region's countries will depend on the willingness of their governments to liberalize the IT sector and their ability to combine such liberalization policies with providing information security. The Central Asian governments do not really need to focus on the task of encouraging the expansion of their national Internet segments; that will happen in any case thanks to globalization, economic growth, and diffusion of technologies. The more important objective is to improve the quality of those segments, and to bolster their international competitiveness. The governments need to prioritize new Internet projects, including socially oriented forums, interactive platforms, and online projects. Progress in that direction will pose no threat to national and international security; on the contrary, it will help to strengthen that security thanks to an unprecedented expansion of the potential for interactive cooperation between government agencies and members of the public, as well as new opportunities for public information, public announcement and monitoring systems on a governmental and public level.

NOTES

[1] For the purposes of this article Central Asia is defined as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

[2] ''Asia Internet Use, Population Data and Facebook Statistics,'' *Internet World Stats*, December 31, 2011, < http://www.Internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm#asia>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[3] ''Internet in Central Asia: Communication Tool or Luxury?,'' Fergana.News Information Agency, March 7, 2003, < http://www.fergananews.com/ article.php?id= 1456>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[4] Internet trolls are people who provoke emotional and angry exchanges, persecute other users, or pose as other people on the Internet.

[5] ''The Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Tajikistan,'' National Association of Independent Media of Tajikistan, November 7, 2003, < http://www.nansmit.tj/laws/?id= 26>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[6] ''Media Legislation in Central Asia (Tajikistan),'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, April 10, 2011, < http://medialaw.asia/legislation/38/21>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[7] ''History of the Printed Media of Tajikistan: from Dependent to 'Independent','' *Sto Storon*, November 17, 2011, < http://www.100storon.ru/smi_20_years/20111116/249602764.html>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[8] ''Tajikistan left without *Facebook*,'' *Internet-Technologies*, March 5, 2012, < http://www.Internet-technologies.ru/news/news_2343.html>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[9] ''Tajikistan blocks Facebook and Other Undesirable Websites,'' *BBC Russian Service*, March 5, 2012, < http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/mobile/international/2012/03/120305_tajikistan_Internet_ban.shtml>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[10] ''Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, April 5, 2007, < http://www.medialawca.org/document/-1234>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[11] For more details, see: ''Media Legislation in Central Asia (Kazakhstan),'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, November 23, 2010, < http://medialaw.asia/legislation/36/21>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[12] See: ''Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, April 5, 2007, < http://www.medialawca.org/document/-1234>, last accessed August 26, 2012. See also: ''On the Concept of the Formation and Development of a Universal Information Space of the Kazakh Segment of the Internet for 2008–2012,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, < http://medialaw.asia/document/-1009>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[13] Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan of November 14, 2011, No 174 ''On the Concept of Information Security of the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2016,'' *Nomad*, December 6, 2011, < http://www.nomad.su/?a= 3-201112060038>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[14] ''Concept of the Formation and Development of a Universal Information Space of the Kazakh Segment of the Internet (*Kaznet*) for 2008–2012,'' Kazakh.ru International Kazakh Server, May 12, 2008, < http://www.kazakh.ru/news/articles/?a= 1274>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[15] Administrator: organization which administers the KZ domain under an agreement with the authorized body and the international organization ICANN. It maintains the register of KZ domain names on the Internet. Registrar: a legal entity, a resident of the Republic of Kazakhstan, accredited by the administrator of the KZ domain name. It provides services to registrants who wish to register a domain name in the KZ segment. It enters all the required information in accordance with an agreement signed between the administrator and the registrar. Registrant: an individual or legal entity which submits to the registrar a request and all the necessary documents to register (prolong, change, transfer, or cancel) a domain name, which owns that name for the duration of the registration period, and has the associated rights and responsibilities. For more details, see: ''Procedure of the Implementation of the .KZ Domain,'' *Kazakh Center of Network Information*, January 30, 2012, < http://www.nic.kz/docs/poryadok_vnedreniya_kaz_ru.pdf>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[16] ''KZ Domain Zone and Registration of KZ Domains,'' General-Domain.Ru domain name registration service, < http://www.general-domain.ru/katalog/kz.php>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

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[21] ''Concept of the Development of Informatization of the Republic of Uzbekistan,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, < http://medialaw.asia/document/-2718>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[22] ''Report on the State of Media Legislation in the Republic of Uzbekistan,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, April 13, 2008, < http://medialaw.asia/document/-1265>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[23] ''Economic Basis of the Operation of Media Outlets,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, May 15, 2011, < http://medialaw.asia/document/1265-1296>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[24] For details, see: Law of Uzbekistan ''On Guarantees and Freedom of Access to Information,'' of April 24, 1997. No 400-I. *Vedomosti Oliy Mazhlisa Respibliki Uzbekistan* (Tashkent), 2001, Nos 1–2, p. 23; Law of Uzbekistan ''On the Protection of State Secrets,'' of May 7, 1993, *Vedomosti Verkhovnogo Soveta Respubliki Uzbekistan* (Tashkent), 1993. No 5, p. 232; Law of Uzbekistan ''On Advertising,'' of December 25, 1998. No. 723-I, *Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan* (Tashkent), 2010, No. 38, p. 317; Law of Uzbekistan ''On Mass Media,'' of December 26, 1997, No. 541-I (edition of the law of January 15, 2007—No ZRUz-78), *Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan* (Tashkent), 2007, No. 3,p. 20; Law of Uzbekistan ''On Copyright and Related Rights,'' of July 20, 2006, No. ZRU-42, *Laws of the Republic of Uzbekistan* (Tashkent), 2006, Nos 28–29, p. 260; Law of Uzbekistan ''On Informatization,'' of December 11, 2003, *Vedomosti Oliy Mazhlisa Respubliki Uzbekistan* (Tashkent), 2004, Nos 1–2, p. 10.

[25] ''The UZ Domain is 16 Years Old,'' Gazeta.uz, May 1, 2011, < http://www.gazeta.uz/2011/05/01/cctld/>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[26] More than 80% of Internet-connected households and 40% of businesses use dial-up connections; xDSL is used by 7% of households and 36% of businesses.

[27] ''UZ is 16 Years Old,'' Info.nic.ru, May 5, 2011, < http://info.nic.ru/node/3631>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[28] ''UZ Zone has 14,000 Registered Domains,'' Gazeta.uz, March 27, 2012, < http://www.gazeta.uz/2012/03/27/uz/>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[29] Registration of domain names with the purpose of selling them on at a higher price is allowed, and is not subject to any regulation, in many jurisdictions, including Russia.

[30] ''The UZ Domain is 16 Years Old,'' Gazeta.uz, May 1, 2011, < http://www.gazeta.uz/2011/05/01/cctld/>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[31] ''Government adopts IT Development Program for 2012–2014,'' Gazeta.uz, March 28, 2012. http://www.gazeta.uz/2012/03/28/ict/>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[32] S. Ismoilov, ''Egyptian Syndrome in Uzbekistan,'' Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan, February 22, 2011, <http://ru.hrsu.org/archives/1793>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[33] Yetar! (Enough!) is a youth movement set up by Uzbek citizens in 2005. The organization is active mainly on the Internet. Yetar! is the name and the slogan of the youth movement, which says that it consists mainly of 25- to 30-year-old Uzbek citizens. Their goal is peaceful removal from power of President Islam Karimov, who they argue has already served his maximum two terms of office allowed by the constitution. They say Karimov should have stepped down in 2007, and that he is now occupying the position of the president in breach of the law.

[34] ''People want to say Yetar! to Islam Karimov,'' Uznews.net Independent Information Service of Uzbekistan, April 11, 2011, <http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng= ru&cid= 30&sub= &nid= 16892>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[35] Trolling—posting provocative messages on discussion boards in order to trigger a conflict, an exchange of insults, etc.

[36] ''Media Legislation of Kyrgyzstan,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, January 6, 2011, <http://www.medialawca.org/legislation/37/21>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[37] ''Number of Mobile Subscribers in Kyrgyzstan is 98 Percent of the Population,'' *Zhenmin Zhibao online*, June 2, 2011, <http://russian.people.com.cn/31519/7398078.html>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[38] ''Temir Sariev explains why Kyrgyztelekom has been put up for Sale,'' *K-news*, March 27, 2012, <http://www.knews.kg/ru/parlament_chro/13338/>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[39] ''Procedure for Registration in the .KG Domain,'' Kyrgyzstan Domain Registration Service, December 2, 2010, <http://www.domain.kg/rus/regulation.htm>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[40] ''Kyrgyz President takes Offence?,'' *Host: On Hosting and Domains*, April 14, 2009, <http://ohost.ru/blog/topic/1043/>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

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[42] ''Turkmen Media Legislation,'' *Law and Media in Central Asia*, January 6, 2011, <http://medialaw.asia/legislation/39/21>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

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[45] ''Internet in a Country of the Absurd: Turkmenistan,'' Helsinki Foundation, December 12, 2008, <http://www.tmhelsinki.org/ru/modules/news/article.php?storyid= 1075>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[46] ''Turkmenistan: Enemy of the Internet,'' Reporters without Borders for Press Freedom, April 4, 2011, <http://en.rsf.org/IMG/pdf/turkmenistan_ru-2.pdf>, last accessed August 27, 2012.

[47] ''Yekaterinburg Declaration of the SCO Heads of State,'' President of the Russian Federation (Official Website), 2009, June 16, <http://archive.kremlin.ru/text/docs/2009/06/217868.shtml>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[48] ''Declaration of the 9th Session of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO,'' SCO Information Portal, June 11, 2010, <http://www.infoshos.ru/ru/?id= 74>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[49] ''Civilizational Ideology for the SCO: Informational Civilization,'' *XXI Century*, <http://www.info21.ru/second.php?id= 108>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[50] Letter of September 12, 2011 by permanent representatives of China, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan at the UN to the Secretary-General, A/66.359, General Assembly, United Nations, October 14, 2011, <http://rus.rusemb.org.uk/data/doc/internationalcoderus.pdf>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[51] For more details about the proposed Code of Conduct in the area of provision of international information security, see: Oleg Demidov, ''International Regulation of Information Security and Russia's National Interests,'' *Security Index*, No. 4 (101), Fall 2012, pp. 15–32.

[52] Decision of the Collective Security Council of the CSTO ''On a Program of Joint Action to form the System,'' September 5, 2008, <http://www.info21.ru/second.php?id= 108>, last accessed August 26, 2012.

[53] PROKSI is an abbreviation, in Russian, of ''Countering Crime in the IT Sector.'' The operation is part of a program to create a system of information security for CSTO member states.

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Christopher Ford and Thomas Graham

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND NONPROLIFERATION: THE AMERICAN WAY

FROM: CHRISTOPHER FORD

TO: THOMAS GRAHAM

SUBJECT: *IS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT APPROPRIATE IN TODAY'S WORLD?*

Dear Tom,

It is a pleasure to have the chance to correspond with you, and I am grateful to *Security Index* for putting us in touch for this exchange. I am looking forward to hearing your thoughts on whether a policy of nuclear disarmament is appropriate within the current international security climate.

For my part, I am somewhat skeptical. In my experience, proponents of nuclear disarmament, when pressed on the question, commonly declare that what is really needed to achieve and sustain a world of zero is some kind of fundamental transformation in how the international community thinks about military security. In this respect, I quite agree with the disarmament community, insofar as I believe it is true that envisioning a disarmed world necessarily presupposes a world that operates fundamentally differently—in its approaches to security, conflict resolution, status, and indeed national power itself—from how things work today.

Without some kind of politico-moral, or even psychological, revolution in world politics, in fact, my suspicion is that disarmament would create more problems than it would solve. To my eye, without such a transformation, a world with no existing nuclear weapons but living with the ever-present possibility of their re-development by any one or more of a large number of states seems likely to be a less stable and more perilous place than a world like the one we live in today. As Thomas Schelling has rightly observed, in such a disarmed but nuclear-capable world, every crisis would be a potential nuclear crisis. Indeed, incentives might even exist for a state in a crisis to race to build a handful of nuclear weapons and actually use them preemptively, to win an overwhelming victory and preclude its rival's weaponization. (Nor is it obvious that a disarmed world would not see the door opened, once again, to general war between the major powers. As I have said elsewhere, 1914 or 1941 would represent no improvement over 2012.)

By contrast to that potentially perilous future environment, today's world—in which a small number of states retain nuclear weapons but avoid Cold War-style arms races with each other, and in which nonproliferation norms make it hard for additional players to join the game—does not seem so bad. It may not be easy to ensure such conditions in the future, of course, but doing so sounds more feasible than achieving zero.

My disagreement with the disarmament community is really about how feasible it is to achieve the kind of global transformation that would be needed to make zero anything but destabilizing madness, and how likely it is that such a thing will occur. Such transformation is not beyond imagining, I suppose, but that sort of epochal psychosocial evolution is probably not the kind of thing that one can count on, predict a date for, or offer much of a coherent public policy roadmap for achieving. (Indeed, because of the potentially horrendous costs of disarming in a world that is

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otherwise still armed, it is very hard to imagine how one could persuade any rational actor to lead the way.) Even the famously disarmament-friendly President Obama has said that we should not expect disarmament in his lifetime, and I'd reckon that if we will ever see it at all, he is greatly understating the time that will be required.

If zero is in fact much less likely and much more distant an objective than disarmers claim, however, we will have a lot of work still to do for many decades in maintaining security and stability through robust deterrent policies. Since even the most optimistic of disarmers do not expect abolition to occur soon, I thus hope that we will be able to agree—at least in the short term—upon a number of issues that are important to maintaining deterrence and security until such time as some such hoped-for transformation occurs.

I may myself be too optimistic in this, but I believe it is possible to imagine something of an American consensus on nuclear policy issues in the short and medium term, with hawks and disarmers agreeing to disagree about the long-term future while yet working together on matters such as: U.S. nuclear modernization; warhead safety, security, and reliability; command and control survivability; achieving optimal tailoring of nuclear forces to anticipated missions so as to be able to reduce to the lowest possible number; and robust and effective measures to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weaponry and mitigate the damage caused by nonproliferation failures.

Such is my two cents' worth, at any rate. How do you see this question?

All my best,

Chris

FROM: THOMAS GRAHAM

TO: CHRISTOPHER FORD

SUBJECT: *RE: IS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT APPROPRIATE IN TODAY'S WORLD?*

Dear Chris,

It is equally my pleasure to correspond with you about these issues and I also thank *Security Index* for making these arrangements. These are important issues and they deserve serious attention on a regular basis. Overall, Chris, my response to your two cents as to whether a policy of nuclear disarmament is appropriate in the current situation is to say that we do not differ greatly. Our principal differences it seems to me are how stable do we see present conditions to be and on my part perhaps a greater emphasis on nonproliferation than deterrence.

Since 2006 I have been working with the so-called Group of Four: former Secretary of State George Shultz, former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and former Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn on the subject of nuclear disarmament. I very much agree with their assessment articulated in their first *Wall Street Journal* op-ed article in January, 2007 that ''unless urgent new actions are taken, the U.S. soon will be compelled to enter a new nuclear era that will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically even more costly than was Cold War deterrence.'' It is not clear to me that the stability of U.S.–Soviet Cold War deterrence can be replicated for the next 50 years, with the spread of technology, nuclear weapon arsenals outside of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, programs such as those of North Korea and Iran, and the lessening viability of the NPT as compared with past decades. Thus, while the conditions of the current international security situation would certainly not permit a serious effort to eliminate nuclear weapons in the near future—among other things highly intrusive worldwide verification and rigorous means of enforcement (including military measures) systems would be required—not possible in today's world—as the Four Statesmen indicated in their article, urgent steps should be taken to lay the groundwork for the achievement of the conditions that would permit the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

Every American president since World War II has in principle favored the elimination of nuclear weapons and every one since Richard Nixon has reaffirmed the obligations of the NPT, which envisions the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. But, as the Four Statesmen indicated in their article, no president was more explicit on this than was Ronald Reagan who called for the

abolishment of ''all nuclear weapons'' which he considered to be ''totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possibly destructive of life on Earth and civilization.''

Thus, nuclear disarmament as a goal is one that it is imperative to retain. However, we do not live in a world where this is possible or even foreseeable. We live in a world of threats, where it is not clear that the NPT will hold, and that nuclear weapons will not spread significantly further—referred to by President John F. Kennedy as ''the greatest possible danger and hazard.''

Thus I agree, Chris, everything possible must be done to prevent further nuclear weapon proliferation and, as the Four Statesmen argue, everything possible must also be done, in my view, to create the conditions that will make the eventual abolishment of nuclear weapons possible. New START was a good step in that it essentially codifies where the U.S. and Russia planned to be anyway. But much more should be done in the nearer future to include: reducing the alert status of nuclear weapons; pursuing further reductions in nuclear weapons—not only U.S. and Russian weapons but also those of other states possessing nuclear weapons; finding a way to permit U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and its entry into force; achieving the highest standard of security for nuclear weapons and material worldwide; eliminating forward-deployed tactical nuclear weapons; and ending the production of fissile material for weapons globally. Also, hand in hand with all this must be efforts to regulate conventional weapons and to solve regional confrontations.

And I also agree that at this time nuclear deterrence has a role to dissuade the use of nuclear weapons by others and for this purpose the U.S. stockpile must be maintained safe and reliable. But this should be able to be accomplished at a far lower level than during the time of Cold War deterrence and indeed below New START levels.

So those are my thoughts and again I am grateful for the opportunity to have this discussion.

All my best,

Tom

FROM: CHRISTOPHER FORD

TO: THOMAS GRAHAM

SUBJECT: *THE U.S. NUCLEAR ARSENAL*

Dear Tom,

Thanks for your thoughtful reply. I don't think we disagree in principle about the desirability of creating conditions that might someday make disarmament attractive and feasible, but we might part company about how to do that, and how to prioritize objectives along the way.

For now, however, let me ask you a second question. One often hears it said that if the United States pursues nuclear disarmament, then its allies may feel the need to develop their own nuclear weapons. What are your thoughts on this?

For my part, it seems to me that some U.S. allies might conceivably feel the need to develop nuclear weaponry even if the United States does maintain a robust and credible nuclear arsenal. The U.S. security umbrella for such allies has never been exclusively nuclear, but has instead relied in part upon a very strong American conventional power-projection capability as well—backed up by the availability of nuclear weapons in extremis. (To see why this is so, imagine how credible it would seem for a U.S. president to try to defend a small regional ally against conventional attack by a nuclear weapon state only by threatening World War III in response to the first local artillery bombardment!) The umbrella has always relied upon the availability of both nuclear and capable conventional forces. I think we'd be making a great mistake to forget this.

U.S. nuclear disarmament would surely make these proliferation pressures all the worse, particularly in an era when American leaders seem likely to reduce defense spending drastically, thus significantly cutting back the global conventional power-projection capabilities that we will have available in years ahead. From the point of view of some U.S. regional allies—who face additional proliferation pressures on account of the international community's failure to prevent

proliferation in North Korea and to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions, and who (in East Asia) now also worry about China's growing military power and regional bellicosity—this is a grim combination.

If the United States wishes to have any chance of providing security assurances to its regional allies of a sort that would reduce the proliferation pressures they are coming to face—and especially if we wish to do this while reducing our nuclear arsenal—we will need to maintain a conventional capability beyond what Washington currently seems willing to pay for. Providing regional stability and forestalling further nuclear weapons proliferation through a robust U.S. military posture is neither easy nor inexpensive, but it is very important to international peace and security. The current approach of seeking further nuclear reductions, reducing defense spending across the board, and seeking to reassure friends of the continued and unshakeable credibility of our alliance commitments seems dangerous indeed: these three objectives seem fundamentally incompatible. President Obama sometimes likes to depict what look like difficult quandaries as really being false choices, but we don't face a false choice here: it's a real one. If we're going to cut our mainline defense budget, it will be harder to reduce our nuclear holdings, and vice-versa. I fear we're headed for the worst possible alternative—namely, cutting both, in which case it would be hard to blame some of our allies for finding nuclear weaponry increasingly attractive.

And since this brings us to the topic of possible U.S. nuclear weapons reductions, let me also ask you how low you think we can go. Opponents of U.S. nuclear disarmament believe the United States needs a nuclear arsenal to protect itself and its allies. But how many weapons are enough, and what sorts of weapons should we have?

I do not myself think that it is necessary to expand the current U.S. nuclear capability. Modernization, however, is essential, as is maintaining a nuclear weapons infrastructure capable of rapid and effective expansion if the future security environment should take a dramatic turn for the worse.

For many years the United States was the only nuclear weapons possessor that was not modernizing its arsenal, and now that we have just begun the long process of doing so, it is very important that we continue. For so long as we retain any nuclear weapons, I believe it is vital—and both deterrence and crisis stability require—that they be safe, secure, reliable, credible, survivable, and as well-tailored to their potential missions as possible. We will also need to ensure that our nuclear weapons infrastructure is capable of being genuinely responsive to future threats, not least because keeping state-of-the-art weapon design capabilities and a robust production capacity is a critical hedge against future uncertainty without which we would likely need to keep in existence a much larger nuclear arsenal.

These requirements do not lessen with reductions in our nuclear arsenal, and they may even increase. The fewer weapons we possess, it seems to me, the more important it is that those we keep are optimized for modern needs in all these respects, and the more important it is that we maintain the ability to reverse course in the face of some grave new threat. Underinvestment in modernization has left us with an arsenal built around systems developed in and optimized for a Cold War competition that ended decades ago, not now changed in any significant essential but merely reduced drastically in numbers. (It has also left us with an infrastructure that is today all but incapable of genuinely new work in this field or of significant production volumes, either now or in some future contingency.) If we are serious about maintaining deterrence and meeting our security needs as the twenty-first century progresses, especially with fewer weapons on hand than at present, we have a lot of work to do.

As for how many weapons we need today, I find that a very challenging question. Clearly, if we wish to keep reducing the size of our arsenal we will at some point encounter a choice between continuing with counterforce targeting (i.e., aiming for military targets) and adopting a more weapon-economical countervalue approach that deliberately aims at innocent civilian populations. (There is invariably not much practical distinction between these two positions, of course, for with our current weapon designs, attacks on military targets that happen to be in or near urban areas would probably have many of the same effects as countervalue targeting of those same population centers. Nevertheless, it is a significant moral distinction, and perhaps a legal one as well.) Depending upon who and what we wish to deter, moreover, the choice between counterforce and countervalue could affect how effective our deterrent posture is over time as well. It could also affect the utility of the nuclear umbrella we extend to allies. (The credibility of countervalue threats in response to all but the most egregious direct attacks on one's homeland has frequently been questioned, especially where the potential adversary is a nuclear-armed state.)

Most fundamentally, perhaps, the answer of ''how low can we go'' in our nuclear numbers will depend upon how many targets we feel it necessary to hold at risk—and under what conditions—and there is little likelihood of that debate occurring in public. Moreover, since force structure planning needs to be done many years in advance, we need to make such calculations not just on the basis of the current security environment but on the basis of what we think the future environment might look like. This is necessarily a very inexact business, and there exist powerful incentives to aim high as a hedge against future uncertainty. (Personally, I would rather have more weapons than I need to deter my adversaries than have too few, and I suspect most U.S. planners would share this perspective.) Particularly as some other nuclear weapons possessors continue to build up their numbers—and here it must be acknowledged that uncertainty over the future of the notoriously opaque Chinese arsenal is perhaps the foremost problem, though not the only one—it will likely be very difficult for us to contemplate further reductions, particularly before a vigorous U.S. modernization program has come to fruition.

That's plenty from me for now. What are your thoughts on these matters?

All my best,

Chris

FROM: THOMAS GRAHAM

TO: CHRISTOPHER FORD

SUBJECT: *RE: THE U.S. NUCLEAR ARSENAL*

Dear Chris,

This is a *tour de force*. I would need a short book to answer adequately the important questions that you raise, but I will try a few comments.

First a few words about the nuclear umbrella. This was always a Cold War concept but it does have some relevance today. But in my view it was always a bit overrated. What caused, and is still causing, to the degree it continues in this post-Cold War era, America's allies to rely on her has always been far more complicated than nuclear weapons or even military strength generally. America's principal Cold War allies, the UK and France, opted for nuclear weapons. President De Gaulle famously said, paraphrasing, ''will the United States risk New York to save Paris?'' He apparently didn't think so and built the Force de Frappe. Germany early on was constrained by treaty from building nuclear weapons, a post-World War II measure. Did Israel rely on the nuclear weapons of America for protection? No, it built its own highly sophisticated nuclear weapon arsenal. Japan was prevented from building nuclear weapons by its post-World War II constitution, and South Korea remained in the non-nuclear weapon state camp only after very heavy pressure from the United States in the late 1970s. Some argue that an Iranian nuclear weapon arsenal can be countered as far as Saudi Arabia is concerned by extending to it the U.S. nuclear umbrella, but if De Gaulle did not believe that the United States would risk New York to save Paris why would Saudi Arabia believe that the U.S. would risk New York to save Riyadh? The response by Saudi Arabia to a nuclear weapon stockpile in Iran would be proliferation, that is nuclear weapons, as did France and Israel, likely promptly acquired from Islamabad. Thus, the nuclear umbrella while real has also been limited in its effect.

Robert McNamara, the former Secretary of Defense, used to tell me that neither president for whom he worked (Kennedy or Johnson) would ever have contemplated the use of nuclear weapons except in response to nuclear weapons being used against the United States. Undoubtedly Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, and the first President Bush shared this view. There is some uncertainty with respect to President Nixon in that he did raise the U.S. to an alert level of Def Con 2 during the Middle East crisis of 1973 to intimidate the Soviets but likely he shared this view as well. And this is certainly true of the post-Cold War presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama. So in a sense it is a false choice; nuclear weapons cannot replace conventional weapons because they simply will not be used to defend a regional ally except in the case of actual nuclear attack. Thus our defensive umbrella everywhere will remain conventional; small regional allies will have to be defended with conventional arms but likely not large armies any more as opposed to more mobile type units such as Navy Seals and Army Special Forces. NATO of course has its own arrangements. Thus the number of nuclear weapons that the U.S. needs for its

defense is the number needed to deter other nuclear weapons. This is the only role today for nuclear weapons; the U.S. never has and will not introduce nuclear weapons into conventional conflicts. This is well understood, the nuclear weapon non-use norm is today widely supported, it obviously is important that it continue to hold.

So how much is enough—the old question from the Cold War? Absent further actions from states other than the U.S. and Russia the New Start levels are an appropriate level. The U.S. and Russia in a New START follow-on negotiation could perhaps reduce to 1,000 total weapons but in my view the U.S. and Russia should seek in this context a cap on the stockpiles of the other nuclear weapon states. And then perhaps if that should be accomplished there could follow at some point, hopefully not too far in the future, a multilateral nuclear weapon negotiation to reduce nuclear weapons. Should this take place, perhaps the number 300 would suffice for the U.S. and Russia on the condition that there would be significantly lower limits on the other states possessing nuclear weapons. Thus with these caveats perhaps 300 nuclear weapons would be sufficient for the U.S. to effectively deter the remaining stockpiles.

And in contemplating this process it is, in my view, most unlikely that U.S. allies would seek nuclear weapon stockpiles. For one thing it would derail the nuclear weapon reduction process which virtually all of them support. Germany, Japan, and South Korea have long been very strong supporters of nuclear disarmament and other U.S. allies, the UK, France, and Israel already have nuclear weapons. Threats abound to the NPT, North Korea threatens Northeast Asia, particularly South Korea and Japan, and the Iranian program threatens the Middle East—such states as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey. If new nuclear stockpiles are considered by U.S. allies it will be because of reasons such as this, not the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

However, with respect to the U.S. stockpile, whether it is at a level of 300, 1,000, or at New START levels, modernization must be pursued vigorously as long as nuclear weapon testing, contrary to the moratorium, is not part of such a program. It is important to keep the existing U.S. stockpile safe, secure and reliable.

All my best,

Tom

FROM: CHRISTOPHER FORD

TO: THOMAS GRAHAM

SUBJECT: *MY DIFFERENCES WITH THE DISARMAMENT COMMUNITY*

Dear Tom,

Thanks again for your response: I'm enjoying this exchange! I would agree that a fairly strong norm of nuclear weapons non-use has developed since 1945—but there has also developed a pretty strong norm that major powers don't wage general war against each other. We should be cautious about disarmament in case the overlap between this second norm and the existence of nuclear weaponry is not just a coincidence.

But I hope you'll let me toss another question at you. In his Prague speech in April 2009, President Obama said that nuclear disarmament is unlikely to be achieved in his lifetime. As I suggested in an earlier e-mail, I agree with that—and indeed think Obama understates the time that will be needed for the abolition, if indeed such a future is ever likely to materialize at all. I was wondering, however, what timeline you yourself might project—and what, if anything, might persuade you to drop that objective?

For my part, I think trying to set a timetable for zero would be both pointless and inadvisable. Rather than a catalyst for constructive action, a timeline would probably just be an exercise in humiliation. Worse still, an imminent failure to make the deadline might prompt the stupidity of political desperation. (As a friend of mine likes to put it, ''if you want it bad, you get it bad!'')

Let me repeat, however, that despite my skepticism about abolition, I still see room for cooperation between hawks and disarmers on nuclear deterrent stability during the likely rather long period before any such zero is likely to appear at all feasible. As I mentioned in my first

e-mail, I hope there is room for agreement on modernization and robust deterrence for so long as we retain any such weapons at all.

As for what we can do to increase the odds that something akin to zero will occur at some point in the future, my instinct is that present-day disarmament debates focus upon the wrong target. Trying to address issues of the existence (or non-existence) of nuclear weapons themselves may not actually be as important as trying to address at least some of the rivalries and competitive dynamics of global politics that have helped make the acquisition or retention of nuclear weapons seem so appealing to a number of states. I don't mean to suggest that we can plan our way to a wholesale transformation of world politics, of course, but it may well be possible to make some progress on political issues that will help ease—if perhaps still not solving—a number of states' security dilemmas.

Focusing upon the tools used in a rivalry, in other words, may be less important than trying to defuse the intensity or scope of that rivalry itself—which is more a broader question of international politics than an arms control objective per se.

The history of our extraordinary progress reducing the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals since 1991, it seems to me, underscores this point. Arms control measures played some role in containing or channeling the U.S.–Soviet arms race during the tensions of the Cold War, but sweeping arms reductions were possible only as a result of the underlying rivalry having undergone fundamental change with the end of Cold War itself. (Arms control, one might say, is about managing what you can't fix, disarmament is what you can achieve once things are fixed, and statesmanship is about trying to fix them.) Between Washington and Moscow, the political changes that ended the Cold War made the critical difference, and arms reduction progress was comparatively easy thereafter. Today we have taken out of service something like four out of every five weapons we had in 1991, and we are no more insecure for it. That's progress indeed!

But this is something that I think the contemporary disarmament community has gotten entirely wrong: focusing so much upon the nuclear weapons themselves puts the cart before the horse. Even from the perspective of seeking some eventual zero, we should worry less at this point about reducing the number of nuclear arms and more about how to ease tensions and resolve political problems. If we can't make progress on those political issues, we might as well openly give up on zero, because it won't happen anyway. (Diplomatic energy and political capital are finite resources; we should spend them on things that aren't fantasies.)

But that raises another question I'd like to ask you. What, in your view, would happen were the United States actually to repudiate the goal of disarmament? It is often alleged in disarmament circles that such a rejection would immediately cause global nonproliferation norms to break down, but I'm not so sure.

Frankly, I don't believe that the success or failure of global nonproliferation depends nearly so much upon U.S. disarmament policy as pro-disarmament Americans often like to flatter themselves by thinking. (Perhaps you recall that saying about how for someone who only knows how to use a hammer, the whole world looks like a nail?) At any rate, I think the linkage is pretty tenuous, if indeed there exists any at all.

From a nonproliferation perspective, we've certainly gotten precious little out of our ostentatious pro-disarmament posturing during the last four years. (Iran and North Korea face tougher sanctions than they did before, but these pressures haven't been enough to change their policies, and in any event we owe what sanctions there are to those regimes' ongoing provocations—not to Barack Obama's disarmament promises. Nor is our current disarmament-friendly position preventing an ever-larger number of countries from pursuing technological capabilities clearly intended to give them a nuclear weapons option in the future.) The world's proliferation dynamics, alas, continue apace, essentially unaffected by our disarmament-friendly positioning. We might see some repercussions in diplomatic circles if we renounced the eventual objective of disarmament, therefore—for cherished dreams die hard whether or not they are realistic ones—but it's not obvious that anything really substantive would actually change.

I should stress, however, that I don't think it is necessary to repudiate the idea of disarmament. In the essentially hortatory way it is addressed in the Preamble and Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty—that is, as an aspiration for the world's eventual progress, a destination that we would like someday to achieve through the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust

between States—it is quite unobjectionable. (Indeed, as you have pointed out, this notion has been endorsed by every U.S. president since 1968.)

I have no problem with the objective as thus understood. I do, however, think we need to be more honest about several things: (a) the difficulty and distantness of zero if indeed it ever arrives at all; (b) the need to avoid doing stupid things in our security policy during such time as nuclear weapons continue to exist; and (c) the fact that it is probably more important today to work on easing tensions and strengthening trust than on the Sisyphean labor of trying to bring about significant and lasting reductions without having first made such political progress.

Have I provoked you enough yet? I'd be interested in your reactions...

All my best,

Chris

FROM: THOMAS GRAHAM

TO: CHRISTOPHER FORD

SUBJECT: *RE: MY DIFFERENCES WITH THE DISARMAMENT COMMUNITY*

Dear Chris,

Setting a time line to achieve zero nuclear weapons certainly would be pointless and unwise. I spent a significant part of my active government career opposing the Indian concept of time-bound disarmament and I have always opposed the Nuclear Weapon Convention, espoused by some activists and many countries in the Non Aligned Movement (in case you missed it the last two chairmen were Cuba and Egypt, the new chairman is Iran, but the Movement has membership of over 100 countries). I had to contend with them in the 1994–1995 effort to make the NPT permanent; it is possible to do so but it is important to listen to them and their concerns—but that is diplomacy. Of course there is a considerable difference between some of the countries in the Movement and the vast majority as to the potential for productive dialogue. But placing a time limit on the achievement on nuclear disarmament is significantly misguided without doubt.

That said I consider a commitment to nuclear disarmament as a real objective—far off but real—and indeed imperative. The NPT was and remains a strategic bargain—not a gift from the 180-plus non-nuclear weapon states to the recognized five nuclear weapon states. That bargain was and is nonproliferation for most of the world, in exchange for peaceful nuclear cooperation and nuclear disarmament efforts aimed at the ultimate abolition of nuclear stockpiles by the five nuclear weapon states: US, UK, France, Russia, and China. No matter the text of NPT Article VI, this expectation is abundantly clear from the record. In 1965, for example, the Swedish–Indian resolution made clear that the nonproliferation treaty being contemplated must be based on balanced obligations for nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states alike. The good faith honoring of this strategic bargain creates balance for the NPT and political cover for many countries to give up forever the most powerful weapons ever created—the possession of which for many years has symbolized first class status in the world. The non-nuclear weapon states understood that the ultimate abolition of nuclear stockpiles remains far off from their point of view, but the states possessing nuclear weapons could at least stop testing them. Thus the CTBT became the litmus test of nuclear weapon state good faith in observing the NPT strategic bargain. Failure thus far to bring the CTBT into force; the Indian, the Pakistani, the Israeli as well as the North Korean and Iranian programs; nuclear weapon state—principally the United States and China—non-observance of the NPT agreements reached in 1995 and 2000; among other things, have all seriously weakened the NPT. It is important to remember the comment by Ambassador Dhanapala, the president of the 1995 Conference, at the conclusion of the Conference, ''the NPT does not run on autopilot.'' Thus in this situation, in my view, if the United States—not having ratified the CTBT—also were to reject nuclear disarmament, that would be the end of the NPT and it would gradually fade away.

The second reason that I support nuclear disarmament as a real objective is that I agree with Messrs. Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, and Nunn about the dangers of the current situation as I said in a previous message. I believe that it is important to ''rekindle the vision'' of Ronald Reagan of the elimination of nuclear weapons. And his vision should be reasserted with ''practical measures

toward achieving that goal'' pursued on an urgent basis. Through such a process hopefully one day, by means of activities in many areas to include nuclear weapon policy, conventional arms, and regional confrontations, the conditions will be created which will make the elimination of nuclear weapons conceivable. But as to when this might be it is difficult to say. The time is certainly far off. The world must fundamentally change to, among other things, permit comprehensive worldwide verification which must include intrusive onsite inspection everywhere and a truly effective means of enforcement by the world community which includes economic and where necessary military measures. This is a tall order but one worth pursuing through interim measures now such as CTBT and a fissile material for a weapons cut-off treaty but never losing sight of the vision. And as I agreed yesterday during this long period ahead appropriate measures must ensure that the remaining U.S. stockpile remains safe, secure, and reliable.

Finally, nuclear disarmament does not have a great deal to do with President Obama. He largely took his lead on this subject from the Shultz Group. The real impetus came from and comes from President Ronald Reagan. But even so the U.S., along with China, remain the least disarmament friendly of the major states, for example, Russia, the UK, France, Germany, and Japan have all ratified CTBT; the U.S. has not. Russia has more nuclear weapons but the U.S. spends more money on its nuclear weapon complex. Of course Russia and the U.S. possess over 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons, thus Russia remains, as all through the Cold War, the indispensable partner for the U.S. in all nonproliferation and nuclear weapon reduction and disarmament efforts. Indeed U.S.–Russian cooperation is essential to the continued viability of the NPT.

All my best,

Tom

FROM: CHRISTOPHER FORD

TO: THOMAS GRAHAM

SUBJECT: *U.S. POLITICS AND RUSSIA'S NONPROLIFERATION POLICY*

Dear Tom,

You're quite right, as Ambassador Dhanapala put it, that the NPT does not run on autopilot—though in truth, I've never heard anyone suggest that it does. It's clear that making the nonproliferation regime work takes effort and commitment. It's shameful, therefore, that so few countries apart from the United States and its allies have shown much willingness to shoulder burdens or to bear risks in support of nonproliferation.

The modern upwelling of international diplomatic unhappiness with the NPT and ill-disguised sympathy for proliferators has precisely coincided with massive post-Cold War nuclear reductions by the United States and Russia, giving the lie to any suggestion that disarmament breeds nonproliferation success. One often hears it promised that our disarming faster will turn this around, but experience suggests quite the opposite: the trend since the early 1990s has been that disarmament progress by the superpowers is answered by nonproliferation backsliding. Needless to say, I find this worrying, and get exasperated to be told that the answer to the world's nonproliferation problems is for U.S. to disarm itself faster.

But let's move to a slightly different question. The United States has just had a presidential election, with Barack Obama returning to office for another four years. What do you think this outcome will mean for arms control and disarmament?

Though I do not know exactly what Governor Romney thought on these issues, I would myself imagine that a Romney Administration would have had perspectives much closer to what I have outlined in this exchange with you than to the positions of the Obama Administration. I assume that a Romney Administration would have attempted to press more vigorously for U.S. nuclear modernization and infrastructure responsiveness, would have been less sympathetic to the prospect of further reductions, and would have much more strongly resisted limitations upon U.S. missile defenses. It might, however, still have been interested in further strategic arms control negotiation—though perhaps more eagerly with China on transparency and/or confidence-building measures than with Russia on weapon numbers or weapon types. We'll never know now, of course, but such is my supposition.

If it did choose to engage in further strategic negotiations, however, it might be that a Romney Administration would have had a better chance than Obama of eliciting meaningful concessions from the other side. Romney probably would not have considered it absolutely essential to have any agreement, and would have felt freer than Obama simply to walk away from the table if offered inadequate terms. (By contrast, the Obama Administration's negotiating effectiveness has surely been hampered by the widespread, and probably accurate, perception that it was critical to Obama's agenda that some deal be reached, and that he be able to point to something that could be described as progress towards the goal of zero. As a general rule, I think, the needy negotiate poorly.)

As for what Obama will do now that he has been re-elected, it is an open question precisely what his approach will be. Some observers wonder whether, unconstrained by any further direct accountability to the American voter, Obama will plunge headlong into the disarmament enthusiasms that he has talked about for years but has so far not chosen, or had the opportunity, to make into U.S. policy. (Obama's unintentionally publicized reassurance to then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev that the White House would have ''more flexibility'' after the 2012 election to accommodate Russian demands on missile defense is ''Exhibit A'' for this line of argument.) Hawks tend to fear this, while disarmers seem to place much hope in it. My guess is that Obama will still face considerable political and institutional constraints, however, even if he did want to move much further down the disarmament road.

I would expect that the most significant steps he will take toward disarmament—if any—are more likely to be unilateral ones than negotiated ones. Republicans in Congress might yet do much to stymie such U.S. unilateralism, but the White House could surely do something significant, for good or for ill, if it wanted to. One already hears rumors of a new Nuclear Posture Review being prepared in order to justify further cuts, and of the possibility of what would purport to be a new round of ''Presidential Nuclear Initiatives'' reductions—that is, unilateral steps that Obama could take without approval from Congress.

The irony is that, as the Congressionally appointed Strategic Posture Review Commission demonstrated in 2009, bipartisan agreement actually exists in the U.S. policy community on most aspects of U.S. strategic policy: a consensus on cautious policies of modernization, hedging, a strong deterrent but a reduced role for nuclear weapons, and openness to disarmament if and when suitable conditions present themselves. This is a domestic political consensus, however, that Obama could destroy by unilateralist enthusiasms, thus perhaps poisoning the prospects for sensible policymaking (not to mention negotiated, ratified arms control) for many years. But he may not care: the most fervent disarmers approach the subject more as theology than reasoned policy. We shall see.

But before we leave the subject of nonproliferation entirely, Tom, let me ask you—for the benefit of *Security Index* readers—what you think about Russia's current role in the nonproliferation regime, and how you think Americans see Russia today. To what extent is Moscow perceived as a threat? As a reliable partner?

I hope I don't offend readers, but to me—to put it charitably—Moscow's role in global nuclear nonproliferation policy has been disappointing. With Russia having actually built for Iran the nuclear reactor at Bushehr, Russian entities reportedly having played a role in designing the plutonium-production reactor Iran has under construction at Arak, and Moscow having long joined China in diplomatic foot-dragging at the UN Security Council over nonproliferation sanctions against both Iran and North Korea, the Russians are doing both far less than they could and far less than they should. It is hard to imagine that Russia actually supports such proliferation, but Putin-era Moscow certainly seems to place little priority upon nonproliferation. (At some level, in fact, today's Russian leaders may not much mind the degree to which nuclear developments in Iran, for instance, complicate U.S. grand strategy and push up the global oil prices upon which Russia's petroleum economy depends, and upon which may hinge the survival of the *siloviki* elite in Russia's corrupt and ever more baldly autocratic managed democracy.)

Washington thus has little reason to regard Russia as a reliable partner in nonproliferation, or—to be honest—in much else these days. If anything, Putin's Russia seems increasingly intent upon re-creating for itself a strutting imperial aesthetic vaguely reminiscent of the Soviet era, or perhaps of imperial times.

Thankfully, there seems little chance of any revival of the kind of really deep tensions and conflicts that characterized the Cold War, and I see little danger of a full-blown arms race no matter how many times the Russian president appears before the cameras to boast about a new warhead or

missile. (To most Americans today, I suspect, Russia still seems more annoying than threatening. This is not a relationship poised to spring into a revived Cold War-style rivalry.) Nevertheless, all these developments are unfortunate—for Russia's neighbors, for ordinary Russians, and for the international community.

In light of this, I'd love to sound you out about Russo-American strategic arms control too, but let's save that for the next round. For now, how do you assess Russia's role in nonproliferation?

All my best,

Chris

FROM: THOMAS GRAHAM

TO: CHRISTOPHER FORD

SUBJECT: *RE: U.S. POLITICS AND RUSSIA'S NONPROLIFERATION POLICY*

Dear Chris,

First, let me address what Ambassador Dhanapala meant by ''autopilot.'' He set forth at some length that the NPT is a strategic bargain between the five recognized nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states—most of the world—now 180 plus states. The indefinite extension agreement of 1995 also was such a bargain, even more explicitly with a list of actions that all states—including the five nuclear weapon states—agreed to undertake. The list includes a comprehensive test ban treaty, a fissile material cut-off treaty, worldwide deep reductions in nuclear weapons, more nuclear-weapon-free zones, improved verification for the NPT, and so forth. It was his view—which I share—that progress on this agenda over time is essential to the viability and survival of the NPT over the longer term. Failure to make progress would be operating on ''autopilot.'' Some progress on this agenda has been made, but there still is no test ban in force, no progress on fissile material cut-off, some reductions have been agreed, the Additional Protocol for the NPT has been negotiated and relatively widely accepted, and some progress has been made on Nuclear Weapon Free Zones. But most of the world sees the United States and to a lesser extent China as the most significant obstacles to fulfillment of this agenda. The primary reason for this is the U.S. unwillingness to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, from the earliest of days seen by the non-weapon states as the litmus test of nuclear weapon state good faith in implementing the NPT basic bargain.

Turning to President Obama and nuclear disarmament, he now most likely will try to seek Senate ratification to CTBT and likely will seek a second round of START reductions to bring in limits on Russian tactical weapons, widely supported in the U.S., although Russia is reluctant. What he will do on missile defense is difficult to say but he probably will try to work out something on missile defense with Russia. (In the interest of full disclosure I should describe my personal view on missile defense as it is relevant here. It was the first subject that I worked on when I came to ACDA in 1970. I have never had a fundamental objection to it but I have never had any faith that it would work sufficiently to give U.S. military commanders any confidence. Thus I have no objection to it unless it interferes with some other important security priority of the U.S.). Obama in my view had a successful nuclear policy in his first term with the New START Treaty and the Nuclear Security Summit process. Except for his speech in Prague all of this had little to do with disarmament. It is true that there is an ongoing Pentagon process aimed at determining what size and type of nuclear stockpile the U.S. should have going forward—looking at the subject from the military point of view. It is possible that this could lead to unilateral cuts; however, from a personal point of view I would prefer that they held back to bargain for things the U.S. might want from the Russians. But we should remember that as far as U.S. unilateral cuts are concerned President George Bush did more than anyone else, reducing the U.S. stockpile by 50 percent from approximately 10,000 to 5,000. I didn't really like that so much either.

And let me say, Chris, that in general I do share your enthusiasm for the report of the Strategic Posture Review Commission. I have read it carefully and believe it does represent a large measure of bi-partisan agreement on strategic policy. It is a fact that for the most part Republicans and Democrats, despite some disagreements, have been cooperating in this field for a very long time.

Lastly, let me turn to U.S.–Russia cooperation in the field of nonproliferation. Some senior, seasoned observers believe that the world is on the verge of a new wave of nuclear proliferation—indeed that it is imminent. One can see this concern expressed in the Shultz et al *Wall Street Journal* articles. I myself believe that the NPT regime is much weaker than it was 15 years because of a number of factors including the India–Pakistan nuclear tests, the failure of the U.S. to ratify CTBT, the Iranian program, the DPRK program, etc. If this is true, I very strongly believe that the situation cannot be turned around without close U.S.–Russian cooperation. Failing that it will not be possible.

Indeed this has been true since the 1960s. For most of this period Russia has been a good partner although there have been rough patches. We seem to be in one such patch now, among other things because of missile defense, Iran, and Syria. But we must not forget that the U.S. and Russia between them possess over 90 percent of existing nuclear weapons and we need to try to work things out so that we can work together on nonproliferation. Iran is a difficult issue for Russia, it is a nearby state, there are important trade relationships, Iran has never supported the rebels in Chechnya and elsewhere, and Iran has helped Russia in places like Tajikistan, but Russia has cooperated to a degree on Iran policy. Syria looks right now more difficult as there does not, at this point, appear to be a solution. But it is of very great importance, if at all possible, to restore historic U.S.–Russia cooperation so, among other things, we can hold the line on proliferation and do more on nuclear weapon arms control in our mutual security interest.

Tom

FROM: CHRISTOPHER FORD

TO: THOMAS GRAHAM

SUBJECT: *MY THOUGHTS ON CTBT, NEW START, TACTICAL NUKES, AND CHINA*

Dear Tom,

It is indeed remarkable the degree to which the ''everything will be better if. . . '' arguments of the disarmament community always circle back around to U.S. ratification of the CTBT. Because, by the treaty's own terms, CTBT entry into force (EIF) would require ratification not just by the United States but also by North Korea, Iran, India, Pakistan, Israel, and China, it seems exceedingly unlikely that EIF will ever occur. The disarmament politics of the CTBT, therefore, are clearly much more about achieving American ratification than about actually obtaining a legally binding test ban. Treaty proponents focus upon the supposed imperative of getting Washington to ratify, while the fundamental legal question of EIF is either ignored entirely or airily dismissed with a kind of ''magical thinking'' that posits that all those other countries will find themselves helpless to resist the pro-CTBT peer pressure if only America comes aboard. (How we Americans flatter ourselves!)

This is one of the things that I suspect rubs U.S. hawks entirely the wrong way, and not without reason. They perceive the international CTBT campaign as being, fundamentally, not about banning nuclear weapons tests at all, but rather about constraining the United States. The U.S. Government has adopted a pretty strict no-yield definition of what it means not to test, and we would probably hold ourselves to this after ratification even were EIF postponed indefinitely. Not everyone else would likely be so scrupulous, however—and indeed, if you believe the comments made in the Strategic Posture Review Commission Report, Russia and China may already be doing secret low-yield testing, entirely undetected by the CTBTO, as part of their ongoing nuclear weapons development work. (Russian officials have also repeatedly made references in the press to their development of new designs.)

As far as is known in the open literature, moreover, other nuclear weapons powers have adopted weapons design and manufacture strategies that are better suited to a no-testing environment than are our own. During the Cold War, we built our approach around freely available testing, and opted for enormously sophisticated designs never intended to sit around on the shelf indefinitely, coupled with a weapons-maintenance philosophy that stressed achieving reliability by continuously monitoring and repairing existing weapons as they age. By contrast, rather than trying to keep old warheads in service forever, the Russians apparently prefer to remanufacture their weapons on an ongoing basis—which pretty much avoids the ageing problem—and the often less elegant designs used by some other powers are probably better suited to shelf-sitting in the first

place. (Just before ratifying CTBT, in fact, the French reportedly tested a kind of dumbed-down warhead design specifically intended to be more reliable in a no-test environment. I haven't heard any CTBT advocates suggest that the United States resume testing for such a purpose, but perhaps you can break new ground in support of the treaty, Tom, by making this case.)

As U.S. conservatives see it, therefore, the point of the CTBT campaign is to lock the Americans into a rigorous no-testing regime that would disproportionately disadvantage the United States. Hence their conclusion that ratification is foolish.

The anti-CTBT argument in the United States would have less force if (a) the U.S. laboratories were well funded and thriving, (b) pro-CTBT activists were willing to countenance the development of new American warhead designs optimized for no-test reliability, (c) we shifted more to a remanufacture approach to weapon maintenance; and/or (d) we were willing to hold ourselves to a most favored nation definition of the test ban pursuant to which we would limit ourselves to doing only the sort of testing that we believe others are undertaking. None of these things, however, is currently true.

But enough of my harping on about CTBT, for I'd imagine the readers are probably tiring of us by now. Before we wrap up this exchange, however, let me put some final queries to you—and, of course, offer my own thoughts.

To begin with, I'd like to sound you out about the so-called New START agreement. Whom do you think came out of those negotiations in a more beneficial position, Russia or the United States? (I'll admit it's not really a fair question, because the real secret of the New START agreement is probably that it didn't do too much of anything in the first place.)

For my part, I'd say that, on the whole, Moscow came out somewhat better off than Washington.

To be sure, President Obama achieved his objective of at least being able to say he'd gotten some new strategic agreement with the Russians, and the American team also negotiated verification and transparency rules that aren't so bad. (Indeed, they're surely the best part of this very modest treaty. Under current conditions, I think transparency and confidence-building measures are very much more important than numerical constraints.) The Russians like to say that the New START counting rules and the United States' stock of non-deployed weaponry favors America by permitting rapid bomber uploads, but there's precious little likelihood of U.S. gamesmanship there—especially under the Obama Administration—and the Russians have potential reload advantages in their unique arsenal of land-based mobile missiles, so I'd reckon that area may be a stalemate.

On the Russian side, Moscow also gained politically from getting a treaty, since in the post-Cold War era the Russians have invested a lot in strategic agreements with the United States as the symbolic coinage of their continued status as a superpower—a status that Russia no longer deserves in any sense apart from the nuclear weapons business. On top of this, Moscow managed to get the Americans to agree to some language in the Preamble that marks a new round in the unpleasant slow-motion Russo-American squabble over missile defense issues, and which lays the basis for future Russian threats to withdraw from New START over such matters. The Russians also roped U.S. prompt global strike planning into the agreement, by obtaining provisions that force the Americans into one-for-one tradeoffs between nuclear-armed ballistic missiles and any that are diverted for service with conventional warheads. (Alternative prompt global strike technologies are still many years away.) Additionally, the treaty's basic force limits, although notionally reciprocal, favor Moscow—as can be seen by the fact that the Russians have been building up to New START limits while the Americans have to make cuts, though not big ones, to reach compliance.

For anyone who wanted or expected anything really significant to happen in the negotiations, New START is presumably a pretty disappointing treaty, but I'd score Moscow at least slightly ahead on points.

What little remains of the American non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) deployment in Europe probably doesn't threaten Russia enough to be tradable for any meaningful reductions in Moscow's enormous NSNW holdings—especially since I'd imagine that the Russian NSNW stockpile is kept on hand as much, or more, with China in mind as with NATO. (After all, it takes real paranoia to see the idea of a NATO invasion of Russia as anything except absurd, whereas the idea of Sino–Russian problems developing is not nearly so fanciful as a vastly populous,

resource-thirsty, and increasingly powerful China rubs up against Russia's resource-rich but ill-defended and all but empty Siberia. Through this prism, at least, it's not entirely crazy for Russia to retain a sizeable NSNW stockpile.)

Given the degree that Russian belligerence vis-à-vis Georgia and periodic quasi-nuclear threats against Eastern members of NATO have justifiably spooked some Eastern European leaders, moreover, a U.S. withdrawal of NSNW from NATO might do real damage to the alliance. The utility of the U.S. deployments, one must admit, is more political than military, but this doesn't necessarily make them any less important.

On the whole, I'm skeptical about the odds of Russo–American agreement on NSNW—though based upon declarations made by the U.S. Senate and by President Obama himself, a NSNW deal would seem to be a sine qua non for any follow-on strategic treaty. (Nor would mere reciprocal ''redeployment'' out of theater probably be considered adequate. To many American observers, that would seem little more than a disadvantageous game: once removed, our weapons would be all but impossible to return to Europe, whereas Russian redeployment could easily be done on demand by moving weapons around within the country, perhaps even secretly.) Don't hold your breath for a solution.

I'm not too disconsolate about the improbability of resolving the NSNW problem, however, because I think the future of strategic ''arms control'' lies elsewhere. And this brings me to a big final question: What do you think China's role is in nuclear disarmament?

From my perspective, as the only NPT nuclear weapons state that continues to build up its nuclear forces, China's nuclear policy has vast implications for the future of arms control and disarmament. As I've been saying for some time now, uncertainty about Beijing's trajectory in this regard is emerging—quite appropriately, in my view—as a ''brake'' upon what the United States and Russia should be willing to consider in their own negotiations. This is one reason why I think that it's far more important, as a ''next step'' for strategic arms control, to work harder to engage Beijing on transparency and confidence-building measures (T/CBMs) than simply to undertake a sort of ''try again harder'' policy vis-à-vis negotiations with Russia.

To be sure, reducing uncertainty about Chinese intentions and long-term strategic planning may not necessarily solve the problem. (That depends, after all, on what China is really up to. One possible reason for China to cling to its current opacity is that more clarity about Beijing's intentions might make the situation seem more alarming, not less!) If Beijing is right that we have nothing to fear from its strategic policy, however, there is everything to gain from transparency—and little to lose, since the Chinese authorities are simply wrong to suggest that all the Americans want from transparency is better targeting information for a first strike. T/CBMs don't have to create vulnerabilities, and they can do much to allay concerns and increase stability, including by improving crisis stability (which Chinese officials say they very much want to do). Openness will not magically resolve all Sino–American strategic tensions, but secrecy in nuclear relationships tends to breed arms races, and this may increasingly become a danger.

One concern that I have heard expressed in U.S. circles—and which one imagines has also occurred to Russian strategists—is what would happen if Washington and Moscow cut their forces to a level at which China would be well positioned for some kind of sudden sprint to nuclear parity. (And Chinese officials indeed do talk about the possibility of some future parity. As several of them have expressed it to me, China won't be much interested in strategic arms control negotiations until we come down to their level, but it would be nice to talk then. After all, nobody wants an arms race, right?) The Obama agenda of trying to continue Russo–American numerical reductions does seem inevitably to imply that at some point the global nuclear balance will shift from being primarily a deterrent dyad into a vastly more complicated and potentially unstable multi-player game. (This is one of the big theoretical problems of disarmament.) But it is not obvious to me why planners in Washington or Moscow would want to hasten that day's arrival.

The future of strategic arms control probably depends upon how we handle these challenges.

All my best,

Chris

For more analytics on disarmament, please, visit the section ''Ways towards Nuclear Disarmament'' of the PIR Center website: disarmament.eng.pircenter.org

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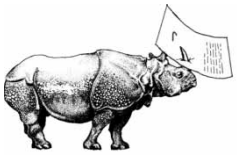

Anatoly Antonov

MILITARY USE OF SPACE: ASSESSING THE THREAT

The use of outer space for military ends is becoming one of the key problems in the context of strategic stability and international security. New strategic concepts of using space for military purposes have been emerging in recent years, mainly in countries which are pursuing clear military and political ambitions. New opportunities are also opening up, owing to the progress being made in space technologies. Finally, clear gaps still exist in the international legislation governing the use of outer space. The international community is concerned by the real possibility of weapons being placed in outer space, turning it into an arena of armed confrontation and potentially into a combat theater.

The idea of placing weapons in space is not new. It was researched in the first decades of the space era; countries were looking into the possible uses of space technology to bolster their defense capability. Over time, however, there has been a certain transformation of national approaches; new concepts of using outer space for military purposes have emerged. These concepts include the idea of deploying weapons in space.

The problem of weapons in space attracted broad international attention after the United States announced plans to deploy a global missile defense system and made the first steps towards that goal in the area of international law by withdrawing from the ABM Treaty. Now that the treaty is defunct, the international system has lost a very important element of its setup—namely, the ban on developing, testing, and deploying space-based missile defense systems and components. The appearance of such instruments could become the first step towards turning outer space into a new sphere of weapons deployment. Another thing to take into account is that the 1967 Outer Space Treaty has outlawed the deployment of nuclear weapons and other WMD in outer space—but the ban does not cover other weapon systems.

Placing weapons in space and turning outer space into a potential arena of combat action poses a significant threat to strategic stability and global security. The deployment of various types of weapons in space could inflict serious damage on the existing arms control arrangements, especially in the area of nuclear and missile weapons. It could also trigger a new wave of the arms race, which could spiral to a whole new level.

The use of space weapons for missile defense, i.e. against ballistic missiles, could substantially change the strategic nuclear balance between the world's leading nuclear powers. Using space weapons against targets on the ground and in the air would mean that many strategic facilities which play a crucial role in national security would come under direct threat of an attack from space.

The first country to deploy weapons in outer space would be able to disable the key space systems of its adversaries almost effortlessly. In such a situation, any manipulation with a spacecraft which belongs to another nation could be seen, especially in a crisis situation, as an act of aggression. Owing to the high degree of integration in the use of spacecraft for military and civilian purposes, the damage will not be limited to the military component of the space fleet. What is more, given that some space systems are used by groups of countries or by international organizations (for example, weather and navigation systems), damaging or disabling such systems would affect interests of a large group of states.

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If a country unilaterally acquires such a component of strategic armaments as space weapons, this could give rise to attempts to reshape the world order and impose diktat in international relations. Such a situation would create an atmosphere of mutual distrust and suspicion, and inevitably lead to other countries taking steps in response so as to ensure their own national security. Such measures could negate all the international efforts in the area of disarmament and nonproliferation, and lead to a spiraling arms race in the outer space, in nuclear and missile weapons, and in other spheres.

It is quite clear that other technologically developed nations would not passively observe attempts by a single nation to place weapons in outer space. This would raise the prospect of another armed confrontation—only this time around the area of confrontation would include outer space.

In terms of technology, placing weapons in space as part of missile defense and anti-satellite capability would lead to the appearance of large fleets of spacecraft on the low-Earth orbit. That could make it difficult for other actors to use the low-Earth orbit, which is the most commonly used in Earth surveying and manned space flight programs.

Another thing to take into account is that the development of space weapons would require numerous tests. Such tests would create a lot of space debris on the Earth orbit, i.e. fragments of the satellites carrying weapons and of the targets used during the tests. That would exacerbate the problem of space junk.

Also, possible effects of space weapons on the biosphere of our planet could have grave consequences for the whole of humankind.

It is therefore clear that the appearance of weapons in space could have extremely negative consequences for strategic stability, international security, and the environment. At present there are no weapons in outer space, but plans for developing such weapons have existed for a long time. The types of weaponry slated for use in outer space include laser weapons, beam weapons, kinetic weapons, and electromagnetic pulse (EMP) weapons.

LASER WEAPONS

When the laser was invented in 1961, military researchers immediately began to think about using lasers as a weapon. In the late 1970s, when scientists developed lasers with an output of several MW, the idea actually became practical. The main advantage of laser weapons is that the impact against the target is achieved almost instantaneously because the laser beam travels at the speed of light. This obviates the need for anticipating the target's trajectory so as to enable the weapon to intercept that target. The laser disables or destroys the target mainly by heating it up, and also as a result of the shockwave generated when the surface of the target missile is struck by a pulsed laser beam.

Several types of lasers are now being considered for military uses. The most suitable type for destroying missiles and their components in outer space is believed to be the chemical laser, which relies on a chemical reaction between hydrogen and fluorine. Replacing hydrogen with its heavy isotope, deuterium, increases the wave length of the laser from 2.7 micron to 3.8 micron. That wave length falls into the low-loss transmission window, meaning that the laser beam can travel to the planet's surface almost unimpeded. In terms of focusing the laser, the most promising technology is the excimer laser, which relies on molecular argon and krypton fluoride. The problem is, however, that the wave length of such a laser is 2,000–3,000 angstrom, which means that the Earth's atmosphere is not transparent for it. In order to reduce laser beam divergence, it is necessary to reduce the wavelength. That requires a huge density of pumping energy, which can only be achieved during a nuclear explosion. Such a solution has been considered for direct nuclear-pumped X-ray lasers. Research into X-ray lasers has been under way in the United States for many years.

PARTICLE BEAM WEAPONS

Beam weapons use narrow beams consisting, as a rule, of neutral particles. The beam is generated by particle accelerators which can be based on the ground or in outer space. High-energy beams can impact only the target's surface or penetrate deep within it, depending on the nature of the particles and on their energy. Absorption of relatively low-energy particles in the thin

surface layer of the target produces effects similar to those of a laser beam. However, every accelerated particle has vastly higher energy (by a factor of millions) than a single photon in a laser beam. Higher-energy particles can penetrate deeper within the target; their energy is dissipated as they ionize the atoms of the target material, which mostly leads to various radiation effects. The particles which are potentially suitable for beam weapons include neutral hydrogen atoms; such beams will not be distorted by the geomagnetic field, and the particles themselves will not be repelled from each other within the beam, thereby increasing its divergence. Various assessments suggest that beam weapons are suitable for use at a relatively short range (up to 1,000km, according to the most optimistic estimates). The main problem of beam weapons is the size and weight of the particle accelerators they rely on.

EMP WEAPONS

EMP weapons disable the target by subjecting it to a massive electromagnetic pulse. In that sense they have much in common with the electromagnetic effects of a nuclear explosion—although the EM pulse produced by EMP weapons is a lot shorter. EMP weapons can be used to remotely disable the electronic components of various IT and command-and-control systems. For example, the currents generated by an EM pulse in the electric circuits of the detonators in various munitions may be sufficient to set them off. High-energy currents can even initiate the detonation of explosives in missile warheads. EMP weapons can destroy or disable semiconductor components in radio-electronic systems, even if these systems are switched off during the pulse. Such weapons can take the form of fixed-position or mobile systems generating narrow EM beams, as well as EMP ammunition delivered to the target by missiles, bombs, or other delivery systems.

The main problem facing EMP weapons projects is developing a source of EM radiation small enough to fit into the warheads of missiles or other delivery systems. Analysts believe, however, that this weapons type is very promising in terms of the modalities and scale of its possible use. The most extensive research into EMP systems designed to disable radio-electronic components is under way in the United States (at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the U.S. Army Research Laboratory, Texas Tech University, etc.). According to media reports, research into military EMP systems is also under way in Britain, China, Israel, Sweden, France, and South Korea.

INTERCEPTOR MISSILES

The latest types of weaponry are not limited to sources of electromagnetic radiation. The vacuum of outer space makes it possible to use interceptor missiles equipped with nuclear or conventional warheads. They destroy the target either through direct collision with it, or by using high-explosive fragmentation warheads. The idea of using space-based missile interceptors to destroy ballistic missiles at the boost phase of their trajectory first appeared in the late 1950s–early 1960s. But the technology available at the time was not sufficiently advanced to put that idea into practice. Nevertheless, the idea was explored in the United States as part of the Brilliant Pebbles program. The essence of the proposal was to deploy a large fleet of autonomous satellites, each carrying a single interceptor. The interceptors were to be equipped with an independent target-seeking system, a navigation system to determine the position of the interceptor in space, and an autonomous combat control system to enable the interceptor to select its target. It is believed that such space-based interceptor missiles could potentially become the first weapons system to be deployed in outer space.

U.S. STRATEGIES

Under the George W. Bush Administration (2001–2009) and in accordance with a presidential directive issued in August 31, 2006, Washington outlined the main principles of its space policy. Following the arrival of the Obama administration those principles were revised (the new space policy was announced on June 28, 2010). That new policy appears non-confrontational and, on the whole, it establishes the necessary climate for the development of space cooperation between Russia and the United States. But despite its non-confrontational nature, the new policy still reflects some of the hawkish elements of American military-political strategy. The policy

rejects any claims to sovereignty over outer space by other nations. It says that intentional interference with the operation of space systems will be considered as an encroachment on the rights of sovereign states. Neither does the new document abandon the approach proclaimed in the 2006 U.S. space doctrine, which aims to ensure the maximum freedom of action for the United States in space while at the same time denying such freedom to America's adversaries. Such an approach means a clear ambition to gain supremacy in outer space. The new document merely attempts to disguise that ambition by means of different wording. Another related element of the policy is the clause dealing with free access to outer space and the goal of strengthening U.S. leadership in space. In essence, it is the same philosophy of freedom of action in outer space, which translates, in the absence of any legal restrictions, into the freedom to place American weapons in space, while at the same time essentially preventing other countries from doing the same. The United States currently has all the necessary prerequisites—including a strong economy and a powerful R&D and manufacturing capability—to attempt a big leap in advanced space technologies, including the development of complex and expensive space-borne weapons systems.

THE RUSSIAN POSITION

Russia, meanwhile, has only two real options to choose from. It can reconcile itself to the prospect of becoming a second-rate space power—or it can pursue a strategy of preserving its space technology potential.

Will Russia accept the role of a second fiddle in space exploration? Probably not. That would run counter to its self-identification as a great space power which has vast experience in this field of human endeavor.

The second strategy does not just seem preferable—it is in fact the only acceptable option. Preserving its space technology capability and focusing its efforts on space R&D and related projects would enable Russia not to fall behind in developing new space technologies and to implement them in a new generation of space systems and instruments. Decades of experience of dealing with the United States in the area of disarmament and arms control suggest that Washington is prepared to negotiate only with a strong partner that can stand its ground. This is why ensuring that Russia and the United States have a similar level of space capability will preserve the preconditions for further resolution of the problem of weapons in outer space through international legislation. 

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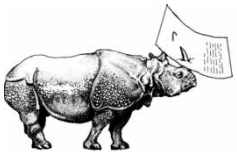

Oleg Demidov and Maxim Simonenko

FLAME IN CYBERSPACE

In late May 2012 Iran reported that its oil companies had been subjected to fierce cyber attacks. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) proposed involving the Russian company Kaspersky Lab in investigating this incident. The first technical reports of the incident were published on May 28, 2012. Kaspersky Lab specialists concluded that the attack was launched with the use of a virus of previously unseen complexity, which has become known in the virus base as Flame. It later transpired that the Hungarian Laboratory of Cryptography and System Security (CrySyS) of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics had since early May been studying a malware code that was very similar to Flame, if not identical to it.

HOW DID FLAME APPEAR?

Interestingly, it is not with Iran that the story of Flame begins. The first versions of this malware, or rather of its prototype, were found by the American company Webroot Community in late 2007 in Europe. The following year the virus was spotted in the UAE. The virus had to make a long technological journey before it reached Iran in the spring of 2010 in essentially the same form that Kaspersky Lab specialists detected it in 2012. At the time of its detection in early May 2012, Flame was at the peak of its evolvement and had entered the phase of its maximum spread. By June 2012, Flame had expanded to the whole of the Middle East region, which makes it hard to establish the exact target its authors had intended it for. When the virus was created, it involved some advanced technologies for infecting computer systems, yet at the same time it lacked any effective mechanisms for zooming in on a specific target. Therefore the current geographical spread of Flame does not reflect the range or the location of its ultimate targets.

Equally unfounded is the ubiquitous use of the label ''cyber weapon'' in relation to Flame. This successor to Stuxnet and Duqu in the gallery of the world's worst cyber horrors can be described in many different ways—for instance, similar to biologists' recent discovery, as a macro virus—but the use of the term ''cyber weapon'' fundamentally misrepresents the essence and the purpose of this program. Those modules that have been identified and described do not have the task of disrupting computer systems, let alone of causing highly selective, physical damage to critical infrastructure facilities, as was the case with Stuxnet. Flame is a model means of engaging in drawn-out and multilayered cyber espionage. Academic and official papers in the majority of countries with a developed IT sector usually class cyber espionage as distinct from acts of politically motivated aggression in cyberspace, hypothetical cyber wars, and cyber conflicts, i.e. all those actions that can be carried out with the use of a code-based weapon.

CYBER WEAPON?

The persistent positioning of Flame as a cyber weapon is far from accidental—there is a hidden misrepresentation in presenting the virus from this angle. Flame was introduced into networks not in an isolated operation but rather as part of a strategy of using an extensive set of cyber tools combining spyware with programs capable of causing direct physical damage to infrastructure.

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This strategy is primarily implied to suggest actions by certain entities aimed at thwarting Iran's nuclear program. Indeed, it is hard to shake off the impression that Flame and Stuxnet are complementary to each other: a sophisticated instrument for gathering disparate data on any objects of interest on the one hand, and a surgically precise weapon for damaging them, on the other.

The problem is that accepting a purpose-driven link between Stuxnet and Flame as an axiom is impossible and counterproductive. Therefore, it is impossible to positively describe Flame as a cyber weapon. Indeed, cyber espionage by itself, despite its destructive nature, does no actual damage to the infrastructure. It would be more appropriate to compare Flame to a telescopic sight of a sniper rifle: it is very unpleasant to be caught in its sights, but it is the bullet not the scope that kills. In the case of Flame, the scope and the rifle exist seemingly separately and it is practically impossible to prove that they are used together.

In June 2012 the *New York Times* exposed a large-scale U.S. special operation sanctioned personally by Barack Obama, code-named Olympic Games, to carry out a series of attacks on Iran's nuclear infrastructure, of which Stuxnet was allegedly a part.[1] While making all those sensational revelations about Stuxnet, the authors say practically nothing about Flame, although it is unlikely that the publication of such a detailed study coincided with the current hype surrounding the new super-virus by mere accident. The attempt to laconically close the topic of Flame with the remark that its emergence has nothing to do with the Unites States' anti-Iranian crusade in cyberspace, and therefore with Stuxnet, leaves many questions. The thing is that the NYT's key target audience—the Iranian leadership and the expert community—will not learn anything significantly new about Stuxnet from the article: they hardly ever doubted the U.S.–Israeli lineage of Stuxnet and Duqu. With Flame, however, things are not yet quite as obvious. Stoking up the hype around Stuxnet (which no longer poses an urgent threat) by making high-profile revelations about the U.S. leadership could be just an attempt to distract attention from the question of who created the new macro virus.

Furthermore, apart from captivating stories about the classified Olympic Games program, the *New York Times* article contains references to facts which either cannot be verified in open sources or to a certain degree run counter to known facts about Stuxnet. First, the authors of the article claim that in the autumn of 2010, practically right after Stuxnet was first detected, the virus hit 1,000–5,000 centrifuges at the enrichment facility in Natanz. However, in early December 2010 the IAEA published a report saying that some 1,000 centrifuges at that Iranian nuclear program facility had been shut down in late 2009–early 2010. There were no further reports of any more centrifuges being shut down. Second, there are no open-source data to confirm that the centrifuges in Natanz rely on the SCADA software made by Siemens. This is important because the whole story concerning Siemens-made SCADA systems has been around ever since the emergence of the theory (which the *New York Times* article prefers not to mention at all) that the main target of that super-virus was Iran's first nuclear plant in Bushehr. In other words, the article in the U.S. publication, which offers valuable, albeit disputable, answers about Stuxnet, raises new questions about the new spying super-virus.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

According to media reports and the expert community, Flame is the most complex threat to information systems to date. There are good reasons for such claims. The virus makes use of the latest achievements in malware code writing, while its size, some 20MB of information and 70,000 lines, defies the imagination of all information security experts.

Does this quantity translate into quality? It would seem so. Flame uses modern techniques of infecting computer systems which were also used in Stuxnet and Duqu: vulnerabilities in autorun.inf files, in.inc files, and in the print spooler service. The use of these techniques has prompted some experts to conclude that Flame and the Stuxnet malware family were developed by the same team. Yet it is worth remembering that these are just techniques; the corresponding code is already in the public domain, so anyone can use it. In addition, the creators of Stuxnet used unique disguise and infection strategies: several genuine digital signatures of reputable computer manufacturers were stolen, which made it more difficult for anti-virus software to detect the virus; it also exploited a previously unused zero-day vulnerability. None of this is present in Flame, which uses only generally available techniques. This suggests that Stuxnet and Flame were developed by different teams but possibly commissioned by the same client.

The quality of the virus's functionality is not that great. Flame achieves its huge size primarily through the use of additional modules, which look more like a standard hacking kit rather than a high-tech virus. Flame is capable of gathering any information from the target computer by intercepting internet traffic, collecting information about the infected system, capturing screenshots of specific processes, and recording audio and video communications. The virus has also demonstrated keen interest in the AutoCAD format. Yet all this functionality has already been implemented in other viruses—only this time around all of it has been collected in one place, and the assembly of various combinations of modules has been automated. This makes it possible to suggest that the super-virus may have been created by a group of lazy hackers, who wanted to raise their productivity through maximum automation and integration of their business processes. Such a simplification in the way cyber attacks are organized can lead to an avalanche-like rise in the popularity of this problem-solving method.

Earlier, a similar situation arose with DDoS attacks. For as long as the creation of botnets required considerable technological expertise and financial resources, DDos attacks were not very common. Now, however, a whole market has emerged for renting botnets at relatively cheap prices. As a result, DDoS attacks have become commonplace. A similar situation may well emerge in virus writing, when in order to achieve one's destructive aims in cyberspace, one would be able to assemble a virus from Lego-like components and modules.

PROSPECTS FOR COMBATING THE VIRUS

Irrespective of how innovative Flame is, the outlook for combating this new super-virus does not look promising. The main vulnerabilities are being patched; leading laboratories have started analyzing the code; copies of the virus can be commanded to self-delete from the affected systems. However, multi-module macro viruses increasingly look like the Rubik's Cube: the turn of one face, the installation of one new module is enough for it to continue to function using new vulnerabilities, the list of which will never be exhausted. Besides, the international practice of countering cyber threats has almost no examples of successive preventive action against the creation and spread of such a sophisticated virus. As a rule, top-class spyware can successfully operate and remain undetected for years. Its detection usually happens almost by accident, or at a stage when it is practically impossible to assess the total damage it has caused or to trace its origins. Moreover, in the vast majority of cases it is detected by private laboratories or national security and law-enforcement agencies that are in no way connected to international bodies. Such was the case with Shady RAT, Titan Rain, and other top-class forms of cyber spying-related illegal activities in previous years.

As a result, there is a clear imbalance between the transnational nature of modern cyber threats and the predominantly national mechanisms of Internet security. For the time being, the international community has in its hands not a shield capable of blocking the swings of an anonymous cyber-sword, but a pair of tweezers and some thread to patch up the damage.

RUSSIAN APPROACHES

As foreign-policy initiatives are stalling, the Russian authorities have finally started to pay attention to measures aimed at ensuring the security of critical information infrastructure. In July 2012 the Russian Security Council website published what was in effect the first open document in this area: ''Main areas of state policy in ensuring security of automation control systems for production and technological processes at vital infrastructure facilities in the Russian Federation''. The Russian Defense Ministry, too, is now paying increased attention to protecting critical infrastructure against cyber threats. Clearly, this cannot be attributed solely to the Middle East macro virus scares, although it appears that they have played a part, especially Stuxnet. Simultaneously, the Russian authorities are changing their tactics as regards the promotion of initiatives for creating a global cyberspace security regime.

The Russian Foreign Ministry is now receiving assistance from Evgeny Kaspersky, whose Kaspersky Lab has become one of the leaders of the anti-virus industry and is confidently strengthening its position on the world market every year. In recent months Kaspersky Lab was the first to detect several high-profile viruses in the Middle East, including Flame and Mahdi. It has also conducted the most detailed analysis of the Stuxnet and Duqu code. Since early 2012,

Mr Kaspersky has been actively promoting the idea of setting up a cyber-IAEA, an intergovernmental body responsible for preventing national states and affiliated actors from creating and implementing programs similar to the Middle East super-viruses. Mr Kaspersky's rhetoric is clearly in line with Russia's official initiatives and is intended to promote some of the proposals at the non-governmental level, voiced by one of the industry's most respected experts. The problem the Russian projects aim to resolve really does exist, as clearly testified by the situation with Flame.

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However, the direction which the efforts to rectify the situation should take is quite obvious. On the whole, it is adequately reflected in Russia's recent international legislative initiatives, including the draft Convention on International Information Security. The task is, first, to introduce the very notion of politically motivated malicious behavior in cyberspace into the political and diplomatic debate. Second, to form a truly global regime of cooperation in countering cyber threats, derived from, albeit not entirely based on, the Council of Europe's Convention on Cybercrime. The final task is to define the political, diplomatic, and international legal status of cyberspace in the context of military and national security. For Moscow, the question is mainly whether it will be possible to set this process in motion before the emergence of another macro virus targeting Russian rather than Iranian networks.

NOTE

[1] ''Obama Order Sped Up Wave of Cyberattacks Against Iran,'' *New York Times*, June 1, 2012, < http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/01/world/middleeast/obama-ordered-wave-of-cyberattacks-against-iran.html?_r= 1&pagewanted= all > , last accessed October 20, 2012.

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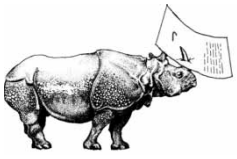

Vadim Kozyulin

AFGHANISTAN-2014 AND THE TALIBAN WITH ITS HEAD HELD PROUD BUT LOW

According to official plans, over the next two years three radical changes are going to happen in Afghanistan: economic transformation, political transformation, and the transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan national forces.

- *Economic transformation.* The number of contracts and the amount of money spent in Afghanistan will inevitably go down. Right now spending is unsustainably high, and not all this money is being spent wisely. The objective is to redistribute the resources and to attract private investment.
- *Political transformation.* The next presidential election is scheduled for 2014. Hamid Karzai, who is serving his second term of office, has promised not to run for the third. The arrival of a new president should bring some order to the country.
- *Transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan national forces*. In the coming years the role of ISAF will be limited to training the Afghan army and police forces. Over the coming decade the Afghan forces will fight the rebels on their own; the American military will not take part in combat operations.

ECONOMICS AND FINANCE

The United States spends about $115 billion a year in Afghanistan. The training of the Afghan army and police costs $1 billion a month; 90 percent of that money is provided by the United States. U.S. officials make no secret of the fact that in the future the size of American aid to Afghanistan should be comparable to the money being received by Israel or Egypt, i.e. $1–1.5 billion a year. The IMF estimates, however, that Afghanistan will require $68 billion just to train its army and police forces. The country's own GDP is $18 billion, so international assistance will be indispensible. In 2011 only 3 percent of the cost of maintaining the Afghan police force was contributed by the Afghan government itself. In 2012 the figure reached 7 percent. The issue of international economic assistance to Afghanistan was discussed in July 2012 at a special conference in Tokyo. However, the Chicago summit held beforehand in May 2012 has made it quite clear that there is not enough money in the kitty.

Afghanistan's civilian institutions account for only 20–30 percent of all government spending. Specialists estimate that only about a fifth of that money reaches the ordinary people; the rest goes to those who are in fact responsible for the chaos in the country: contractors and intermediaries.

The Americans believe that Afghanistan's economic problems can be resolved by making the country part of the regional transit and communication networks. But that will require cooperation from neighboring countries and, insofar as possible, the participation of private investors. Small and medium foreign businesses (including American companies) have already realized the possibilities of cashing in on war, and built some infrastructure on both sides of the Afghan border. Large private companies have long been contemplating big projects such as the TAPI oil

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pipeline—but the time for it has not yet arrived in Afghanistan. The future commercial system, which aims to open up great opportunities for the whole region, could be based on the Northern Distribution Network, which is a military supply system. The U.S. strategy is to hand that network over to countries in the region, the idea being that at some point in the future it will start to pay for itself.

The United States wants to encourage economic cooperation between countries in the region and Afghanistan; it is ready to support bilateral and multilateral partnership projects; even Iran is welcome to participate.

POLITICAL AND MILITARY TRANSFORMATION

Many experts reckon that Hamid Karzai, who used to be the guarantor of the constitution and the central figure in the entire Afghan arrangement, has become synonymous for ordinary Afghans with corruption, misrule and dependence on the United States. The next presidential election is scheduled for 2014. Observers tend to believe that Karzai will try to cling on to his job. The election will be an opportunity for the United States to reformat the Afghan political scene by bringing to power an Afghan Gorbachev, i.e. a politician who has an attractive set of ideas and slogans, and who will be seen by ordinary Afghans as a *third force* capable of uniting the country. Apart from charisma, the future Afghan president must also have two other attributes: he must be an ethnic Pashtun, and he must be a capable military leader, because he will have to fight.

Possible candidates include:

- Ali Ahmad Jalali, the former Afghan interior minister;
- Farooq Wardak, the current education minister;
- Abdullah Abdullah, who served as the Afghan foreign minister until 2006, as interior minister until 2009, and is now the main opposition candidate.

By October 1, 2012 the United States hoped to reduce the number of its soldiers stationed in Afghanistan to 68,000. The forces of Washington's international coalition partners, which reached 40,000 at their peak, were also planned to be drawn down. But there is no real reason to expect a weakening of the central government in Kabul following the troop withdrawal. The gradual transition of the security remit to the Afghan national forces will be backed by the strengthening of the aerial reconnaissance system, similar to the one now being deployed by NATO in Europe, with a control center in Italy. Real-time data supplied by that system will enable the Afghan government to launch lightning-fast strikes against the rebels, just as it now happens in Pakistan. The only difference is that in Afghanistan the manned reconnaissance aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), coupled with formidable firepower, will be used in tandem with agents on the ground recruited from among the locals and the population of neighboring states. Afghanistan has good mobile telephone network coverage (50 percent of the Afghans use mobile phones) and an extensive network of internet cafes. This offers excellent opportunities for transmitting reconnaissance information gathered in the field.

The Taliban will not be able to show themselves openly in Afghanistan; the country will become a huge testing range for new reconnaissance and data analysis instruments, UAVs, and offensive weapons systems. The U.S. Air Force will have full air supremacy in the country; it will be assisted by Afghanistan's own air force, which is equipped with armed Mi-17 transports and Mi-35 attack helicopters. The Taliban, meanwhile, will not be able to field any armored vehicles or artillery; neither will they be allowed to create regular military formations to conduct large-scale combat operations.

WHERE DOES THE TALIBAN FIT IN THIS PICTURE?

For now it is not clear what role the Taliban will play in the Afghan political setup after 2014. The concessions demanded of them are almost entirely unrealistic; they include agreeing to abide by the country's constitution; renouncing violence; and recognizing the rights of women and ethnic minorities. The Taliban themselves, meanwhile, demand a complete pullout of NATO forces and the release of all prisoners of war. The Taliban are now in very high spirits; they believe that they are close to defeating the world's only superpower, the United States, having already defeated

the Soviet Union back in the 1980s. Meanwhile, democratic values in Afghanistan have crumbled under the onslaught of corruption and violence. Extremist ideology is gaining supporters in EU countries, with European Islamists flocking to Afghanistan or Africa for ideological and military training before returning to Europe to wage Jihad there.

The main source of the Taliban's financial stability is drug trafficking; it can survive any occupation and any regime. Satellite images indicate that the Taliban have repaired and extended the irrigation systems built in the 1950s, and are now using them to grow poppies. Their opium empire can become the basis of their economy and their philosophy.

Washington is now in talks with the Taliban; indeed, the Americans think it is a great achievement that the Taliban have agreed to open a representative office in Qatar. But that brings an element of uncertainty into American military planning, and raises concerns among Washington's Afghan allies and the country's ethnic minorities. The negotiations with the Taliban, which are being held in absolute secrecy, are a worrying rather than encouraging factor for countries in the region and for Afghanistan's minorities. These talks raise the prospect of the Taliban being given important positions in the Afghan government. How will that affect the people who fought them? Afghanistan's ethnic minorities are watching the talks with great unease, and will try to derail them if they possibly can. A new anti-Pashtun alliance called the National Front of Afghanistan (a new version of the old Northern Alliance) is quietly emerging in the north of the country. Several ethnic groups are forming with the assistance of the corresponding neighboring states: the Uzbeks, led by Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum; the Hazaras, led by Mohammad Mohaqiq; and the Tajiks, led by Ahmad Zia Massoud, the late Ahmad Shah Massoud's brother.

The U.S. Department of State, however, does not believe that there is a risk of a split along ethnic lines in Afghanistan. Maintaining ethnic representation in all government structures is thought to be an important principle—especially in the armed forces, where ethnic Pashtuns are thought to be underrepresented among the generals.

THE REGIONAL DIMENSION: WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL ASIA?

The ongoing talks with the Taliban create a lot of uncertainty for the Pentagon, which cannot make a final decision about what to do with the weapons and hardware it has brought to Afghanistan. On the one hand, if the talks fail, the Afghan forces trained by the international coalition will need modern weapons to keep the Taliban at bay. On the other, if the talks succeed, there is a good likelihood that the Taliban will be given many important posts in the Afghan government and in the armed forces. That raises the prospect of a very humiliating scenario: American weapons falling into the hands of extremists following a military coup. Speaking in a private interview, one Pentagon official said, ''We have some generals we can trust in Afghanistan—but there are not a lot of them, and they can lose control if the Taliban become part of the government.'' As a result, the talks with the Taliban, which have been dragging on for quite some time now, are forcing the American military to prepare for the unpredictable.

The Pentagon is beginning to realize that the weapons and hardware now being used in Afghanistan should be stored somewhere nearby. First, much of that hardware is worn out and is not worth the transportation costs. And second, it may be required once again at some point in the future to fight another war in Afghanistan or even in Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan could be the best place to store the American weapons to be pulled out of Afghanistan. The country already hosts a key coalition transit center in Manas, and a Russian air base in Kant. This is where the railway from Russia terminates; from there cargos can be transshipped to Afghanistan via a network of northern railways. Kyrgyzstan also has all the necessary supplies and the specialists to repair and maintain military hardware. The country's advantages therefore include: the availability of transit hubs sitting on the crossroads of railways, motorways, and airways; Russia's interest in supporting the country's defense industry; and Washington's interest in keeping close by the weapons pulled out from Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan can essentially become a regional weapons depot. The Americans are now looking into the possibility of building a base in Batken Province, which borders on Tajikistan. According to plans drawn up by the U.S. State Department, the same site at the very heart of the unstable Fergana Valley could be used to host an anti-terrorist military training center.

The Americans have put out feelers regarding the possibility of transferring some military hardware to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—either for the use of these countries' armed forces, or merely for storage. The armies of the three Central Asian republics would be especially interested in sniper rifles, night vision instruments, communication equipment, and armed vehicles suitable for use in mountainous terrain. The international coalition also has lots of auxiliary hardware in Afghanistan, including heavy trailers, towing trucks, fuel tankers, tractors, specialized graders and bulldozers, water tankers, huge amounts of medical equipment, communication instruments, firefighting gear, and even mobile gyms.

To Afghanistan's neighbors the danger of the Taliban seems exaggerated. The Taliban are a known quantity, as is the military threat they pose, and all the risks of their ideological expansion have already been factored in. The United States is stoking up fears of the possible return of the Taliban, and the Central Asian republics play along with that well-paid-for sentiment. Their real fears are not that great, because they have already had to confront the Taliban in the past using only their own resources and Russian help. After 2014 they will still have all that, plus Western support. The U.S. campaign in Afghanistan is a massive economic enterprise: there are airfields being leased, there is the Northern Distribution Network, the helicopter lease arrangements, infrastructure projects for Afghanistan, weapons supplies—the scale of that enterprise is stunning to the residents of neighboring countries. To the Central Asian states, the war in Afghanistan has brought an upsurge in economic as well as political activity.

For more information and analytics on Central Asia, please, visit the section ''Security in Central Asia and Russia'' of the PIR Center website: centralasia.eng.pircenter.org

These states fear a resurgence of the local Islamist movements—such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan—more than they fear the Taliban. Another threat is the return to their home countries of terrorists who have become hardened in Afghanistan. The Kyrgyz military are preparing for the appearance in 2013–2014 of rebels armed with the idea of establishing a caliphate in the south of the country. The same rebels will also serve as conduits for new drug trafficking channels. Another source of ideological threat to the Central Asian republics is the Saudi and Qatari Arabs sponsoring the proliferation of aggressive forms of Islam. The Qataris are the main sponsors of Islamism in the mountainous regions of Tajikistan, where deep gorges serve as transit routes for drugs from Afghanistan, and where inaccessible terrain makes the central government almost powerless. In contrast, the Taliban lacks any messianic potential outside Afghanistan itself. But the Arabs who believe that the United States has been squeezed out of the country thanks to their financial and ideological support are now eager to launch a grand new mission in Fergana Valley and further afield in Central Asia.

THE FUTURE OF THE AFGHANISTAN-2014 PROJECT

Sources in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Central Asian republics say there are clear indicators that the United States has no intention of leaving Afghanistan completely after 2014. On the contrary, Washington will continue to ramp up its infrastructure in and around the country, with an emphasis on airfields, as well as aviation fuel delivery and storage systems in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. These storage facilities are needed to ensure an uninterrupted supply of aviation fuel to the coalition forces in Afghanistan, which are expected to burn through 367,000 tones of kerosene in 2012.

The Afghanistan-2014 project has a good chance of succeeding. After the withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan the country's government will be left in possession of an advantage which Afghanistan has never had before: the full support of every single state on the planet. The government will be confronted by the Taliban, which no country on the planet will dare support openly. The Taliban fighters are an effective force in guerrilla warfare—but they can hardly defeat the regular Afghan army, which is financed by some of the world's biggest economies and which has air support provided by the U.S. Air Force. In this war, an unreachable and all-seeing fighting machine will be pitted against the Taliban, who are living with their heads held proud but low.

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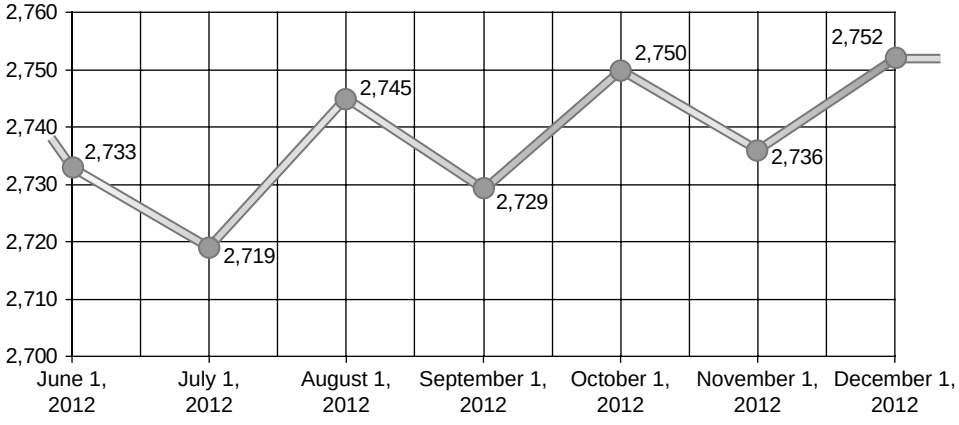
REVIEW OF RECENT WORLD EVENTS: JUNE–AUGUST 2012

Figure 1. **The International Security Index (*iSi*) in June–November 2012**



THE SUMMER STORMS

The International Security Index (iSi) showed a downward trend in the summer of 2012. The index stood at **2733** points on June 1, down 17 points from May. It fell a further 14 points by July to **2719**, its lowest level since January 2012. It then recovered some ground by August 1, rallying 26 points to **2745**, but then fell again to **2729** points by September 1. The downward trend in the summer, when international tensions normally subside, was a reflection of escalating violence in Syria, lack of progress at the Iranian nuclear talks, continuing instability in the Eurozone, and a string of natural and man-made disasters. In Syria armed clashes were escalating between government troops and the opposition. On July 19 Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution imposing sanctions against the Assad regime. The special UN and Arab League representative for Syria, Kofi Annan, resigned over lack of progress towards a resolution of the Syrian conflict. New rounds of talks between the Group of Six international mediators and Iran, held in Baghdad and Moscow, failed to produce any tangible results. European stocks fell to a six-month low in June on fears of a new bout of global recession. There were floods in Russia's Krasnodar region, China, North Korea, and the Philippines; torrential rains in Pakistan and India; a heatwave in Europe; and a hurricane in the United States, dragging the iSi index further down.

> The iSi index is calculated weekly and monthly. The results with the brief comments explaining Index fluctuations are published at the PIR Center website: www.pircenter.org

- **Africa and the Middle East**. The armed confrontation between Syrian government forces and the rebels remained at the epicenter of international security. The situation sharply deteriorated all across the country in early summer. The towns of Aleppo, Ar-Raqqah, and the suburbs of Damascus saw large unauthorized opposition protests. Government troops shelled the towns of Houla and Hama, killing more than 100 people. On June 7 some 86 local residents were killed in brutal massacres in Qubeir and Maarzaf, Hama Province. More then 200 peaceful residents were killed in the village of Tremseh in July. The Syrian

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army mounted a special operation in Aleppo, the country's northern capital. After a two-month offensive it managed to dislodge the rebels from their strongholds in the city. U.S. troops stationed at bases in Israel and Jordan were put on high alert in case they were needed to secure chemical weapons stockpiles on Syrian territory. The UN observer mission was first suspended, then completely withdrawn owing to the escalation of violence. On July 19 Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution introducing sanctions against the Assad regime. On August 2 the special UN and Arab League representative for Syria, Kofi Annan, resigned over lack of progress towards a resolution of the Syrian conflict. On August 16 the UN appointed a new special representative in Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, an Algerian diplomat. At a summit held on August 15 the Organization of Islamic Cooperation suspended Syrian membership. The armed confrontation between government troops and the rebels continues unabated.

In **Lebanon** the Syrian crisis triggered violent clashes between the Alawite community, which supports the Assad regime, and Sunni Muslims, who back the Syrian rebels. On August 16 a group of Lebanese Shia Muslims, outraged at the seizure of several Lebanese citizens in Syria, blocked the Beirut–Damascus highway, which also connects the Lebanese capital with its international airport, thereby cutting the country off from the outside world. Several Arab states warned their citizens against all non-essential travel to Lebanon. On August 22 the leaders of the country's religious communities and Prime Minister Najib Mikati managed to reach a ceasefire agreement in the Lebanese city of Tripoli.

The **Turkish** army conducted a special operation in Hakkari Province against the Kurds, who had stepped up their efforts amid the events in neighboring Syria. On August 20 Kurdish rebels conducted a terrorist attack in the city of Gaziantep, killing nine people. The Turkish government sharply criticized the regime in Damascus, accusing it of fomenting unrest among the Kurds as a way of putting pressure on Ankara, which wants Assad to go.

*Halil **Karaveli** (**Turkey-Sweden**) – Senior Fellow with the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center – by e-mail from Stockholm*: Turkey still wants to get rid of Assad and they want to precipitate the regime change in Syria. What is happening is that Turkey jumped onboard more than a year ago thinking that Assad was going to fall quickly and started to help the insurgents in Syria arming them in the hope that they would soon be able to topple Assad. Instead Assad and his Iranian allies have been fighting back Turkey by supporting the Kurdish insurgents. So, this is an extremely dangerous situation for Turkey. In this case Erdogan has to make it clear that he is the force to recommence to. And my information is that the Turkish Government has ordered the General Staff a couple of months ago to prepare for a big war.

New anti-government protests were held in June in **Bahrain;** the protesters demanded the release of Nabeel Rajab, a human rights activist.

In **Saudi Arabia** the arrest of Sheikh **Nimr Al-Nimr**, a critic of the Saudi government, triggered mass protest among the Shia minority in August.

In **Tunisia** protesters demanded jobs and better social standards.

Yemen saw clashes between the army and Al Qaida militants. The army managed to repel the militants' attempt to seize the strategically important Jabal Yusuf heights and restore control of the city of Shukra.

The liberal National Forces Alliance won the **Libyan** parliamentary election on July 7. On August 9 the Transitional National Council handed over power to the newly elected General National Congress. Meanwhile, clashes continued between the rival Libyan militias.

The U.S. ambassador to Libya was killed on September 11.

Iran and its nuclear program remained a key factor of instability. A new round of talks between the Group of Six and Iran ended in Baghdad on May 24 without any tangible results being achieved. Talks resumed on June 18–19 in Moscow, but no

compromise was achieved during that round, either. On July 2 Iran tested a ballistic missile capable of reaching targets in Israel.

*Mehdi **Sanaei (Iran)** – the Head of the Iranian Center for Research on Russia, Central Asia and Caucasus, Professor of Tehran University – by phone from Tehran*: Iran is firm in its intention to develop nuclear energy. At the same time country is ready to cooperate with the IAEA. We hope that sooner or later the sanctions against Iran will be weakened and removed completely. Largely for this reason Tehran has supported Moscow's offer of a phased approach toward its nuclear program. Multiple delays of the date of completion of the *Bushehr* nuclear power plant led to a fall in confidence of the Iranian policy of Russia. We do not always understand the action and strategy of the Kremlin. However, both for Iran and Russia bilateral relations are still very important. Both countries are equally concerned about the situation in the region and in the world, and cooperation between Tehran and Moscow on the issue of regional security is paramount. It should be noted that the possibilities of Russia are not unlimited; however, Moscow and Tehran have a mutual desire to develop relations. In such matters as the transfer of missile systems S-300, Iran should not require Russia to pay a fine because international relations are multi-dimensional game, and IRI, in turn, is pursuing its own interests in this game. Regarding missile systems S-300 Iran has reasons to be unhappy, but the Iranian-Russian relations are not limited to them, so it is necessary to look for new opportunities.

On August 29 the IAEA released a new report on Iran, which says that the country has doubled the number of uranium enrichment centrifuges at the underground facility in Fordow, and that new activity, including ground works, had been observed at a military base in Parchin. Iran has produced some 189kg of highly enriched uranium since 2010. A summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held on August 30 in Tehran supported Iran's peaceful nuclear program. Meanwhile, a new bill tightening economic sanctions against Iran entered into force in the United States.

Dayan **Jayatilleka (Sri Lanka)** – Sri Lanka's Ambassador to France and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO – *by e-mail from Paris*: Globally the situation has improved with the re-election of President Barack Obama, who has a more realistic and less aggressive international policy than his Republican challenger did. Regionally, things briefly worsened with the Gaza crisis but they re-stabilized with the positive outcome of the ceasefire efforts by Egypt. The most negative factors have been the continued one-sidedness of the policy of the West towards the Israeli escalation in Gaza. The positive factor is that Egypt and Turkey, encouraged by Russia were able successfully broker a ceasefire deal in Gaza, which was backed by the Obama administration. The negative aspect is that it is not possible to discount the statements that the Gaza operation was the test run for a larger assault on Iran.

Egypt held a second round of presidential elections on June 16–17. The election was won by the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, Mohammed Morsi. He was inaugurated on June 30, promising to honor all of his country's international commitments. The Supreme Military Council approved changes to the Constitutional Declaration, retaining its power to propose new laws. On August 12 President Morsi removed the generals from power and said the country was now under civilian rule. On August 2 the Egyptians formed a new government led by Prime Minister Hisham Kandil.

Israel and the Arab world. Tensions rose sharply in August on the Egypt–Israel border in the north of the Sinai Peninsula. Egypt delivered a series of airstrikes against the positions of the rebels, who had attacked the Egyptian army's checkpoints on the peninsula. It also closed the Rafah crossing to the Gaza Strip. Egged on by Tel Aviv, the government in Cairo accused criminal elements in Gaza of complicity in the attacks in Sinai, causing a new upsurge in tensions between Israel and Palestine. On September 6

the Israeli Air Force struck the militants' positions in Gaza, killing three. Israel said the airstrikes were in response to rockets launched from the Palestinian enclave.

Sudan and South Sudan held talks on June 8 to discuss the establishment of a demilitarized buffer zone between the two countries, but failed to reach an agreement. Mass protests broke out in Sudan in early July over economic problems caused by the unresolved conflict with South Sudan. On August 4 the two sides agreed to end their conflict. In Darfur, one of the regions of Sudan, clashes resumed in the summer between government troops and rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement.

In **Mali** supporters of the deposed president attempted to restore him to power, but the military junta managed to keep the situation under control. On July 11 Al Qaeda militants seized control of several northern districts.

Evgeny **Satanovsky (Russia),** President of the Institute of Middle East Studies – *by phone from Moscow*: The agony of the Palestinian national movement becomes evident. Suicide attacks against Israel, and readiness for a complete break up with it are parts of the strategy of external sponsors of terrorism (*Hamas*) to end the Oslo process without Palestinian side (PNA) fulfilling it part conditions. In fact, the new round of conflict was provoked in order to get the status of UN statehood circumventing the Oslo agreements, that Yasser Arafat pledged implement by 1999.

In **Nigeria** Islamists attacked a Christian church, killing 19. In **Kenya** 48 people were killed in tribal clashes. In **South Africa** 18 people were killed in clashes between striking miners, who demanded a pay rise, and the police. In **Madagascar** the army suppressed a mutiny at a military base on July 22. **Mauritania** saw opposition rallies; the protesters called on the president to step down. In **Ivory Coast** government forces prevented an attempted coup by supporters of former president Laurent Gbagbo.

*Sehlare **Makgetlaneng** (**South Africa**), Head of the Governance and Democracy Research Program at the Africa Institute of South Africa – by e-mail from Pretoria*: Islamic group *Boko Haram* in Nigeria has continued its program of armed activities attacking civilians, churches, police stations in Nigeria. This increasing security problem and the fact that the Nigerian state has not been able to effectively deal with the problem has the potential to impact negatively security in West Africa. This is particularly the case given the fact that Nigeria is the regional power in West Africa. For West Africa to have a serious security problem will mean Africa either facing the consequences of this problem or some of it having the security problem.

Kenya's intensified expansion into Somalia and its declaration of war against *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen* has further threatened security in Somalia and Kenya. The military situation on the border between Somalia and Kenya has become more complex as a result of the operations of various military groups. While some are allies of *Al Shabaab*, others are independent of it. Kenya's implementation of its decision to be active internally in some parts of Somalia is posing serious security threats to itself particularly its capital Nairobi.

- **Afghanistan–Pakistan**. The Taliban stepped up attacks against the security forces and civilians in Afghanistan over the summer. In August there was a series of attacks against U.S. and NATO troops. There was also a sharp upsurge in terrorist activity. The Taliban also managed to strengthen their positions in the provinces of Kunduz and Sari-Pul. Fighting also continued in Nuristan Province. Meanwhile, there were signs of growing popular resistance to the Taliban in the east of the country.

  Pakistan officially approved the resumption of NATO cargo transit via its territory on June 4. On June 19 Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Gillani was sacked; he has been replaced by Pervez Ashraf, who has formed a new cabinet. In early September the United States said it was going to put the Haqqani Islamist group, which is based in Pakistan, on the international black list of terrorist organizations. The government in Afghanistan supported the decision.

❑ **East and Southeast Asia**. A diplomatic row broke out between Japan and China in August over the disputed Senkaku islands in the East China Sea. Chinese activists landed on one of the islands, drawing sharp criticism from Japan. Tokyo made an official protest to Beijing over the incident, and Japanese activists reacted by making their own landing on Senkaku.

Another territorial dispute caused diplomatic tensions between **Japan** and **South Korea**. Tokyo recalled its ambassador from Seoul after South Korean President **Lee Myung-bak** visited Takeshima island in the Sea of Japan, which the Japanese claim as their own.

China hosted a Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit on June 6–7. The participants discussed global and regional security.

On June 16 Beijing announced that its Shenzhou-9 manned spacecraft had reached the earth orbit.

North Korea resumed construction of a new nuclear reactor. The government officially proclaimed the country to be a nuclear power.

There were clashes between the army and Islamist rebels from the Abu Sayyaf group in the south of **the Philippines**.

Extremists in southern **Thailand** attacked the town of Narathiwat on July 18, killing several people.

In **Burma** there were clashes between the Muslim and Buddhist communities.

❑ **The European Union**. European bourses fell to six-month lows in June over fears of another bout of recession. Spain, Portugal, and Greece remain vulnerable. An EU summit held on June 29 approved the parameters of the future European monetary union and decided to give an extra €100 billion to struggling Spanish banks via the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Financial Stabilization Mechanism. It was decided that Greece should remain in the Eurozone. Output fell in August in every single Eurozone economy. Moody's lowered the EU's long-term credit rating to negative in order to reflect the unfavorable outlook for the sovereign ratings of the EU economies. The European economy and measures to staunch the Eurozone crisis were at the top of the agenda of the G20 summit in Mexico on June 18–19. On September 6 the European Central Bank announced its readiness to buy unlimited quantities of bonds issued by the struggling EU sovereign powers.

Protests against the government's handling of the economy took place in Britain, Germany, Spain, and Greece.

There were clashes in Germany between neo-Nazis and anti-Fascists. Muslim youths clashed with police in Belgium.

In northern Kosovo the local Serbs blocked highways to demonstrate that they do not recognize the government in Pristina.

Ethnic Albanians protested in FYR Macedonia demanding an investigation into the killing of five Macedonians committed on April 12.

❑ **Former Soviet republics**. Thirteen Kazakh border guards were shot in early June on the border with China, at the Arkankergen border post; their bodies were burnt. An investigation is under way.

On June 28 Uzbekistan announced its intention to suspend its membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In August the republic's government approved the national foreign policy concept. One of the document's highlights is a ban on foreign military bases on the country's territory.

In Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Region the government conducted a large special operation in June against armed rebels accused of the killing of Gen Abdullo Nazarov, a senior official with the secret services. After bitter fighting with casualties on both sides, the government and representatives of the rebels announced a ceasefire and began negotiations.

In Moscow, opposition protests on June 12 degenerated into clashes with the police.

Farhad ***Tolipov (Uzbekistan)*** *– Independent political analyst – by phone from Tashkent*: Information and Cyberspace becomes a new arena of international relations. Central Asian states are actively involved in the processes taking place in the global cyber network. Thus worsening geopolitical situation and the increasing vulnerability of the region from the influence of external forces impose certain constraints on the ability of the Central Asian republics to respond to modern information and cyber threats. In the context of strategic uncertainty, regional governments incline to the principle of information immunity. Political regimes in Central Asia are striving to protect themselves from the harmful effects of information processes. The problem also lies in the fact that it is still unclear how to interpret such concepts as *the national interest in the informational and cyber space*, *informational warfare* and *cyber warfare.*

Russia and Ukraine reached an agreement in July on the delimitation of the sea border in the Azov Sea and the Black Sea.

Armenia froze diplomatic relations with Hungary on August 30 over the decision by Budapest to extradite Ramil Safarov, an Azeri army officer who killed a military serviceman from Armenia in 2004.

Evgeny ***Buzhinsky*** *(****Russia****), Lieutenant General, PIR Center Senior Vice-President – by phone from Moscow*: Vladivostok APEC summit chaired by Russia was a positive event. Despite the different views expressed before and after the summit, it was quite effective. The main achievement of the summit is that Russia has sent a clear signal of its willingness to strengthen political and economic ties in the Asia-Pacific, both on multilateral and bilateral basis.

Russia's Vladivostok hosted an APEC summit on September 7–9. The summit adopted a declaration which stressed the importance of fighting corruption, strengthening the national financial systems and reducing price volatility.

- **Strategic stability and nuclear security**. The United States announced its intention to bolster its missile defense system in Asia. Washington plans to station early warning radar on one of the southern islands of Japan and in the Philippines. It is also planning to increase its naval presence by sending to the Pacific more ships capable of carrying missile interceptors. These measures are designed to counter the North Korean threat—but the same weapons can be used against Chinese armed forces as well.

  In August the U.S. Department of Defense invited India to participate in joint development of missile defense systems. The move was part of Washington's plans to increase American influence in the Asia Pacific. Meanwhile, India conducted several test launches of ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

- **Natural and man-made disasters.** A passenger plane crashed in Nigeria on June 3; 153 people died. Flash floods in Russia's Krasnodar Territory killed more than 170 people in July. A 6.4 magnitude earthquake struck northwestern Iran in August, killing more than 250 people. Torrential rains in Pakistan and India caused floods and led to casualties. Severe floods in North Korea killed more than 30 people; the country's government asked the UN for humanitarian aid. Other natural disasters during the period under review included an earthquake in China and a hurricane in the United States.

  There were deadly terrorist attacks in Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, and the Russian North Caucasus.

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THE SYRIAN CAULDRON

The autumn of 2012 saw the completion of Syria's transformation into an important source of instability in the Middle East that draws attention away from other key international problems in the region, the Iranian nuclear crisis above all. There is a possibility of fighting escalating further including Turkey's military operation in the Kurdish-populated parts of northern Syria; declaration of a no-fly zone over the country or taking under their control Syria's chemical (and possible biological) weapons by some Western nations. There is also a lot more clarity about the long-term trends in and around the country. The Assad regime is getting weaker, while by the end of 2012 opposition have attained tactical successes including capturing a few air and army bases, and have blocked a number of major routes. Yet a military victory by the opposition or a political settlement remains unlikely any time soon. The most plausible scenario for Syria is gradual fragmentation, with the nation turning into a set of separate enclaves, independent in all but name and chaotically interacting with each other.

The Assad regime attempted to compensate for its political losses by wooing the so-called loyal opposition. That opposition seems to be responding to the regime's overtures with some degree of enthusiasm. One of its factions, the so-called People's Front for Change and Liberation, took part in the May 2012 parliamentary election, winning a grand total of five seats. Its leader, Qadri Jamil, has been appointed deputy prime minister in charge of the economy. His main task, however, seems to be maintaining regular contacts with Moscow. This is unsurprising; Jamil graduated from Moscow State University and is a son-in-law of the former leader of the Syrian Communists, Khalid Bakdash. In fact, he used to be a prominent Communist in his own right. These are the kind of foreign leaders who are *personae grata* in Moscow these days.

As the regime becomes increasingly desperate, many of its senior military officials, bureaucrats, and diplomats are defecting to the opposition. The list includes the first Syrian astronaut, Gen. Muhammed Faris, former prime minister Riyad Hijab, and more than 30 army and security generals. The hardest blow so far has been the defection of Brigadier General Manaf Tlass, who fled to Paris in July 2012. Tlass is the son of a former Syrian defense minister who served under Hafez Assad. In the past he commanded an elite unit of the Republican Guard and was a close friend of Bashar Assad. A Sunni Muslim, Tlass was seen by some analysts and politicians as a likely alternative to the beleaguered president, a figure acceptable to the moderate opposition as well as to those members of the ruling elite who are not yet tarnished by complicity in mass reprisals.

In July 2012 the Kurdish militia, which takes orders from the Kurdish National Council and the Democratic Union Party, a close ally of the PKK, took control of parts of Aleppo and key Syrian towns in the northeast. These two outfits have struck an alliance and established the Supreme Kurdish Council. The deal was initiated by the leader of the Iraqi Kurds, Massoud Barzani, a staunch opponent of Assad who has long pushed for an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria. It appears that senior Kurdish leaders who had previously thrown in their lot with Assad in his confrontation with the opposition now want to play an independent role in the civil war. As a result, Damascus has all but lost control over densely populated majority-Kurdish parts of the country.

Meanwhile, the Assad regime is becoming increasingly isolated internationally. On August 3, 2012 the UN General Assembly passed Resolution A/RES/66/253/B, in which it condemned ''the increasing use by the Syrian authorities of heavy weapons, including indiscriminate shelling from tanks and helicopters, in population centres and the failure to withdraw their troops and heavy weapons to their barracks.'' The resolution also lambasts ''continued widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities and pro-Government militias, such as the use of force against civilians, massacres, arbitrary executions, the killing and persecution of protestors, human rights defenders and journalists, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, interference with access to medical treatment, torture, sexual violence, and ill-treatment, including against children, as well as any human rights abuses by armed opposition groups.''[1] The document was passed by 133 votes to 12; naturally, the

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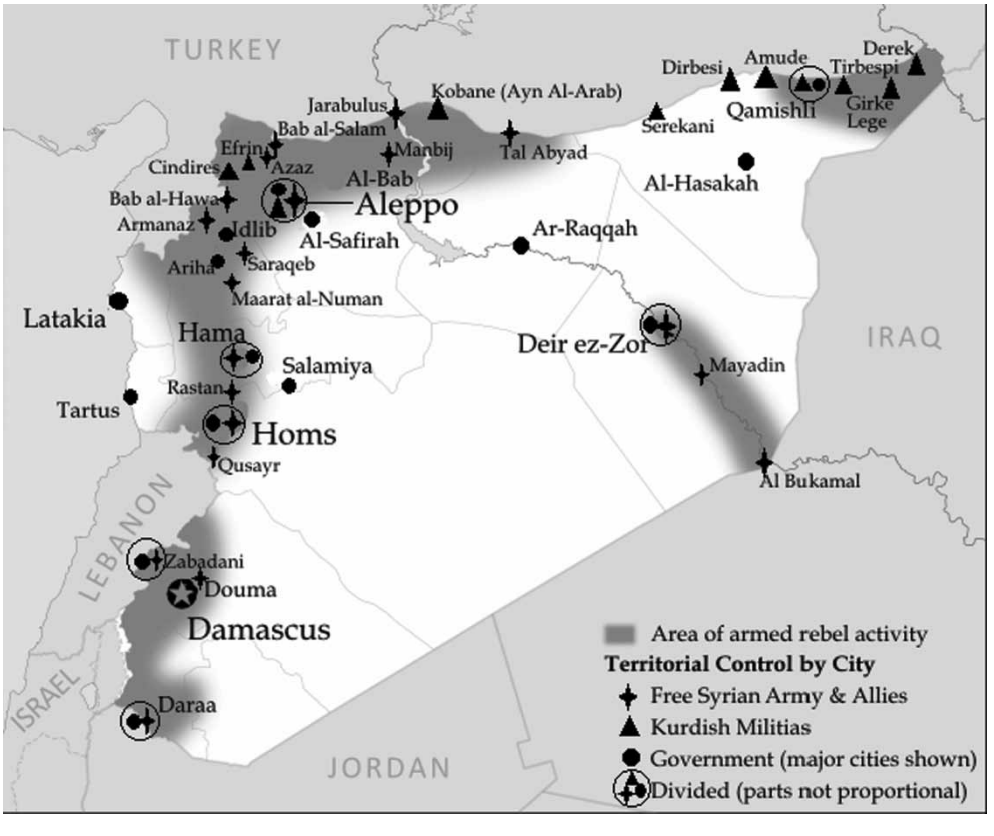
Russian delegation refused to support a resolution condemning mass reprisals. On August 15 Syria was expelled from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in what became the most painful political blow to the Assad regime since the country's expulsion from the Arab League in November 2011.

Meanwhile, fighting continued to spread across the country. By the end of 2012, rebels and Kurdish militias had taken control of about two-thirds of the area along the Syrian–Turkish border (see Figure 1). The government has been forced to withdraw troops from the Golan Heights because it needs them to fight the rebels in the Syrian heartland. Since July 2012 armed clashes between the opposition forces and government troops were going on in Damascus and the country's economic capital Aleppo. Opposition forces have also seized all border crossings into Iraq.

In another heavy blow to the Assad regime, several key members of the government who orchestrated reprisals against the rebels were killed in a terrorist attack, including: Defense Minister Dawoud Rajiha; head of the National Security Bureau Hisham Ikhtiyar; head of the Damascus branch of the General Security Directorate (sometimes also described as chief of the Directorate's investigations department) and the president's cousin Hafez Makhlouf; Deputy Defense Minister for Security, the president's son-in-law Assef Shawkat; head of the counter-insurgency HQ Hasan Turkmani; and several others.[2] Makhlouf and Shawkat are thought to have been members of the small coterie that makes all the key decisions in the Syrian government.

But for all that, there is no reason to expect an imminent fall of the Assad regime. There is no split within the core of that regime, which is centered on the Assad family clan. It consists of the chiefs

Figure 1. **Rebel Activity in Syria as of October 23, 2012**



Source: Syrian Uprising Map: October 2012. *Political Geography Now*, 2012, October 23, <http://www.polgeonow.com/2012/10/syria-uprising-map-october-2012-7.html>, last accessed December 4, 2012.

of Syria's numerous security services, most of them Alawites, who have irreparably tarnished themselves by reprisals against the opposition. Despite the growing number of desertions, most of the army remains loyal to the regime and is still in relatively good fighting shape. A growing number of officers and generals have become quite experienced at counterinsurgency operations, including urban warfare, and have too much blood on their hands to change loyalties at this point. The more peaceful civilians the Syrian army and security services kill, the less likely their commanders and officers are to keep their freedom and their very lives if the government falls.

Russian analysts often point out that the army remains loyal to the regime, and predict the eventual defeat of the opposition forces. The situation in Syria is sometimes compared to the civil war in Algeria, which the Algerian government troops won. The Middle East Institute, which is probably Russia's most respected authority on Arabic studies, recently had this to say on the matter: ''Barring a foreign military intervention, the internal war in Syria will increasingly follow the Algerian scenario of 1992–1998. Back at the time the fall of the ruling Algerian regime under the onslaught of the Islamist forces, led by the Islamic Salvation Front, seemed inevitable . . . . The ISF forces included not only Algerian-born and raised rebels but also—and perhaps more importantly—the so-called Arab Mujahedeen, i.e. Algerians and other Arabs who had fought in Afghanistan.''[3] Opinions like these seem to inform the entire Russian policy on Syria.

It is true that the 300,000-strong Syrian army is almost eight times as numerous as the opposition's Free Syrian Army and other armed opposition groups, which can field, according to its command, only about 40,000 fighters between them. Unlike the rebels, government forces are armed with heavy weaponry and aviation, including attack helicopters. Nevertheless, they cannot defeat the opposition militarily. They are facing all the usual problems of counter-insurgency warfare. They have to spread themselves thin in order to hold all the key towns and strategic communications, trying all the while to crush armed rebel units all across the country. True, most of the army remains loyal to the regime—but Assad can completely rely on only his elite units, special-purpose troops, and the Shabiha militia (manned mostly by members of the Alawite community, which makes up less than 10 percent of the population). Meanwhile, the rebels are increasingly gaining access to anti-tank weapons and man-portable SAM systems, so the government troops' superiority in hardware will continue to dwindle.

Unlike Algeria in the 1990s, Syria is facing harsh international sanctions, which will inevitably become even more crippling over time. The Assad regime is already on the brink of bankruptcy, while its opponents continue to receive assistance from abroad. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the pillars propping up the regime are the minority Alawites, Shia Muslims, and part of the Christian community. The opposition, on the other hand, has the growing support of the country's Sunni majority, as well as the leftist and liberal-democratic secular forces.

The precedents of government forces winning a war with insurgents are very few and far between. Apart from the already mentioned 1992–1998 war in Algeria, they include the defeat of the Communist rebels in Malaya in the early 1950s, and of the national liberation movements in western Ukraine and the Baltic states. In the first case the British authorities managed to isolate the rebel groups, which consisted of ethnic Chinese, from the ethnic Malayan population. In the second, the insurgents lost their support base among the local population as a result of indiscriminate reprisals by the Soviet government, including the deportation of hundreds of thousands of people to Siberia.

The distinctive nature of the Syrian situation, however, is that neither the government nor the opposition can hope for a military victory any time soon. Such a victory would require one of the two sides to take full control of Damascus, Aleppo, and other big cities. That would take either a radical shift in the current balance of power, or the complete collapse and disintegration of the government forces. Both scenarios are unlikely—but the main weakness of the opposition is that it consists of too many political, organizational and military factions.

In essence, the anti-Assad movement consists of several elements. First, there are several hundred small groups which act on a local level, organize anti-government protests and demonstrations, run mutual support networks, distribute humanitarian aid, etc. Some of them are involved in the armed fighting, while others advocate a political settlement.

Second, there are larger organizations which seek to coordinate the smaller groups. In Homs, Hama, Deraa, and Idlib provinces, as well as Damascus itself, such coordination is being carried out—though not very well—by the Revolutionary Command Councils, which sprang up in 2012. On

the national level, there are three umbrella organizations. One of them is the Local Coordination Committee in Syria. It unites several dozen groups which have relatively strong positions in Damascus and several provinces. Officially the Committee cooperates with the Syrian National Council, but in practice there is very little cooperation. The two other organizations (apart from the Muslim Brotherhood and groups allied with Al Qaeda) which coordinate the Islamic groups are the Higher Council of the Syrian Revolution (backed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar) and the Syrian Revolution General Commission.

Third, there are also two rival organizations that want to assume political leadership of the anti-Assad forces and to represent them internationally. The first, the Syrian National Council (SNC), a coalition of opposition groups formed in October 2011, is based in Turkey and backed by Ankara. It consists of 310 people, the vast majority of whom live in the United States, Europe, and Middle Eastern countries. Until November 2012 its leader was Abdel Basset Sayda, a specialist in ancient Middle Eastern history, a representative of the Kurdish National Bloc, who lives in Sweden. He was replaced by George Sabra, a Christian and a left-wing figure. The SNC unites advocates of a liberal secular model; members of the Kurdish National Bloc; and the Muslim Brotherhood. The SNC's clout in Syria itself is hard to judge, but most experts believe it to be negligible. The second rival organization is the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change, which unites various leftist groups and the Syrian-based cells of the Kurdish Democratic Union. The Committee is taking a lot of flak from the other opposition forces, which accuse it of opportunism and even collaborationism because it advocates a ceasefire and the beginning of negotiations with the government without any preconditions. In Syria itself the Committee is led by Hassan Abdel Azim; internationally it is represented by Haytham Manna, a human rights activist.[4]

Fourth, the Free Syrian Army (FSA) is the main armed force of the opposition. It consists of soldiers and officers who have defected from the government troops. The FSA command is based at a Syrian refugee camp in the Turkish town of Antakya. It is led by Riad Mousa al-Asaad, a former Syrian Air Force colonel. In practice the FSA units tend to take their orders from the provincial Councils of Revolutionary Commands rather than the central FSA Command.

Fifth are armed Islamist groups, including radicals affiliated with Al Qaeda. The most prominent of these groups is the al-Nusra Front, which sprang up in February 2012. This category also includes Palestinian terrorist groups and the Abdullah Azzam Brigades. All these outfits oppose any forms of cooperation with non-Muslims and do not want any foreign (including Turkish) intervention. They want Syria to become an Islamic state based on Sharia law. The Assad regime, Russian politicians and diplomats, as well as affiliated figures who claim to be experts on Syria, intentionally exaggerate the role of Islamic extremists in the Syrian civil war. In truth, these groups are fairly marginal (unlike the Muslim Brotherhood) and very unlikely to come to power if the opposition wins.

On 11 November 2012, a new 60-member body for coordination of the opposition forces, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, was set up in Qatar. It lays claim to be recognized as Syria's only legitimate representative and recipient of financial and military aid from abroad. It is headed by Moaz al-Khatib, a Sunni Muslim, a former imam of a mosque in Damascus. The National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change was not invited to join the national Coalition.

In summary, Syria has found itself in a military-political deadlock. Neither side can defeat the other militarily, and a political settlement remains unlikely. The opposition insists that Assad should step down and that government troops cease fire as a precondition for talks. The regime, for its part, demands that the opposition forces lay down their weapons, and refuses to discuss the possibility of Assad's resignation. There are now two scenarios left for Syria.

The first scenario, which does not appear very likely, depends on the emergence of a figure whom the army and most of the armed opposition groups could live with. In theory, such a figure could end the military confrontation, or at the very least substantially reduce its scale, while at the same time removing Assad and his entourage from the political arena. There is no such figure at the moment; nobody knows whether one will appear, or when. The second scenario, which seems far more likely, is that the armed confrontation will continue and the country will disintegrate. Analysts usually predict the appearance of an Alawite state in the coastal areas with a capital in Latakia, and a Kurdish entity in the north. The Sunni-populated part of the country will probably become a territory of *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

The natural question is how the civil war in Syria sits with the interests of the external actors. Saudi Arabia and the other Sunni monarchies of the Gulf probably want the Assad regime to fall as soon as possible. They can—and most probably will—arm and finance the Syrian rebels, who look to them for support. But they lack the capability—and, more importantly, any desire—to become embroiled in a chaotic civil war. For the United States and most of the European powers the Assad regime, which has chosen the path of mass reprisals against civilians, is unacceptable. These countries also want the pro-Iranian regime in Damascus to be replaced by a new government which would be either neutral or even supportive of them in their confrontation with Tehran over the Iranian nuclear program. Given the very real prospect of armed conflict with Iran, the developed democratic nations want to avoid military intervention in Syria, which would draw their political and material resources away from resolving the Iranian problem for many years to come. Viewed in that light, a military operation by the United States and several European countries in Syria seems unlikely—unless they perceive a clear threat of Syrian chemical weapons falling into the hands of Islamist radicals, or unless Assad himself uses these weapons against his opponents and civilians.

Several countries have an interest in Syria becoming weaker as a result of the civil war. A militarily strong Syria, with its aspirations for dominance over Lebanon and influence in the Arab world, is a

Sergio ***Duarte (Brazil),*** *Ambassador (ret.), High Representative of the United Nations for Disarmament Affairs (2007–2012) – by e-mail from Brasilia:* The Syrian situation and the worsening of the crisis between Palestine and Israel increased concerns about security in the Middle East. At the same time, the absence of agreement between the P5 + 1 and Iran continues to fuel preoccupation about the nature of the Iranian nuclear program. Barack Obama has again taken a prudent stance regarding the main sources of instability (Iran, Syria). Together with others, including the UN Secretary General, the U.S. was instrumental in brokering a cease-fire in the Gaza strip. Given **Obama**'s known views, it is to be expected that the negotiated reduction of nuclear forces between the U.S. and Russia will be resumed and that the Administration will renew efforts to get Senate approval for the ratification of the CTBT. Unfortunately, ''modernization'' of the nuclear arsenal seems to continue in both the U.S. and Russia.

natural rival of Turkey, which has ambitious geopolitical plans of its own. In addition, Ankara might be tempted to use the current crisis as an opportunity to eliminate the bases of terrorist Kurdish organizations which have a strong presence in Syrian Kurdistan.

Israel, meanwhile, has found itself in a difficult situation. While the Syrian army is busy fighting the regime's opponents, Israel does not have to worry about its eastern border. Neither Assad nor his generals will have the time to think about re-taking the Golan Heights while they are fighting rebels in Damascus and Aleppo. The Syrian opposition shares the anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli sentiment typical of the Arabs in general, so if it comes to power the situation on the Syrian–Israeli border could become very tense. But any serious threat for Israel from Syria will not materialize until the situation in Syria itself returns to some semblance of normalcy, which will take several years at the least.

Iran obviously wants Assad, its only ally in the region, to remain in power. The arrival of a pro-Western or a pro-Saudi government in Damascus would be a heavy blow for Tehran. Among other things, it would become a lot more difficult for Iran to work with Hezbollah, a pro-Iranian terrorist group based in Lebanon. The Iranian leadership is well aware that keeping Assad and his coterie in power would be problematic, to say the least. But the longer the war in Syria continues, the longer the attention of the West remains distracted from the Iranian nuclear program. Tehran will therefore support Assad to the bitter end.

Formally, Russia is trying not to declare open support for Assad. But numerous statements by Russian officials leave no doubt that Moscow is doing everything it can to keep the regime in power. To illustrate, in March 2012 Deputy Defense Minister Anatoliy Antonov made no secret of the fact that Russia was sending weapons and military advisers to the Syrian government. ''Russia continues to maintain friendly and comprehensive military-and-technical cooperation with Syria, and we see no reason to review that cooperation,'' he said. ''Russian–Syrian military cooperation is entirely legitimate.'' He added that Russian military advisers were in Syria to train the Syrian army.[5]

The official Russian line of argument is that foreign intervention in Syria is unacceptable, that the Syrian people should decide their own future, and that the country needs national reconciliation.

Such a position appears disingenuous. After all, national reconciliation would require the opposition to accept that the regime will stay in power. In truth, the Russian position is based on very different considerations. First, many experts believe that the regimes now in power in Russia and in Syria have a lot in common. Second, the Assad regime is Russia's only remaining ally in the Middle East. And third, Moscow wants to keep its naval supply station in the Syrian port of Tartus.

Pál ***Dunay****, (****Hungary****), Head of the International Security Program of the Geneva Center for Security Policy – by e-mail from Budapest*: The instability in a number of post-Arab spring countries, including Libya and Egypt have demonstrated that the resolution of the hot phase of conflict does not result in the stability desired and does not bring about change that is clearly showing in the direction of lasting settlement. This is a contributing factor of doubt concerning a conclusive resolution of the Syrian conflict. The hesitation of many states stems from the fact nobody knows whether Syria under the leadership of the current opposition forces would be better governed than now.

That, however, is not all. By supporting Assad, Russia wants to draw the attention and resources of the Western powers away from the former Soviet republics and the adjacent territories in the Baltics and the Black Sea, which are the focus of Moscow's main geostrategic interests. What is more, Russia is trying to provoke Western military intervention in Syria. Such an intervention would be an excellent occasion once again to accuse the West, and the United States in particular, of using force to meddle in other countries' affairs. Such accusations are not only needed to cobble together an anti-American coalition of regimes which have reason to fear such interventions. They are also necessary in view of the political situation in Russia itself. They will serve as an additional pretext to persecute the opposition, which has long been labeled as Washington's stooges. Most importantly, a military operation against the Assad regime would clearly cost the West a lot more in terms of political, material, and financial resources than the operation in Libya, for example.

NOTES

[1] ''The Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic,'' Resolution A/RES/66/253B, United Nations General Assembly, August 3, 2012, < http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/452/71/PDF/N1245271.pdf?OpenElement>, last accessed December 4, 2012.

[2] Various media outlets are using different names for the agencies in which the dead Syrian army and security chiefs served, which calls for clarification. The largest of these agencies is the General Security Directorate. It includes three departments: internal security, the Palestine department, and external security (foreign intelligence). The second-biggest agency is the Political Security Directorate, which oversees efforts against the regime's political opponents inside the country, monitors visiting foreigners and the media, etc. Its remit is very similar to that of the Internal Security Directorate. The Military Intelligence Directorate gathers intelligence on the armed forces of Syria's neighbors; it also provides assistance to radical and terrorist groups abroad, and kills the regime's opponents in foreign countries. The directorate's remit includes special operations, including operations to kill the regime's opponents in Syria and abroad. Formally, the National Security Bureau coordinates all the aforementioned services and the Interior Ministry. In actual fact, however, all of them are subordinated directly to the president. The Republican Guard, which is about 25,000 strong, protects the president and top government officials. It also patrols central Damascus and guards the presidential palace. In recent years, Republican Guard units have also been stationed in Homs, Hama, and Deraa. Finally, the Assad regime also makes use of the paramilitary Shabiha formations to carry out reprisals against the rebels. The Shabiha units are manned primarily by Alawites and Shia Muslims, and have earned themselves a reputation for extreme brutality.

[3] P. Lvov, ''Lessons of the Syrian Resistance,'' *IIMES*, August 22, 2012, < http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2012/22-08-12.htm>, last accessed September 10, 2012.

[4] Nora Benkorich, ''Comment s'organise l'opposition intérieure en Syrie?,'' *Le Monde*, August 8, 2012, < http://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/08/comment-s-organise-l-opposition-interieure-en-syrie_1743592_3232.html>, last accessed September 10, 2012.

[5] Charlotte McDonald-Gibson and Shaun Walker, ''Russia: We're Happy to Sell Arms to Assad,'' *Independent*, March 14, 2012, < http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-were-happy-to-sell-arms-to-assad-7565725.html>, last accessed September 10, 2012.

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Dmitry Evstafiev

A PICTURE FRAME FOR WORLD POLITICS

Summer 2012 was more than a little nerve-wracking—although the events that took place during that period were entirely predictable. But there is something entirely unorthodox about the fact that missile defense or the situation in Afghanistan has not been the main source of international tensions over those months. (In Afghanistan, by the way, the strategic mutual exhaustion of the two warring factions has become entirely obvious, signaling a demand for a third force.) The focus of international tensions has shifted instead to Syria, a civil-war-torn country which has traditionally been at the heart of the Middle East, and to the territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands. In other words, the regions that are now the greatest source of international instability are the very same regions that were seen as prime candidates for that dubious honor back in the early 1990s. The international situation has arrived at this point after many twists and turns caused by attempts to slow down the formation of multipolarity in the global power play, and to impose instead some new world order. Nevertheless, world politics is now back where it started. Apparently, this also means the return of the economic challenges that the developed capitalist countries were facing after the break-up of the Soviet Union. In essence, these two developments shaped the international situation in the summer of 2012.

A painting only becomes a painting once it has been given a nice frame. It immediately gains depth, it becomes part of the time and space, and its details gain some unexpected meanings. Let us therefore try to put the two aforementioned crises, and other apparently unrelated events of those few months, into a kind of frame. That frame will consist of four elements.

First, the United States is straining hard to keep the foreign policy initiative. It abhors the thought of ever playing second fiddle, even if it makes good tactical sense. On the contrary, over the past six months Washington has tried to show leadership in almost every situation, even if its involvement was only indirect. The scale of American interventionism has not only failed to decrease compared with the George W. Bush presidency, but has actually gone up. Clearly, the American elite is well aware of the difficulty of its own situation; it realizes that the only sensible way out is for it to preserve the ability to extract what might be termed unipolarity rent from all the leading developed countries. In other words, it must be able to limit the global competitiveness of all the other players by means of military instruments (including membership of military-political organizations and ad hoc alliances). The situation in Europe these days appears crystal clear. Norway has always been a rather peculiar part of the continent—but agonizing discussions as to how to cause the least possible amount of suffering to the butcher Breivik, who killed 77 people, amply demonstrate the general European trend. But things become far more complicated when we move on to China, or to the nascent Latin American challenge (and I do not mean Hugo Chavez—I mean the prospect of Brazil undergoing an industrial breakthrough and becoming the region's leader; such a prospect is far more impressive than the Bolivarian Alternative, Portuguese language notwithstanding). So in order to be able to maintain its dominance in these areas, Washington is forced to participate on every foreign-policy situation, and to assume the burdens of leadership. It cannot afford anyone having the slightest doubt about its strength. But is Washington actually strong enough to continue carrying that burden?

Second, even though the leading world powers—especially the United States—are more than willing to use military force, their ability to conduct successful military operations is not actually that impressive. In other words, the threshold for using force has become much lower in this new humanistic world we are living in—but technical details are preventing even the strongest countries from exercising their military power in an unrestricted way. The use of military force is restricted not only by legal formalities, but also by the need to take into account various other considerations—such as the position of key international organizations, or whether the opponent has influential allies. Even more importantly—and this is nothing new—using military force to promote democracy is easy if the opponent is weak and cannot really fight back. If, however, the opponent is determined to take forceful action, people start talking about the difficult nature of international relations these days, or about the destructive role being played by Russia. I do not think Washington has only just realized that it would not be a good idea to invade Syria because

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Russia and China have vetoed the anti-Assad resolution. A far more important consideration for the United States is that the Syrian regime will actually fight back, and that it may well use chemical weapons, not necessarily on its own territory.

Third, it has turned out that allies are important after all. All the talk of the possibility of aggressive unilateralism—primarily on the part of the United States—has not been put into practice. The availability and nature of allies determines whether the leading players have any freedom of maneuver. For example, had Nicolas Sarkozy still remained president in France, and had the notorious Caballero still ruled Italy, there is little doubt that NATO's air raids against Syria would have begun a couple of months ago. As it turns out, even the United States—let alone other countries—needs more to start a war than the political support of Britain. Conversely, had Iran's Ahmadinejad and Venezuela's Chavez been Russia's only allies on Syria, and had China taken a neutral stance, Moscow's actions would not have been so decisive and resolute. In other words, any large international action in this day and age must be conducted only as part of a coalition—and not just any coalition, but an almost unanimous one, when those who disagree keep silent as opposed to actively voicing their opposition. That is a serious challenge for the largest international players, especially the United States and China, because it will be very difficult for them to assemble a truly meaningful coalition. Everyone will know perfectly well what such a coalition will be about, who it will be aimed against, and what the price of participation is.

Fourth, regardless of what human rights activists say, the main issue in modern politics and economics is the issue of energy. More specifically, it is the issue of oil. For all the talk of alternative energy sources or shale gas, most of the international geopolitical processes, including the situation in Syria, ultimately turn out to be about influence over key transport corridors used for traditional hydrocarbons. Did anyone really think that Qatar's involvement in the Syrian conflict was caused by the country's concern for democracy and human rights? The imperative of dominating the hydrocarbons markets allows us to make three key conclusions, which have clear military repercussions.

- The traditional hydrocarbons will remain the basis of the global energy sector—or at any rate, the energy sectors of the countries that show the most sustainable economic growth rates. The outlook for nuclear energy remains uncertain; another major nuclear accident will be enough to put an end to it. For now, nuclear energy and exotic energy sources, such as shale gas and renewables, will dampen the growth in demand for traditional hydrocarbons; they will cover much of the global growth in energy consumption, but no more than that.

- The prices of traditional hydrocarbons will remain relatively high, owing not so much to the political risks and speculation on the energy market (although the latter factor will remain important) as to the riskiness of all the other investments. At times of crises, investing in oil (and that includes political investment) is a fairly reliable way to keep your money. More importantly, if there is political protection available, operations with oil always generate a profit, albeit not a steady one.

- It is obvious that the key consumers of traditional hydrocarbons and many of the suppliers are not happy with the current state of the world market, and will try to change it, one way or another. Some of them—China, for example—can use mostly economic instruments. Others, such as the United States, will stoke up managed conflicts and sell their power-projection capabilities to the victims. Still others, such as the Gulf states, led by Saudi Arabia, will try to use the Islamist movements they finance to reshape the market in their own favor. In any event, it would be naive to hope to perpetuate the current comfortable situation and the profits it brings without making some very energetic efforts. The fight for influence on this market will be very ruthless, with no holds barred.

And now that we have looked at the new and old frameworks of the world processes, let us assess the developments in summer 2012.

CHINA: AN UNCOMFORTABLE CHASE AFTER THE LEADER

The talk of the coming struggle for world leadership between China and the United States has become a foregone conclusion over the past five years. The increasingly public disagreements between the two countries—which cannot be denied—are being taken as evidence of their

growing rivalry. A fresh round of discussions about the restoration of bipolarity has coincided not only with the situation in Syria (where China has unexpectedly chosen not to lose face), but also with semi-clownish demonstrations on the Senkaku Islands. Tensions were stoked further by a statement by Hillary Clinton in Togo, in which she directly pointed at China as a source of possible problems in Africa and described the Chinese as ''aliens'' (in an apparent belief that the Americans are seen as home boys on the continent). There was also the situation with the Standard Chartered bank, in which Chinese presence can clearly be traced. Of course, to all outward appearances we are going through another bout of Sino–American tensions. But are these tensions really serious? After all, bipolarity can only appear when there is a real alternative. China is not an alternative—either ideologically, or economically. It is more likely that China is merely trying to close the gap with the United States in terms of its international influence, using its growing economic might as leverage. This is a classic catch-up game, complicated by very real contradictions in Northeast Asia, which is a vitally important region for China, and by Beijing's geopolitical ambitions.

There is a growing feeling that the Chinese are always lacking something to stake their global claim. In the past six months this has become entirely obvious. Almost all of Beijing's seemingly cunning plans for establishing a strong presence in other parts of the world are coming to naught. Some of them are ending in failure (such as the attempt to secure a presence in West Africa, especially oil and gas-rich Guinea). Others (Central Asia is a prime example) are turning into shoving matches with the other players, without any clear prospect for geopolitical capitalization of all the resources the Chinese have spent.

More importantly, the Chinese seem to lack the decisiveness, and the ability to explain and prove to the Americans that everything is for real this time. This is partly due to China's economic dependence on the American market. In addition, the Chinese leadership has consciously chosen (probably for historical and ideological reasons) a strategy of pursuing global expansion in areas where they are least likely to meet the resistance of other global competitors, primarily the United States.

Washington is well aware of this. Whenever it frustrates China's ambitions (sometimes in a very rude way, such as during Hillary Clinton's tour of Africa) it feels confident that China will never allow tensions with the United States to spiral to a point where they can jeopardize its access to the American market or the American financial system. That is why Washington believes it can escalate the polemics and ramp up political pressure without any risks. For obvious reasons, the path of least resistance China has chosen for global expansion leads to parts of the world that are not worth serious conflict with the United States.

The obvious exception is Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula. Everyone understands that in these two regions the Chinese can be far more determined and decisive. In that sense, new tensions over the Senkaku Islands are a rather unpleasant development for the Americans, and a premature one as well. After all, the partnership Washington is now trying to build with Vietnam (who do you think was the target audience of the gay parade in Ho Chi Minh City, and who were the Vietnamese communists sending a signal to?) may not be enough to contain the Chinese. That is especially true in light of the latest events in North Korea, where the pro-Chinese group has gained a lot of influence at the expense of the autarchists.

But if one keeps demonstrating to the Chinese that their economic might cannot be transformed into global political influence without the consent of Washington, sooner or later the Chinese will agree with that. And once they have, they may well decide that in order to become a truly global power they would do well to flex some muscle. On the whole, the Chinese have recently gained some experience of more assertive behavior. Let us not forget how decisive and demonstrative their actions were against the U.S.-Indian stooges on the Maldives, which only Russian tourists see as merely a tourist destination. If the Americans try to fence the Chinese in too tightly, Beijing may well choose to abandon restraint—and it is far from certain that Washington will prove strong enough to parry that blow. The fact is that America's power projection capability has long been stretched nearly to a breaking point.

THE FORMER SOVIET SPACE: END OF THE ISLAND OF STABILITY

Of course, compared with the developments in the Middle East, the situation in the former Soviet republics looks like an island of stability. For now, the scale of the violence is not nearly as great as

in the Middle East or other parts of the world—even if we take into account a clear deterioration in the Caucasus, or the upsurge in deadly shoot-outs in Kazakhstan, for all its vaunted stability. But this relative calm is deceptive; what is really important here is the trend, and the trend gives little reason for optimism. It is fairly safe at this point to predict three important developments that will soon change the political and military-political landscape of the post-Soviet space (and Russia is no exception in this case).

First, economic growth has completely decoupled from social development and social stability. Economic growth indicators still remain fairly decent (even though everyone keeps predicting a new wave of economic crisis), but society as a whole and individual members of the public are feeling less and less of that growth. There is nothing new about the fact that the benefits of economic growth have always been enjoyed by a very small section of society in the former Soviet states. But now that disparity has become so blatant that any talk of the stabilizing effects of economic growth on the social situation has become completely irrelevant. Interestingly, the social and economic destabilization is actually more evident in those countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and, to a lesser extent, Uzbekistan) where, formally, economic growth figures remain fairly decent. But it is in those exact states that the clan system which controls the economy has been brought to perfection. Meanwhile, the countries which have been the worst affected by negative political and economic developments, and which ought to be suffering the greatest social imbalances (Ukraine, Belarus, and Kyrgyzstan) are not actually seeing any major deterioration compared with 2011. Of course, nothing very good is happening in those countries, either—but at least things are not getting any worse. This phenomenon amply demonstrates that clan monopoly (which, by the way, makes the elites entirely uncompetitive) and lack of competition are the worst banes of social development. The situation is compounded by the dependence of most of the former Soviet economies on the European market.

Second, there is a growing problem of ethnic divisions and religious—especially Islamic—fundamentalism. Of course, many former Soviet countries have frequently faced upsurges in radical Islamist trends—but previously those trends were thought to affect only individual regions on the periphery. Tensions in Fergana, where the Islamic factor has been very clearly present, were put down to politics and the struggle for democracy. Now, however, radical Islamism is growing in places where only yesterday it was thought to be very unlikely to cause any trouble. When an Islamist underground is discovered in Kazakhstan, it is obviously a problem—but hardly a surprise. When, however, an Islamist underground movement (and a very exotic one to boot) is found in Tatarstan, that is a very worrying signal to the elites in the post-Soviet space. That signal suggests that the Soviet republics are not immune to global trends (and talking about national borders and different national attitudes to Islamists would only obfuscate the issue). We continue to seek solace in the clearly outdated concepts of a European Islam (ask people in the suburbs of London or Paris what that form of Islam is supposed to look like), a tolerant Eurasian Christianity, and the supposed resilience of the former Soviet peoples to radicalism.

Third, we are witnessing an erosion of the post-Soviet economic consensus among the ruling elites, and of the entire post-Soviet economic model. The relative stability of the former Soviet space was predicated on a consolidation of the local elites around a very simple, perhaps even primitive idea of exploiting the Soviet industrial heritage, with little thought spared for future generations. That consensus was also based on the elite's determination not to do anything to jeopardize the existing economic model. There were exceptions, of course, such as Mikhail Saakashvili—but that was mostly because in Georgia, Soviet heritage had been looted sooner than in any of the other republics. In Tajikistan, which had gone through a much bloodier civil war, the economic model in question continued to work very well. But developments in the past six months may suggest that our age is drawing to a close. The clans that make up the ruling elite are no longer confident that parasitizing on what remains of the Soviet economy is a reliable survival strategy. In simple terms, in the past three or four months the post-Soviet ruling elites have been trying to cash out. They want to lay down the burden and the responsibility of managing Soviet assets, and gradually retire. Just look how many relatives of powerful people have recently left their home countries in search of a quieter life. The trend is very obvious in almost every single post-Soviet state, with the possible exception of Belarus (where the single-clan system continues to work very well) and Ukraine (where the infighting between the different clans of the elite is starting to look like a classic Cossack ''everyone against everyone else,'' and few people are in a position to cash out). In Russia, meanwhile, the easiest way to get an idea of the scope of the disaster is to look at the privatization program. The reasons for that mass phenomenon are clear: the machinery and infrastructure are becoming decrepit, nobody wants to invest any money in

their renovation, and, more importantly, there is a feeling in the air that big trouble is on the horizon. But while some are trying to cash out, others are getting their own ideas about how to obtain the financial resources necessary for their survival. In other words, there is a prospect of a large-scale and probably bloody re-division of the economic pie, because there are serious doubts that assets will be taken over by portfolio investors in an orderly fashion.

The conclusion that can be made from all of the above is simple and cynical: as of September 2012, everything was in place in the former Soviet space for a large conflict with a significant religious component. The island of stability has turned out to be an illusion; the owners of crime-ridden slums thought that world events would pass them by, and kept themselves busy making profits in their dingy cellars and rowdy watering holes, oblivious to the fact that their time will soon be over.

It is not yet clear when and how life will catch up with their little world. That will depend on many unknown factors. Neither is it completely clear whether the situation has passed the point of no return. But it is no longer possible to pretend that the situation in the region is not changing in a very fundamental way. In such circumstances, we would all do well to have a closer look at the regional security bodies that have sprung up in post-Soviet Eurasia in the past 20 years; who knows, they might actually become useful some day soon.

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TALES AND PROPHECIES AT A BOILING CAULDRON

Evgeny Satanovsky, Russia and the Middle East: A Cauldron of Trouble, (Moscow: EKSMO, 2012), 384 pp.

Reviewed by Vladimir Orlov

> ''Who are Russia's friends and partners in the Middle East, and who are the enemies or aggressors?'' ''Why can't we seem to come up with an effective policy in the Middle East?'' ''What will be the impact of the confrontation between Iran, the United States and the EU, and how will that confrontation affect Russia?'' ''Will there be a nuclear war in the Middle East?''...

With questions like these on the front cover, this book is impossible not to grab from the shelf and start reading at once—especially considering who the author is. The man is a political scientist and political leader, a businessman and philanthropist, an erudite, a prankster, a provocateur, and self-proclaimed ''jolly fat man who looks more like De Vito than De Niro.'' ''I have always, since I was a young man, found the world we live in fascinating,'' he says of himself. ''By the mid-1990s I knew the whole Jewish world like the back of my hand; I had access to the Russian ruling circles and the Western elite; at the Foreign Ministry's recommendation, I had established good relations with Abbas and his family; I had founded my own corporation and a research institute; retained my optimism and faith in humanity; made quite a lot of money, and had more than 100 years of my family's experience in building steel mills, naval bases and other large facilities'' (p. 140).

NO ANGER, JUST SOME BIAS

LIBRARY

Those who know Evgeny Satanovsky, President of the Middle East Institute and former head of the Russian Jewish Congress, will probably agree that this book of his should have an audiobook version. The stories told by Satanovsky are best listened to, not read. Whether you agree with him or absolutely reject his opinions, his personal charm and charisma cannot be denied. He is well aware of it, and his personality comes through very well in this book. It is full of entertaining deviations—about Af-Pak and the Somali traditions, about ''the uses of the CIA'' and the ''New Ottoman Empire,'' about ''kebabs in Jericho'' and Middle Eastern demographics. Some of these digressions take just a few lines; others are several pages long.

What, then, is the genre of this book? Satanovsky himself begins it with a loquacious disclaimer. It was meant at first to be a learning aid ''for serious students of a serious school''—perhaps the students of the Institute of Asian and African Studies (of Moscow State University), where he continues to teach? But the author then found the dry and concise style of a textbook inimical to his own nature. What came out is neither a textbook, nor a reference tome, nor yet an encyclopedia. I would describe ''A Cauldron of Trouble'' as a collection of essays held together by the Middle Eastern kebab spit.

The artwork on the front cover betrays the author's passion for geography and, by extension, for geopolitics. Pages of Soviet atlases dating back to Satanovsky's childhood lay the ground for a brave foray into the Arc of Instability that is the Middle East. Satanovsky's careful and deliberate definition of the region includes Turkey, Pakistan, Mauritania, and Somalia. ''The Middle East of this book is the Arab world, the non-Arab Muslim countries, and non-Muslim regional powers.'' Having dealt briskly with the geography, Satanovsky paints, in broad strokes and with encyclopedic insight, the history of the whole region and its individual countries. I have no doubt that students will find this particular section absolutely fascinating. It may not be a classical

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''learning aid,'' but the concentration of facts, thoughts, and ideas—sometimes contentious, but always exciting and never pedestrian—is simply outstanding.

The charm of this book is also its main weakness. This is not a piece of research. This is an exuberant and very personal piece of opinion-based journalism. Satanovsky despises understatement, vagueness, and political correctness. His tells it like it is—or like he thinks it is, based on his excellent education and vast social experience. Here are just a few of his gems: ''Iran is the most effective democracy in the Middle East'' (p. 80). Or this: ''Without foreign military presence or local dictatorship, Iraq is unlikely to continue to exist as an independent state, and the secession of Kurdistan is inevitable'' (p. 94). Or this: ''Saudi Arabia... is ready for a regional nuclear arms race. It will probably achieve this capability by obtaining the *device*, the technical specialists and the delivery vehicles from Pakistan'' (p. 106; emphasis added).

Is that still not enough? Here is more: ''The initiative to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East... is targeted directly against Iran and Israel, ignoring the problem posed by the Pakistani nuclear weapons'' (p. 106). And still more: ''The spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, is the Sunni version of Khomeini, an admirer of Hitler and a popular TV preacher.'' From his home in Qatar, he had a lot of influence on the events in Egypt and Libya, according to the author. Or how about this: ''It is almost inevitable... that Turkey and Iran will clash as the two countries aspire for dominance in the Muslim World and pull in different directions when in comes to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Lebanon or Iraq'' (p. 182). Nevertheless, by working hand in hand against the Kurds, Turkey and Iran are rehearsing joint action against Israel, Satanovsky argues (p. 291).

This book is brimming with contentious, eccentric, and outspoken ideas on a broad array of pressing issues—and that is probably why it is so engaging and thought-provoking.

THE LOBBYISTS, THE PEACEMAKERS, AND THE TALE-SPINNERS

It was a particular delight for me to read the chapter on the external players in the Middle East. It offers a very uncompromising and critical analysis of the role played by the United States. It looks carefully at the growing importance of China. I almost held my breath when I reached the pages devoted to Russia's policies and role in the region. Here Satanovsky is especially ruthless: ''The distinctive features of Russian projects in the Middle East include lack of mobility, glacial pace, absence of any genuine interest in the end result, unwillingness to take responsibility, erratic and arbitrary style of the senior political leadership, cronyism among that leadership's underlings, and pervasive corruption driven by the pursuit of personal gain'' (p. 372). It is hard to disagree with that assessment, or with the following verdict: the Russian policies ''come nowhere near the level of China's long-term global planning, or the sheer bustling energy of Turkey's and Iran's efforts. The reasons for that include a shortage of resources, fear of repeating the Soviet Union's mistakes, a deficit of qualified specialists, and... poor coordination between the various government departments'' (ibid.)

I am not sure, however, what to make of the following assessment of Russian policy in the Middle East: ''Through various lobbyist groups, including the Russian Foreign Ministry, Russia often supports global political initiatives which carry serious reputational risks but have very little to offer in terms of our national interests'' (p. 373). Who are these ''lobbyist groups''? I would have thought that in recent years the problem has been completely the opposite. True, the ''lobbyist groups'' are to blame for these problems—but these are very different groups from those which the former head of the Russian Jewish Congress is pointing at.

The inevitable vulnerability of this book—which, ironically, creates a lot of room for further debate—is the author's unashamed bias when it comes to Israeli–Palestinian affairs and the peace process. Satanovsky makes no secret of the fact that he does not believe in the possibility of Palestine ever becoming a viable independent state. What is more, he is confident—wrongly, I believe—that deep down, even the Palestinians themselves do not want such a state because they benefit from the current uncertainty and, as the author puts it, from not having to bear any responsibility for anything. Satanovsky's arguments against the involvement of the UN, peacekeepers, and co-sponsors sound annoyingly plausible. Moscow did without co-sponsors in Chechnya—and won. Tehran did without co-sponsors in the Iranian Azerbaijan Province—and won. So why can Tel Aviv (or Jerusalem, as Satanovsky insists) not do the same? Why the indecisiveness? By delegating the task of resolving the problem to the international community,

Israel ''merely perpetuates the conflict and takes it to a new level,'' he argues—especially since, in his sarcastic opinion, the job of the peacekeepers ''is, as a rule, to keep the process going as opposed to actually settling the conflict'' (p. 276). Satanovsky then goes on to describe the UN as ''an ineffectual bureaucratic outfit living in its own world, which is far removed from the real world. The expensive UN peacekeeping structures don't protect anyone from anything'' (p. 216).

That is a very serious charge to make. But is it entirely groundless? I believe that this assertion by Satanovsky deserves a separate discussion in the pages of *Security Index*. It also reminds me of a recent episode at one of the Middle East conferences, when an Israeli expert, a former government official, called the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference ''short-sighted.'' Let us recall that the document was approved by a unanimous vote of all the countries in the world, bar four (Israel being one of those four). To that remark by the Israeli delegate, a Chilean diplomat angrily retorted: ''So you think the whole international community is short-signed, while you alone are far-sighted?''

PAKISTAN, IRAN, AND THE NUCLEAR DOMINO

I will not deny it: I was especially interested in the chapters dealing with the Iranian nuclear program and the Middle Eastern nuclear affairs in general. Satanovsky dwells at some length on the regional atomic bomb.

He is quite emotional on the subject of the Pakistani nuclear program and the country's role in nuclear proliferation. His personal feelings and emotions come through so strongly that they sometimes get in the way of the actual facts and analysis. Nevertheless, I have to agree with his conclusions regarding Pakistan.

Things are a bit more complex as far as Iran is concerned. On the one hand, Satanovsky's analysis of Iranian policies in the Middle East is deep, penetrating, and insightful. On the other, the author's unshakeable conviction that Iran is trying to build an atomic bomb is not sufficiently grounded in facts. This is the first time in the whole book that his grasp of the subject matter starts to look a bit weak. It comes to my mind that it has already been a decade since Satanovsky first said Israel and Iran should begin direct negotiations in order to agree on the rules of the game once Iran had the bomb. In other words, he proposed that it was necessary to start thinking about the modalities of nuclear deterrence in the region and decide whether it should follow the United States–Soviet Union model dating back to the Cold War, or the current India–Pakistan model. Even back then Satanovsky was confident that the Iranians would never abandon their idée fixe, and that an agreement with them can and should be reached before it is too late—in other words, before a regional nuclear conflict breaks out in the Middle East. He also insisted that such an agreement should be sought by those who are part of that region, i.e. by the Israelis—not the Americans, who are far away and would only muck things up.

I do not share that point of view—and neither do I subscribe to the Middle Eastern Nuclear Domino theory proposed by many experts, Satanovsky included. These experts aver that Iran will be followed by Saudi Arabia, then Egypt, and eventually Turkey as well. To that group of countries Satanovsky adds the UAE and Algeria. It is true that the two are expressing interest in launching a nuclear program. It is also true, however, that the program they are contemplating has a strictly peaceful nature. ''Their nuclear arsenals will be small and primitive,'' Satanovsky predicts. ''But it will give them immunity from external meddling—the same kind of immunity that is now enjoyed by North Korea... and soon, by Iran as well'' (p. 319). Well, I think it is quite obvious that the Gulf countries will never acquire the bomb. Even if we accept that the Iranians are secretly working to build such a bomb (which I doubt), these suspected efforts are thought to have been ongoing since 1985. Just think how long that same process would take the Saudis! Unlike the Iranians or North Koreans, they do not even have the mountains in which to hide these activities.

I find it easy to disagree with Satanovsky on the nuclear domino—but he makes one other Nostradamic prophecy which I cannot easily dismiss. I am not sure whether that prediction is ostentatiously alarmist (which would fit the general essay format of the book very well) or impeccably correct in its analysis of the current state of affairs in the Middle East. The prediction

is this: ''The region is rapidly approaching a major war. Such a war is inevitable for several reasons, the main one being the situation in Iran'' (p. 318).

So grab the ''Cauldron of Trouble'' and read it while you can. The cauldron is approaching boiling point—who knows, maybe the predictions will start to come true even before you reach the end of the book. 

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