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NATO UPDATE

By: Tom Aargaard

The recent weeks have been eventful for NATO on a number of fronts. Most visibly, the stunning rebel victories in Libya signal the beginning of the end for Operation Unified Protector. On September 1, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen attended the International Conference on Libya in London to discuss the future of the country. Rasmussen's comments revealed pride in the operation's success mixed with relief that the conclusion was in sight. Crediting NATO's action with saving countless lives, he emphasized that operations would continue for "as long as attacks and threats continue but not a day longer than necessary." As the fighting winds down, Rasmussen stressed that the UN would take over as the primary international organization aiding the Libyan people's transition to a democratic peace, but that NATO would be prepared to offer assistance if requested.

Overshadowed by the events in Libya and Afghanistan, NATO has quietly had to bolster the peacekeeping force it has led in Kosovo since 1999. In early August, ethnic tensions flared after the Kosovo government tried to establish customs points along the Serbian border. In the ensuing violence NATO-lead KFOR troops have come under fire from Serb militants. While the Alliance planned to withdraw approximately half of the 5 000 troops stationed in Kosovo by the end of the year, it has instead reinforced KFOR with contributions from Germany and Austria. In an interview with an AP reporter KFOR commander Maj. Gen. Erhad Bueler suggested that the planned reduction was off the table for the foreseeable future.

Two developments have added tension to NATO's perennially touchy relationship with Russia. First, NATO issued a statement on its official website refuting the legitimacy of the recent election in Georgia's Russian-sponsored breakaway region Abkhazia. Secondly, last week Turkey agreed to host an American surveillance and fire control radar as part of the integrated ballistic missile defence plan adopted by NATO at last year's Lisbon conference. Turkey refused to agree to the deployment of the powerful radar on its territory until it received adequate assurances that information from the system would not be shared with one-time friend, now nemesis Israel. Despite NATO and American insistence that the missile shield is intended as protection from "rogue states" like Iran, Russia has voiced its displeasure at the Turkish announcement and reiterated its demand for a legally-binding guarantee that any fielded system would not be aimed against Russia's strategic arsenal.

Finally, an interesting event took place in Moldova last week that while not immediately recognizable as a traditional NATO exercise demonstrates the Alliance's adaptation to stay relevant in the post-Cold War environment. Through the Partnership for Peace Program, NATO's Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre conducted a large-scale field exercise responding to a hypothetical earthquake in the capital region.

Over 30 NATO and partner states took part, cooperating to deal with simulated mass casualties in the face of critical infrastructure damage and a radiological incident. As Hurricane Katrina and the recent Japanese tsunami have demonstrated, first-world countries are not immune to natural catastrophes minimize the loss of life when disaster strikes. Exercises like these are crucial in establishing the capabilities and inter-organizational relationships necessary to minimize the loss of life when disaster strikes.

A War for Oil?

By: Simon Miles

Amidst the worldwide enthusiasm in response to the continuously mounting successes of Libya's rebels, Russia has been a dissenting voice on the international scene. Recent statements by Russia's permanent representative to NATO, Dr. Dmitri Rogozin, are the latest in a series of condemnations of NATO's actions. "For Russia," Rogozin declared, "NATO's operation in Libya indicated that the major interests of the alliance now lie not in Europe's East – where its adversaries the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union used to be – but in oil-rich lands of Northern Africa and the Middle East." The NATO intervention in Libya is but one of many areas of tension between NATO and the Russian government, in addition to missile defense initiatives, the Collective Forces in Europe Treaty, the outcome of the recent elections in Abkhazia, and the accession of further Eastern European nations to NATO.

Elaborating, Rogozin enumerated his government's three key reasons for objecting to NATO's intervention. Firstly, it rejects the imposition of a normative concept of human rights on other sovereign countries, and using force in so doing. Secondly, Russia argues that NATO activities have overstepped the provisions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution permitting foreign military intervention to safeguard the well-being of Libya's civilian population. Thirdly, Rogozin suggests that the wave of uprisings dubbed the "Arab Spring" is replacing old regimes with new, fundamentalist ones. Western encouragement of Libya's rebels could precipitate further destabilization and, he suggests, even more power becoming concentrated in the hands of radical Islamists. "This is why the intervention of the Western countries into the situation in the Middle East in order to get the hydrocarbons is assessed as a very risky gamble," Rogozin concluded, "almost as dangerous as a stroll through a minefield."

Russia has a record of opposition to NATO's involvement in Libya. At the UNSC, Russia abstained (along with Brazil, China, Germany, and India) from voting on UNSC Resolution 1973 which allowed for a no-fly zone over Libya and the use of "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians. Both Russia and China refused to participate in any embargos on the Qaddafi regime – largely because doing so would put the Russian oil companies contracted to manage much of Libya's oil infrastructure out of work.

Following a 30 April airdrop by French forces of weapons to rebel fighters in Libya's mountainous regions, Russia expressed its opposition concretely. This was far from rabble-rousing on Russia's part, however. In terms of international law, France's action in this instance and in many others of supplying the rebel forces with considerable quantities of materiel is only questionably permissible. UNSC Resolution 1970 imposes an arms embargo on Libyan territory, but France has argued that the provisions of Resolution 1973 allow for arms to be given to the Rebels, albeit not specifically. Russia, joined by the African Union, rejects this logic.

Most recently, on 1 September, Russia recognized the rebel regime as being the legitimate government of Libya on the eve of a conference in Paris on Libya's future. Moscow pressed for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, and on several occasions dispatched envoys to meet with leaders from both sides of the civil war. President Dmitri Medvedev declared that Russia would withhold recognition until the rebel forces had a clear position of dominance throughout Libyan territory. Viewed from Moscow, that condition appears to have been met, as the Foreign Ministry announced that it no longer considered the Qaddafi regime to be Libya's legitimate government.

There is naturally an internal political dimension to this aspect of Russian foreign policy, which is directly linked to the continuous struggle for power between President Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. Putin initially (and clearly independently) condemned NATO's humanitarian intervention, calling it "flawed and inadequate" and declaring that it reminded him of "a medieval call to crusade" on 21 March. Russian news services echoed this sentiment, depicting French President Nicolas Sarkozy with clear relish as a would-be Napoleon of the modern era. Shortly thereafter, President Medvedev called an impromptu news conference at his country estate – where he proceeded to directly contradict most of his Prime Minister's pronouncements and rebuke him for his likening the involvement to a 'crusade.' The press hastened to align itself with the government's new tack.

In conclusion, the Russia-NATO relationship is clearly one in dire need of amelioration. Spats over the appropriateness of actions in Libya are but one aspect of a relationship which has since 1949 been a turbulent one. Nevertheless, thanks largely to their coordination with NATO air forces, the rebels' hold over Libya appears to be a *fait accompli* with which Mr. Medvedev and Mr. Putin will have to come to terms. Their next challenge will be in transitioning Russia's Libyan economic interests from the Qaddafi regime to the opposition movement.

Further Reading: [Rogozin Calls Libya a NATO War for Oil](#); [Russia Recognizes Libya Rebels as World Leaders Meet](#); [Libyan Scenario in Syria Unacceptable – Russian President](#); [A Crack in the Tandem?](#)

Turkish-Israeli Relations Sinking Fast over Flotilla Fallout

By: James Marcus Bridger

Ever since Turkey became the first Muslim-majority country to recognize Israel in March 1949, relations between the two states have been marked by a high degree of economic, military, and humanitarian cooperation. What was once a seemingly natural alliance between two non-Arab "outsiders" in the Middle East has however recently devolved into a diplomatic crisis that threatens to remove yet another constant from the regional calculus.

The antecedent to the fallout was the May 31, 2010 Israeli naval raid on the 'Gaza Freedom Flotilla.' While five of the six ships were detained without violence, demonstrators aboard one vessel owned by a Turkish NGO, the *MV Mavi Marmara*, were fired upon after Israeli commandos allegedly encountered violent resistance. Nine activists were killed; eight Turkish citizens and one Turkish American.

Immediately after the incident, Ankara recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv and demanded a UN inquiry into what it called "a grave breach of international law ... tantamount to banditry and piracy." This week the long delayed report, produced by a panel headed by Geoffrey Palmer, the former president of New Zealand, was leaked to the *New York Times* by an anonymous diplomat. The findings were not what the Turkish government had expected.

The Palmer Report concluded that the Israeli commandos' actions were "excessive and unreasonable," and that forensic evidence showed that "most of the deceased were shot multiple times, including in the back, or at close range." However, it was also noted that the *Mavi Marmara's* passengers put up violent resistance, a charge Turkey adamantly denied. Furthermore, it was ruled that Israel's blockade "complied with the requirements of international law," and was "imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea."

Though Tel Aviv accepted the report's findings "with reservations," the response from Ankara was one of pure outrage. Turkish President Abdullah Gul rejected the conclusions as 'null and void.' Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan lashed out similarly, calling Israel the "spoiled child" of the region. Fiery words were quickly followed by diplomatic action on Friday, September 2, when Turkey expelled the Israeli ambassador and downgraded bilateral relations to the lowest possible level.

While Israel expressed “regret” over the *Mavi Marmara* incident, Ankara demands both a formal apology and compensation for the victim’s families. Turkey is also determined that the Israeli embargo on Gaza must end before relations can fully be normalized. As Israel has refused to meet these conditions—insisting that its soldiers were acting “in self-defence” and that its blockade is vital to Israeli security—Turkey has promised to take further action.

Hinting initially at an increased naval presence, Erdogan declared that “our ships ... will display themselves more often in [the eastern Mediterranean].” The Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, similarly warned that Turkey would “take whatever measures it deems necessary in order to ensure the freedom of navigation.” Turkish intentions became clearer on September 8, when Erdogan declared that the country’s warships will now escort any Turkish aid vessels travelling to Gaza. He elaborated that Turkey “had taken steps to stop Israel unilaterally exploiting natural resources from the eastern Mediterranean.”

Though Erdogan initially stated that all relations would be suspended completely, it was later clarified that this referred only to military related trade and cooperation. This marks a stark shift in regional geopolitics, as for the last half-century Turkey has been the only Muslim country with which Israel has had a military partnership agreement. The relationship was notably beneficial for both sides; Tel Aviv was provided with open airspace in which to train its pilots and a lucrative market for its sophisticated defence industry. Israeli companies have supplied Ankara with surface-to-air missiles and have upgraded hundreds of Turkey’s US-made fighter jets and tanks. Tel Aviv had also been supplying Turkey with unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones, which the country had used for surveillance purposes in its ongoing war against Kurdish insurgents. However, this too has become a recent sticking point as Ankara accused Israel of not returning drones Turkey purchased and then sent in for maintenance.

In many ways, the flotilla incident was simply the straw that broke the camel’s back, as Turkish-Israeli relations had been steadily deteriorating for several years. Ankara has been increasingly critical of Israeli conduct in the Palestinian territories, loudly condemning the 2008 War in Gaza as “state terrorism.” For Turkey, Yigal Schleifer explains, the continued occupation “stands as the primary roadblock toward creating the kind of more harmonious regional order that Ankara envisions.” Seeking to break the deadlock of negotiations, Erdogan has stated that Turkey will lobby other states at the UN to support the Palestinian bid for statehood expected near the end of this month.

Israel, for its part, has been concerned about the new direction Turkish foreign relations are taking. The new policy of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), critically dubbed “Neo-Ottomanism,” has seen Turkey shift its diplomatic focus away from the West and towards states in the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. The outreach has been fueled by Turkey’s economic dynamism and the increase in “soft power” that has accompanied it. While the surrounding states were once weary of their former Ottoman overlords, Erdogan’s readiness to publicly denounce Israel has made him something of a hero on the Arab street. Particularly worrying for the Jewish state has been Ankara’s recent diplomatic outreaches to Hamas, Iran, and (until a recent change of stance) Syria. Erdogan has raised the possibility that he will visit Gaza during an upcoming diplomatic tour of North Africa—making him the first statesman to visit the Hamas-controlled enclave.

If a further deterioration of relations occurs, both parties, regional states, and the entire post-war alliance system have much to lose. Turkey risks alienating its traditional NATO allies, while Israel is in danger of becoming further isolated at the perilous moment when it must come to terms with the realities of the new Middle East. “The most tragic part of the breakdown,” Schleifer writes, “is that it comes at a time when closer cooperation and dialogue is exactly what the two countries need most.” There are a plethora of regional issues—gas exploration disputes off the coast of Cyprus, ongoing violence in Syria, and Iran’s nuclear program—in which Israeli-Turkish cooperation could be mutually beneficial.

As they are both American regional allies, there has been strong pressure from the U.S for the two states to resolve their dispute. Turkey's membership in NATO, it is also hoped, will prevent the feud from becoming an open conflict. However, as recent events have taught observers, nothing in today's Middle East is constant or predictable. The shore of the eastern Mediterranean is now one more hotspot for the world to watch

Further Reading: [Erdoğan: Turkish navy to protect Gaza aid; Dead in the Water](#); [Amid Tensions With Israel; Turkey Threatens Increased Naval Presence](#); [Turkish PM announces additional sanctions on Israel](#); [Turkey suspends military ties with Israel](#)

The Battle Over the Hill: Upcoming Challenges for the National Transitional Council

By: Daniel Cunningham

With the Libyan conflict nearing its end, National Transitional Council (NTC) leaders are discussing the challenges which await efforts to bring Libya back to economic and political normalcy. Nevertheless, the NTC leadership are urging realism and reigning in the overoptimistic in their ranks. In a news conference last Thursday, NTC deputy leader Mahmoud Jabil cautions Libyans that “[their] biggest challenges are still ahead.” As the extended deadline for surrender reaches its end, Gaddafi Loyalists fired a salvo of rockets from a stronghold in Bani Walid on Thursday, reaffirming their dedication after an announcement by Moammar Gaddafi that allegations he had fled the country were false. Continued aggression leaves little doubt that the future obstacles will be military in nature. However, with the end to the military conflict in sight, the NTC has more pressing problems than dealing with the remnants of Gaddafi's army. High atop their list of priorities are sure to be items dealing with political restructuring, salvaging Libya's economy, mitigating future security risks engendered by the current conflict, and confronting the atrocities of the Gaddafi regime.

A pressing concern of the NTC's has been its role in the creation of the new Libyan political superstructure. The NTC has announced its twenty month “road map” to democratic reform, which lays out how a permanent form of leadership will be created. The plan begins with an eight month period where Libya will be governed by the current NTC leadership. This will be followed by a council of 200 directly elected members who will begin to draft Libya's constitution during the last year of the plan. The constitution will then be completed by the council and brought to a referendum. The NTC has stated that it plans for the 12 month rule by the truncated council to be brought to an end by full parliamentary and presidential elections.

As idyllic as these projections seem, there is great potential for struggle over who will represent Libya. The post conflict political situation is sure to come with its own divergent factions. However, the NTC leadership is loathe to give any hints as to how internal competition might play out. Political pragmatism, as much as propriety, is behind the NTC's conviction to stave off visible signs internal conflict. Instead, NTC chief Mustafa Abdul Jalil has vowed that “political games” will be on hold until the last remnants of Gaddafi's forces have been dealt with.

Political restructuring is contingent upon the ability of the state to heal the Libyan economy; and the key to Libya's economic recovery is restoring its oil production. Oil accounted for 95% of the country's export revenue before the fighting began. Libya is currently producing 50,000 barrels per day, compared to the 1.6 million pre-conflict output. The return to production is hampered by many factors. Key among them is the fact that the most valuable of Libya's reserves is in the Sirte area, where previous conflict has left behind extensive mining. Industry and security officials are expecting that it will take months to remove the mines before production can be safely continued. Combined with continued looting, as well as the damage already done to support infrastructure, the prospects for a speedy economic recovery look dim. The International Energy Agency has stated, along with the new chairman of Libya's National Oil Company, that a return to full production before 2013 is unlikely.

Beyond concerns over political and economic stability, there are signs that post-conflict security will pose a significant challenge for the NTC. Journalists in Tripoli have discovered abandoned weapons depots in residential neighborhoods. What has many worried is that these stockpiles were looted extensively. With the potential for significant quantities of arms and munitions to be floating about, there are concerns that these weapons will reach militants through the black market. While stockpiles are currently being transferred to secure locations and accounted for by Libyan officials, international observers note that the damage has already been done.

Another challenge that the NTC has ahead of it is much less concrete – the task of deciding how to resolve recent and longstanding human rights violations by the Gaddafi regime. The political violence of the previous regime still weighs heavily for Libyans, many of whom have suffered or lost family and friends. Human rights activists are now claiming to have found two mass graves containing over 1,200 hundred bodies dating from 1996. The remains from these graves are said to be from Abu Salim prison, a detention centre used by the Gaddafi regime to hold citizens for years at a time without charges. The site was discovered by a Geneva based human rights organization, Human Rights Solidarity. Ahmed El-Gasir, director for the organization, says they found the site after interviewing former prison workers, some of whom helped to transport bodies there.

Extra-judicial killings perpetrated by the government were amongst the myriad causes of the Libyan uprising, and there is much that needs to be accounted for, including more recent sites found in Tripoli. Leadership change requires that the NTC decide how to address the human rights violations under the Qaddafi regime. Methods for dealing with such emotionally charged issues with such far reaching social consequences are varied. Nations with similar histories have gone the route of Truth and Reconciliation Tribunals, total amnesty, and judicial manhunts. The reasoning behind any actions taken by the NTC will have to take into account what is best for the Libya of tomorrow. However, given emerging evidence as to the extent of atrocities, deciding on the correct path will be a long and exhausting journey which will likely stay at the fore of Libyan politics for many years.

As the military conflict appears to be approaching its end, the NTC is faced with a myriad of social, political, and economic challenges the meeting of which will redefine Libya. As many look with eagerness to a near future without the looming specter of Gaddafi Loyalists, others seek to address issues which could prove to be almost as destabilizing as the military conflict itself. In any case, the decisions that will have to be made by the NTC during its 20 month plan could be the most important and far reaching of any to date.

Further Reading: [Gaddafi Loyalist Resolute - Firing Rockets Out of Bani Walid](#); [NTC Leaders Discuss How the Conflict Will Play Out](#); [NTC Discusses 20 Month Transitional Plan](#); [The Economic Recovery and Oil - Key Facts](#); [Fears Over Missing Munitions](#); [Gaddafi Prison Massacre](#)

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