



PROSPECTS FOR MILITARY COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CASPIAN SEA STATES

The problem of the Caspian Sea militarization started to appear at the beginning of the 21st century. Despite the fact that after the fall of the Soviet Union newly independent states, namely, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, opposed to the idea of militarization of the Caspian Sea, nowadays Astana, Baku and Ashgabat are completely sure that there is a necessity for military supervision of their own strategic aims in the region, especially, in the ownership of oil and gas reserves.

It is obvious that among all Caspian fleets the Russian Caspian Sea Flotilla is still the most powerful one. Iran owns the second largest navy after Russia in the Caspian Sea. Consequently, Russian and Iranian policy largely determines the current situation regarding the militarization processes. As a result, these two countries, to varying degrees, are responsible for causing the militarization activity over the Caspian region. For instance, incident with intercepting the BP Amoco exploratory ship from Azerbaijan by Iranian fighter jets and a gunboat (2001) and holding the first large-scale military exercises of the Caspian Flotilla in the northern part of the sea (2002) actually triggered the naval race in the Caspian basin.

Following the desire to compensate arising military imbalance, other seaside states directed their efforts to increase bilateral military cooperation with Western partners. In particular, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan have become actively involved in the NATO projects concerning issues such as struggling against terrorism, water and air space protection, training and re-training of military personnel, technical assistance, etc. In 2003, the US adopted the "Caspian Guard" program, which

is supposed to coordinate activities in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan with the U.S. Central Command to enhance the Caspian Sea security.

Being against the third-party involvement in the Caspian Sea, at the same year the Russian government put forward the proposal to create the Caspian joint naval forces called "CASFOR" group, which should be formed by forces from national armies of the five littoral states. However, at that period of time coastal countries were not ready to deepen the military cooperation, so both initiatives have been rejected.

The new wave of naval strengthening has forced the Caspian littoral states to develop national facilities for ship construction. Nowadays, only Russia, Iran and Kazakhstan, have opportunities to build their own military vessels. Kazakhstan joined that list only few years ago. The new domestically produced rocket-artillery ship was launched in 2012.

Nevertheless, even after reaching higher level of navy equipment status, the Caspian states still could not manage to overcome threats of transboundary nature, such as drug smuggling, poaching, illegal immigration, etc. Besides, instability in the Middle Eastern region, so as Ukraine crisis forced the Caspian Five to review their attitude towards the problem of militarization.

High-ranked governmental officials started to declare the desire to cooperate with neighbors in the military sphere. The most significant level of cooperation between navies and boundary services was achieved between Russia and Kazakhstan. However, even among the closest allies there was no well-designed schedule of bilateral military exercise such as well-oiled

message channel between corresponding military services. Therefore, there is no exemplary model for multilateral military cooperation in the region, so coastal states have to start from the beginning to establish the appropriate level of cooperation in this field.

That is why signing the "Agreement on Security Cooperation in the Caspian Sea" could be called a genuine breakthrough on the way to remove tension among the littoral countries. The agreement mentioned above was signed by the leaders of the Caspian Five during the Caspian Summit in Baku in 2010. Within the framework of the Agreement, the Caspian Five have established an important mechanism of interaction between border authorities and other government agencies in the following areas of cooperation: ensuring safety of navigation, fight against terrorism, organized crime, smuggling, illicit arms and drug trafficking.

The first step towards activation of the international military cooperation between the Caspian states was made by Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. The naval forces of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and the Russian Caspian Flotilla will hold trilateral naval drills in the middle of the Caspian Sea in June and July, 2015. The distinctive feature of the upcoming drills is that the trilateral exercises of the littoral states navies would be held for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union.

In conclusion, it should be noticed that the process of reaching the highest level of military cooperation would be finished only after integration of the Caspian naval forces of Iran into the unified system of measures for security insurance.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- The President of China Xi Jinping carried out a six-day state visit to the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), namely, Kazakhstan, Russia and Belarus. The main aim of his working trip was to promote Beijing's "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative to forge closer trade and economic ties between Asia and Europe.
- The EAEU leaders held Summit meeting of the Union in Moscow. During the meeting presidents of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Armenia signed documents on Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union Agreement.
- The leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) member countries held an informal meeting in Moscow to round up preparations for the 70th Anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. During the meeting, the CIS members have also determined the date of the next CIS Summit, which would be held in Astana on October 9, 2015.
- The President of Mongolia Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj stated that Ulan Bator expected to sign a medium-term program of developing strategic partnership with Russia on the sidelines of a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which would be held in July.
- Russian Defense Ministry announced that Russia-China navy drills have begun in Black Sea port Novorossiysk. The Joint Sea naval drills in the Mediterranean featured about 10 combat ships of various classes from both states.
- The Saudi Arabia declared its intention to stop fighting against the Houthis in Yemen for five days during visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry to Riyadh. The main goal of this pause would be to render humanitarian aid to the population

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the chief executive of Gazprom Alexei Miller, Russia would supply natural gas to Turkey via the

new planned pipeline under the Black Sea, known as Turkish Stream, in December, 2016. This statement was made after meeting with Turkey's Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız in Ankara.

- According to the Ministry of Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat would increase gas production to 83.8 billion cubic meters and to export 48 billion cubic meters in 2015.
- The World Trade Organization (WTO) declared that China pledged to contribute \$500,000 to the WTO's program aimed at the least developed countries' (LDCs) accessions for 2015. Initiated in July 2011, the so-called China Program aims to enable the LDCs to better integrate into the global economy by strengthening their participation in WTO activities.
- The President of Vietnam Truong Tan Sang announced that Vietnam and the EAEU would sign a Free Trade Zone Agreement by the end of May. Vietnamese President also stated that following Agreement would open new possibilities for both sides in building up trade and economic cooperation and increasing bilateral trade with Russia to more than \$10 billion by the year 2020.
- The Minister of Transport of India Nitin Gadkari and the Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran Abbas Ahmad Akhoundi signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop the Chabahar Port on the Gulf of Oman. The signed MoU would worth \$195 million. India would invest \$85 million and \$110 million in the first and second phases of development, respectively.
- According the report of the World Bank, Kazakhstan's GDP growth would likely to reach a low point in 2015, but gradually recover thereafter. It was estimated to grow at 1.3% in 2015, and then rise to 2.8% and 3.9% in 2016 and 2017, respectively.
- According Uzbekistan's largest energy producer state-owned company Uzbekenergo, the tariffs for domestic electricity consumption would in-

crease by 7.4% to 155 soums per kilowatt-hour from the current 144.3 soums. Uzbekenergo also stated that in the houses equipped with electric stoves, the cost of one kilowatt-hour would rise from 72.15 soums to 77.5 soums.

Society and Culture

- The President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan has ratified the agreement on extradition of prisoners with Kazakhstan. The bilateral agreement was signed earlier in Ankara in 2013.
- A solemn ceremony to mark the 92nd birthday anniversary of national leader of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev and 11th anniversary of the establishment of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation have been held in Baku.
- Prime Minister of Russia Dmitry Medvedev signed an order allowing the Defense Ministry to launch a US telecommunication satellite. A Proton-M with a Briz-M booster will launch the Intelsat DLA-2 telecommunication satellite from the Baikonur space center.
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Central Asia held in Ashgabat the Ninth meeting of the MoU on Sub-regional Drug Control Cooperation. The meeting was hosted by the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow and the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashid Meredov.
- More than 30 heads of states and governments of foreign countries and heads of international organizations took part in the Victory Day parade on Red Square. The 70th anniversary parade in Moscow was attended by over 16 thousand troops, 194 units of military equipment, 143 units of aircraft.
- Prof. Dr. Musa Yildiz was appointed as the Head of the Board of Trustees of Akhmet Yassawi University on May 9, 2015. Also the Board of Trustees was appointed by Prof. Dr. Makhmetgali Nurgaliuly Sarybekov and Prof. Dr. Zhasulan Kudaybergenuily Shaymardanov from Kazakhstan, and Prof. Dr. Muhittin Simsek, Huseyin Karakum and Dr. Serdar Cam from Turkey.