

THE FUND FOR PEACE

THE SUM OF ITS CONFLICTED PARTS



THREAT CONVERGENCE RISKS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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The Sum of Its Conflicted Parts: Threat Convergence Risks In the Black Sea Region

Patricia Taft and David A. Poplack

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Introduction

The Black Sea region currently represents a moderate, though potentially growing, risk to global security due to the presence of *enabling environments* in the region conducive to the proliferation of WMD to non-state actors. These enabling environments are attributable to the area's proximity to vulnerable nuclear material stockpiles, multiple instances of nuclear and radiological materials smuggling, and widespread vulnerability from weak state institutions. These vulnerabilities are characterized by high levels of corruption and criminality, areas of competing governance and rival power centers, the presence of transnational groups with deep grievances, unequal wealth distribution, high levels of foreign interference, and factionalized political elites.

To better understand and identify these vulnerabilities, in September and October 2007, a Fund for Peace (FFP) research team undertook an extensive six-week investigative mission to the Black Sea and Caucasus region to explore the risks of "threat convergence."

In this project, threat convergence refers to the dangers emerging from new dynamics that tie weak and failing states, ungoverned spaces, and terrorism to the potential for WMD proliferation. No longer bound by the rules of a system of states, criminal and illicit networks flourish in the facilitative environments of ungoverned spaces, cultural enclaves in strong states, and in weak and failing states (WFS). Moreover, as the following field research findings demonstrate, even relatively strong states in conflicted regions can unwittingly facilitate trafficking by failing to cooperate with their neighbors. New ways of thinking about these issues must precede meaningful action, and measures undertaken to counter the threat of WMD terrorism must be informed by current conditions on the ground. The intent of the Black Sea research mission was to evaluate the potential for terrorists' acquisition of WMD material, the capacity of states in the region to thwart such activity, and the policy actions that can be taken to reduce the threat.

The Black Sea region was selected as the first in a series of geographical areas the Fund for Peace (FfP) will be covering in field research because it contains a high concentration of the factors described above that experts deem relevant in constituting an enabling environment for nuclear proliferation.¹ The research mission² conducted over sixty interviews with a variety of experts and informed officials in Turkey, Romania and Georgia; with officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) headquarters in Vienna, Austria; and with US and other officials in Washington DC and at the United Nations (UN) in New York. FfP staff collaborated with the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies for a portion of the field research in the region. This report summarizes the main findings of that field research.

Context of the Study

As the end of the Cold War has demonstrated, strategic conflict and geopolitical rivalry is no longer the domain of great powers alone. Non-state actors have acquired access to a range of technologies that significantly reduce the monopoly of force and strategic communications formerly enjoyed by states. As demonstrated by the 9/11 attacks, entrepreneurial non-state groups operating from, if not based in, weak or failing states and ungoverned spaces can inflict massive damage with a minimum of resources. However, far from usurping a world order based on distance, sovereignty, and the strategic competition of nation-states, the post 9/11 world has reasserted the “primacy of geography,” as Eurasia scholar Dr. Paul Goble put it, even in failed states. In this new “old world,” location matters more than size or capability alone: the “neighborhood” is where a state’s assets and liabilities are most relevant. Non-state actors with political agendas must also have secure terrain from which to operate, however crude or difficult it may be for them to acquire. If a state cannot, with full attention to the rule of law, retain a monopoly on coercive power internally or exert influence on its neighbors and compete externally, it is at risk of exploitation by crafty non-state networks.

However, despite efforts to mitigate risk and stabilize the Black Sea and Caucasus region through bilateral and multilateral aid programs, the West may risk upsetting the delicate balance of power that ultimately determines stability in the region. It is not sustainable for a small or weak state to be a willing ally of the West, as in the case of Georgia, Romania, and Bulgaria, and yet be in conflict with its neighbors or regional mega-powers over fundamental issues such as territorial demarcation and control. As terrorists de-territorialize, states in the region must cooperate in order to deny safe haven for newly mobile groups and to survive both non-state actor aggression and to avoid confronting

¹ The Fund for Peace conducted two experts conferences in April and December 2006 where participants advised the Fund for Peace on the framework for the research, identified the regions of greatest concern for threat convergence, and developed plausible scenarios based on the vulnerabilities present in each area.

² The field research team consisted of Patricia Taft, FfP Senior Associate and project leader, and David Poplack, FfP Research Associate. The project’s principal investigator is Pauline H. Baker, President of the Fund for Peace.

each other.³ Old political rivalries and resource competition overshadow the Black Sea and Caucasus region and greatly affect the chances of controlling WMD trafficking and terrorism. The paradox is that the West's concerted efforts to assist fragile states in the region to control trafficking and terrorism have sometimes put these states at odds with powerful neighbors, such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran, and exacerbated long standing internal divisions over a wide range of issues, including foreign policy, defense, and international cooperation.

State-centered policies in existing non-proliferation protocols have often lacked the nuance or robust commitment necessary to provide for sustainable security within states of concern. If the United States is to contain the threat of nuclear terrorism from non-state actors operating out of weak and failing states or areas of competing governance, it must foster strategic cooperation among rivals rather than pick "winners" and "losers." Indeed, an integrated strategy is needed that takes account of the domestic weaknesses that often characterize states vulnerable to trafficking and terrorism, reversing the tendency of policy makers to dismiss or ignore the weak and failing states dimension as secondary to more traditional security concerns.



³ Some experts have suggested that terrorists could use WMD to spark open conflict between states already hostile to each other, such as Iran and Israel. For more information, go to: <http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/images/pdf/airlieconferencereport.pdf>

Mapping Vulnerabilities: Nuclear and Radiological Trafficking in Enabling Environments

Although there has undoubtedly been some sensationalist reporting on WMD smuggling, instances of trafficking in nuclear and radiological materials (hereafter referred to as NR materials) have increased in frequency, quantity, and quality over the past ten years in the Black Sea and Caucasus region. Some have speculated that trafficking routes have shifted south from Europe to Turkey and the Caucasus, pathways that suggest a supply chain extending from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) to the greater Middle East region.⁴ In response to these and other developments -- including destabilizing trends in Russia and Iran and the ongoing war in Iraq -- the salience of NR trafficking has risen dramatically in importance to local governments and the international community. The US government has put considerable pressure on, and invested significant resources in, the governments of Turkey, Romania, Georgia,⁵ and their neighbors to strengthen capacities to control their borders, citizens, and the movement of people and goods transiting their territory. Nevertheless, FfP research revealed that state-centered non-proliferation and counter-terrorism efforts have thus far fallen short of curtailing these illicit activities in this region.

Analysts in the region suspect that, in the chaos that accompanied the disintegration of the Soviet Union, significant quantities of NR materials were stolen (or “lost” and later re-gained) by former members of the nuclear, political, and security establishment and are now being sold on the black market. As many experts have noted, this appears to be a “supply-dominated market” designed to ensure the security and prosperity of the source, probably at the expense of others further down the supply chain.⁶ What follows is a summary of emerging trends in the NR market in the three countries visited by the research team.

Georgia: One recent case in Georgia highlights the dangers existing in this tough neighborhood. As reported in international media, Oleg Khintsagov, a Russian from North Ossetia, itself a troubled area, passed into Georgia in February 2006. He was later apprehended by Georgian law enforcement in a complex, multinational sting operation, that purportedly included US agents, while attempting to sell 79.5 grams of weapons grade uranium (U-235 enriched to 90%) to a man who claimed to work for “a very wealthy patron from the Middle East.” As is often the case, it was a set-up: the “buyer” was an undercover agent of the special nuclear trafficking investigations unit within the Georgian Ministry of Interior. Khintsagov stood to make US \$1 million dollars from the transaction. He claimed that he had access to several kilograms of highly enriched

⁴ See Lyudmila Zaitseva “Illicit Trafficking in Turkey and The Southern Tier since 1999” <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/npr/vol09/93/93zait.pdf>

⁵ These three countries were chosen by the research team to focus upon in the region for geographic spread, representation of the issues, and for the range in capacity each state represents.

⁶ For more on the “supply and demand chain” model, please see FfP Threat Convergence Conference report Nov/Dec 2006. Available online at: www.fundforpeace.org/web/images/pdf/airlieconferencereport.pdf

uranium (HEU), potentially enough to fashion a crude nuclear bomb.⁷ Competing claims as to the material's origin point to the possibility of numerous sites within Russia and other former Soviet states at risk of theft and raid.⁸

FfP research uncovered evidence that may indicate that illicit NR materials suppliers are actively seeking buyers in the region using sophisticated tactics to distribute their product while protecting their identities and interests. In 2001, four Georgian nationals were arrested in Batumi, the main port city in the Adzharia region of Georgia, while attempting to smuggle 1.8 Kg of HEU aboard a ship bound for Turkey. According to sources in the Georgian nuclear security establishment, the Batumi case, and others like it, may be indicative of a highly sophisticated reconnaissance or "test-run" strategy on the part of sellers of NR material. Suppliers based in Russia and other former Soviet states are thought to be simultaneously exploring possible safe pathways to markets and vetting potential buyers in order to avoid law enforcement, hold-ups, or any other interruption of this high-risk, high-reward type of sale. In this scenario, an unsuspecting "mule" or carrier is sent to country X from country Y with a low-grade radioactive substance, packaged in a sophisticated way.⁹ If the mule is caught along the way, the seller knows that it is not a preferred route; if the mule is not caught, he is met by a middleman with some nuclear forensic knowledge. When the forensics testing is complete, revealing the low quality of the substance, the middleman rejects the sale and the mule is sent back with a message of "disinterest" in the material on offer. According to sources interviewed, it is precisely this "return to sender" scenario that lets the seller know he is dealing with a serious customer. At this point, the mule is dismissed and the seller takes a more direct path to his buyer, who may also understand this scenario and the route laid out in the reconnaissance mission. In the Batumi case, as well as in three similar cases, a water route from Georgia to Turkey may be plausible. However, Turkish maritime officials reject this possibility, based on their confidence in Turkish surveillance of the Black Sea, both surface and aerial.¹⁰

Turkey: Based on data obtained during this study, Turkey and, in particular, Istanbul is perceived by both buyers and sellers of NR material as a destination market of choice. Of the more than 200 cases of purported NR materials seizures involving Turkey in the past five years, most of which turned out to be bogus, there were at least four cases of dangerous material seized on Turkish territory by the Turkish National Police (TNP).

⁷ Most experts agree that, depending on the level of enrichment above 90%, between 20 and 60 pounds of Uranium 235 is needed to fashion a crude nuclear bomb.

⁸ The November 2007 seizure of 426.5 grams of a mixture of Uranium 235 and 238 on the Slovakia/Hungary border appeared to echo the Khintsagov case as materials seized were reported to be weapons-grade, an assertion that proved untrue, and bore the hallmarks of a relatively sophisticated supplier and buyer. According to some reports, following three months of surveillance, the police moved in when the potential buyer did not appear for the sale, suggesting that there was a non-police buyer that could have been conducting counter-surveillance. The details of this case are still largely unknown outside Slovakia.

⁹ The material in the Batumi case was transported in glass vials from Russia, dated 1987, and encased in mineral fertilizer to shield it from detection.

¹⁰ FfP interviews, Tbilisi, Georgia, 17-20 September, 2007; Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey, 4-6 October, 2007.

These four cases included three confiscations of Cesium¹¹ and one seizure of low enriched Uranium (LEU)¹². Although none of these cases involved nuclear proliferation relevant materials, i.e. fissionable material that could be used in a nuclear explosive, Cesium-137 could potentially be used in an improvised Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD). Additionally, the five years span indicated above is a limited view of the history of NR material smuggling involving Turkey.¹³ Turkish citizens have also been involved in a number of transnational NR smuggling operations in the Caucasus and Southeastern Europe. Istanbul could be a hub for illicit trade in NR materials by both amateur and commercial/professional groups and individuals. Two associates of A.Q. Khan that provided dual-use items were based in Istanbul, Gunuz Gerray and Selam Alquardiz, both of whom are under indictment for their roles in the international proliferation market. Currently, their whereabouts, and the progress of the cases against them, remain largely unknown outside of Turkey. Khan himself conducted deals with Libyan leader Muammar Ghadafi's agents in Istanbul in 1997.

Romania: According to law enforcement officials in Romania, smugglers have and will continue to use the "classic Balkans routes" for trafficking NR materials, the same routes that make Romania another of the region's main transit points for smuggling in other illicit goods, such as drugs and humans. High criminality and corruption, as well as geographical location, make Romania an ideal base of operations and financing source for terrorists and organized crime. Representing the weaker eastern frontier of the European Union (EU), Romania is an accessible and inexpensive trafficking pipeline for humans, drugs, and small arms and light weapons (SALW), into and out of Eurasia and the Middle East. The income from this illicit trade has reportedly been utilized to fund insurgencies in Kurdistan and Iraq, according to Romanian Defense and Foreign Affairs officials.¹⁴

*Enabling Environments in Zones of Competing Governance*¹⁵

The Black Sea and Caucasus region is a complex zone containing fractured states, transnational identity groups, and zones of competing governance, including breakaway regions that behave as "virtual states", controlling their own territory but not recognized by the international community as sovereign. Threat convergence thrives in such enabling environments, as explored below.

Fractured States: Georgia has been host to other nuclear smuggling incidents where materials have entered the country from neighboring Russia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.¹⁶

¹¹ The substance ¹³⁷Cs is a highly radioactive byproduct of nuclear fission.

¹² With 173 grams of 17.8% enriched U-235 in August 2005 from a Soviet lab in glass vials with wax seals dated 1987 with Cyrillic labels, two or three Turks were arrested in the Istanbul suburb of Harem. They were seeking \$7 million for the material, an exorbitant price for the goods on offer, indicating the amateurish nature of the suspects apprehended.

¹³ For more information see the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, "Overview of Reported Nuclear Trafficking Incidents Involving Turkey 1993-1999." <http://cns.miis.edu/research/wmdme/flow/turkey/>

¹⁴ FfP interviews, Romania, 10 October 2007.

¹⁵ A term developed by Threat Convergence project contributor Dr. James Forest, Director, Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), United States Military Academy, West Point.

In FfP interviews, it was determined that while the operation that apprehended Khintsagov represents a victory, to be sure, many other arrests and seizures were based on sheer luck rather than coordinated efforts. While interagency and interstate coordination is improving, Georgia and the region remain highly susceptible to cross-border trafficking, including through the breakaway regions which Russia maintains through political, financial and military sponsorship. In addition to the tense stand-off between Russia and Georgia over these regions, the conflict in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the long standing enmity between Armenia and Turkey, have effectively eliminated any possibility of cross-border cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and Armenia and Turkey, all countries that have had nuclear trafficking incidents occur in their territories. Such state-to-state antagonisms, when combined with weak state institutions, make the enforcement of laws and the provision of national security for the region as a whole nearly impossible, enabling threat convergence.

Transnational Identity Groups: By contrast, transnational cooperation among non-state actors seems to be growing in some areas. There is considerable collaboration, for example, among various Kurdish resistance groups and clan structures in southeastern Turkey and in adjoining states. These loose but powerful affiliations based as much on family relations as on ideological sympathies, have established highly organized transport and communications networks that rival the power held by some legitimate governments in the region and facilitate business of all kinds, including smuggling throughout the region and into the European Union. In Turkey, the Kurdish southeastern region is part of a larger system of Kurdish-inhabited territory that stretches to western Iran, northern Iraq, Syria and parts of the South Caucasus. This area of “greater Kurdistan” is perhaps the best example of a “zone of competing governance,” as tribal and clan affiliation for the region’s eleven million Kurds often trump national and other identities, providing cover for activities that are anathema to the states in which they live. Kurdish parties have amplified their violent insurgencies, or lend sympathy and assistance to them, both in response to a clamp down on Kurdish activities from national governments and to attract recruits and resources in order to survive as a distinct communal entity.

These areas are not lawless. Instead, they are part of an intricate web of traditional political, economic and cultural structures, many of which have survived centuries of imperial domination and unitary control. In the modern era, however, they may foster smuggling and criminality that can impact on threat convergence. According to the Turkish National Police (TNP) and regional analysts, Kurds are most susceptible to facilitating NR trafficking due to: 1) opportunity, 2) openness to radicalization, and, most importantly, 3) financial need, as discussed in the section on "Terrorism" below.

Zones of Competing Governance and Virtual States: While frozen conflicts and break-away regions can create “virtual states” -- i.e. self-governing territories that are not recognized as sovereign states -- not all territories of this type present a threat of promoting NR proliferation or terrorism. According to UN and European Community

¹⁶ Georgian nuclear security experts insist that the abandonment of hundreds of radio thermal generators (RTGs) which use strontium or cesium to generate power for remote devices, throughout the FSU, poses a serious risk of being found and used to construct radiological dispersal devices, or RDD

(EC) representatives in Georgia, the secessionist republic of Abkhazia in northeastern Georgia may not be the preferred smuggling route that Georgian authorities have alleged in the past. Bordering Russia and the Black Sea, Abkhazia has a fairly well-protected natural border with Georgia in the Ingur River, while the secessionist government there purportedly has the political will and some limited resources to prevent NR smuggling. Although the Abkhaz would not allow the Georgian government to authorize an IAEA inspection of the now-defunct Sukhumi nuclear laboratories in Abkhazia, it is believed that most nuclear material and personnel were relocated successfully to Tbilisi following the civil war in the early 1990s. Moreover, far from being the chaotic breakaway region that Tbilisi often describes, in interviews with the UN and other international groups familiar with the situation in Abkhazia, it was noted that the government there has a strong interest in demonstrating to the international community that it is ready for independence and is able to control its territory. Incidences of smuggling, both nuclear and criminal, detract from that image and authorities in Abkhazia have attempted to clamp down on them. Nonetheless, these efforts do not seem to have been entirely successful as interviews conducted in Georgia revealed that 655g of HEU was stolen by smugglers following the 1992-1993 civil war, in which Georgian forces were driven out of Abkhazia.¹⁷ Reports that MANPAD, sophisticated shoulder launched anti-aircraft weapons, were discovered in a forest on the Georgian border with Abkhazia after the end of the civil war, further complicates this story which is already riddled with acrimony and allegations of aid to terrorists as well as Russian irredentism.¹⁸

While Abkhazia may be a comparatively lower risk for nuclear smuggling than has been reported, the other Georgian breakaway region of South Ossetia was described as a “sieve” by senior officials from multilateral organizations monitoring the area and independent analysts. Despite the closing of a large illegal market¹⁹ at Ergneti in September 2004, the Roki Tunnel remains out of Tbilisi’s control. Due to South Ossetia’s isolation and lack of economic development, smuggling along the “road of life”²⁰ provides income to the impoverished region. According to personnel on the ground, smuggling in South Ossetia has shifted to smaller and higher value commodities, a dangerous development. Increased economic desperation and tighter controls of traditional commodities may push smugglers to deal in NR materials. There are currently “no eyes in Ossetia” due to complex political tensions and the lack of a cooperative framework that would allow the OSCE, which currently monitors the line of control, to extend international observation above the internationally demarcated boundary between Georgian and Ossetian controlled South Ossetia.²¹

¹⁷ This is in addition to the confirmed report by Russian nuclear technicians that 2kg of 90% HEU included in a 1992 inventory were missing upon inspection in 1997.

¹⁸ FfP interviews, Tbilisi, Georgia, 17-24 September 2007.

¹⁹ The closing of the market at Ergneti has been harshly criticized by some international observers who claim that while the market was indeed host to low and mid-level criminal activity, it also provided a vital trade route and source of income for South Ossetia. The closing of the market drove up unemployment in the region (already quite high) and further radicalized the population against the government in Tbilisi.

²⁰ The “road of life” is a secondary road stretching from the border with Russia through the South Ossetian capital, Tskhinvali, bypassing Georgian-controlled villages, skirting the line of control, and falling outside of the purview of international monitors.

²¹ FfP Interviews, Tbilisi, Georgia, 17-24 September 2007.

For Romanian security, the lawless disputed territory of Transdniestria, on the northern border of Moldova and southern Ukraine, clearly represents the worst kind of threat that can emanate from a virtual state in post-Soviet space: the territory is a reserve of criminality and geopolitical tension. A representative of the Romanian Ministry of Defense expressed concern over what Romania considers a veritable “black hole” of illicit activity, some perhaps involving nuclear smuggling. Transdniestria plays host to a renowned black market in nearly all illicit goods controlled by neighboring states. Romanian speculation at the highest levels in the security establishment puts stockpiles of unaccounted for and undocumented WMD or components in the territory of Transdniestria, possibly left behind by Soviet forces after Transdniestria declared independence in 1990. These additional, undocumented armaments do not appear "on paper" because they are not supposed to have existed. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union, including Soviet Romania, engaged in strategic war games in Transdniestria to assess strike and counter-strike strategies against NATO. According to officials who participated in these exercises, much of that material from decommissioned WMD and other “live” strategic assets disappeared from Transdniestria shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union and has surfaced in Chechnya and elsewhere.²²

Although the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is said to be "air tight" due to the ongoing confrontation between those nations and the militarization of the border, the Azeri and Armenian borders with adjoining areas, including Georgia, Iran, Turkey, and the Caspian Sea, are much less secure. The Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict has been cited as contributing to threat convergence by: 1) hindering cooperation on border security 2) potentially providing transit for smuggled weapons and drugs into and out of Iran, and 3) potentially providing safe haven for terrorists.

The issue of the NK territory being used by Armenian, Iranian, and Kurdish traffickers entering and exiting Iran raises the specter of state-sponsored asymmetric threats by regional spoilers. This development was cited by multiple interviewees as a significant threat to stability. Potential clandestine activity from Russia and Iran, in particular, centers on the export of criminality, using trafficking in drugs, illegal migration, and the suspension or sabotage of energy supplies as strategic weapons. While these scenarios are also potentially dangerous for the source country and could be the anxious interpretations of smaller and more vulnerable states, there is evidence that states have and will continue to employ strategic destabilization of their adversaries to maintain their historic spheres of influence. If these allegations are true, this “Great Game” is, in fact, still being played, if not by competing empires, then by adversaries who dramatically misunderstand each other's historic relationship and current motivations. Such conditions create a ripe opportunity for threat convergence, allowing non-state contenders to exploit gaps in the capacity and political will of weak states and zones of conflict for their own purposes.

²² FfP Interviews, Ministry of Defense, Romania, 12 October 2007. For more information on allegations of lost or stolen WMD in Transdniestria see the NIS Trafficking Database: <http://www.nti.org/db/nistraff/2005/20050240.htm>

Terrorism and the Potential for Terrorist Acquisition of WMD

The Black Sea and adjoining Caucasus region was not found to currently have a significant presence of global terrorists committed to the use of WMD. Furthermore, indigenous terrorist groups and individuals with the combination of motivations and capabilities to procure and use WMD were likewise not found to have significant strength in the Black Sea and Caucasus region -- yet. For local separatist groups to engage in WMD terrorism today, they would have to undergo a process of ideological radicalization and financial inducement from powerful patrons with the motivation to apply existing capabilities to the problem of procurement, construction, or delivery of WMD. By and large, currently operating terrorist groups would likely need to undergo a radical conversion to engage in WMD terrorism. While opportunities to procure WMD material do exist, the FfP assessment is that the Black Sea/Caucasus region presents only a moderate risk of WMD proliferation to or by *terrorist groups* at this time, due to a general lack of sufficient motivation, such as a stated allegiance to radical organizations like Al Qaeda, or other indication of the willingness to use or aid in the use of WMD.

However, the region contains a serious potential risk of local groups or networks becoming radicalized with the help of outside influence. Al Qaeda has some presence in the region and, in the past, has recruited local resistance groups in its global jihad, offering a combination of financial support, training, and the use of the Qaeda “brand” franchise. Al Qaeda affiliates in Chechnya and Turkey appear to be few but, nevertheless, deeply rooted. They are able to transit from countries in the region to and from the EU and Iraq, resting, recuperating, and generating funds along the way. Moreover, the ideology of global Salafist jihad may find fertile ground in certain segments of the populations of Turkey and the Balkans, with a high potential to spread from Chechnya to other disaffected and increasingly radicalized North Caucasian republics.²³ Because indigenous radical elements and criminal gangs potentially possess sufficient operational capability and opportunity to facilitate the acquisition of WMD in collaboration with external groups or patrons, the spread of Al Qaeda’s influence in the region must be closely monitored and thwarted.

The ideological and political motivations for indigenous groups to engage in terrorist activities are numerous, though generally not of the kind and severity likely to lead to the use of WMD. Their goals generally are local, including the pursuit of political autonomy or territorial secession on the part of historically suppressed ethnic minorities, or group grievances that otherwise oblige violent revenge and resistance. A small number of groups claim to be resisting perceived Western hegemony, such as Turkish Hezbollah, and have responded with Qaeda inspired attacks on targets symbolic of Western influence in cities such as Istanbul. Even among traditional allies, such as Turkey, anti-Americanism is growing.²⁴ However, according to interviews with regional counter-

²³ FfP Interviews, Turkey and Georgia, September and October 2007.

²⁴ Despite recent polls, such as Pew and World Public Opinion surveys that suggest a significant downturn in Turkish perceptions of America, FfP sources, both Turkish and expatriate, thought these results were overblown and not representative of Turkish attitudes in the long term (for more information see:

terrorism experts, the ideological motivation to seek WMD need not be home grown. The motivation to procure and use WMD could be imported to the region by expatriates who became radicalized in the Diaspora or by immigrant²⁵ or refugee communities.²⁶ Given Al Qaeda's strategy of recruiting local insurgent groups engaged in local resistances to fight in the global jihad, policy makers attempting to prevent catastrophic terrorism must be concerned with the grievances of these indigenous groups and the status of their struggles. Ignoring such grievances could turn a moderate threat today into a serious problem tomorrow.

Financial incentives would likely be the most powerful motivator, according to intelligence and law enforcement in the region, pushing a local insurgent group to become involved in WMD terrorism. Dedicated insurgents returning to the North Caucasus from Pakistan and Iraq, or those forced out of Chechnya due to Russian victories in Grozny, often find themselves out of work and with few marketable skills outside of fighting. Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighters may lose resources and members due to attrition, effective counter insurgency, and loss of their Iraqi fall-back positions. Pressure to retain relevance and obtain resources could grow within such groups. In the beginning of the Chechen resistance, the founder of the International Islamic Peacekeeping Brigades, (IIPB) Shamil Basaev, was seen to become increasingly religious with every Saudi Riyal that poured into his camps from wealthy Wahabi supporters of Al Qaeda.

As external financial and ideological support grows within a local movement, radicalization can ease the adoption of the global Jihadi mantle and strategic aims. The threat of group radicalization along the lines of the Chechen example is now increasingly being found in the North Caucasus regions of Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, and Dagestan, aided by heavy-handed Russian tactics. In numerous interviews, this region was cited as being of particular concern due to a rise in radical Islamic sympathies among local populations and the use of high casualty terror to achieve political and ideological goals.²⁷

The likelihood of a local group adopting a more dangerous form of terrorism, potentially leading to the use of WMD, depends, in part, on its capability and the opportunity to

<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=247>; and-

http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/home_page/393.php?nid=&id=&pnt=393&lb=hmpg1)

²⁵ For example, in Romania during the Ceausescu era, students from Middle Eastern countries, in particular Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, were given generous scholarships to study at Romanian universities in response to Romania being shunned by the West. In interviews with Romanian MOD officials, it was speculated that these students, who remained in the country to open businesses, could form a potential safe haven for other radicalized populations from their home countries. In addition, there is concern among moderate clerics in Romania that youth in Constantia, near the US Joint Operations compound, are becoming more radical.

²⁶ In regional press, foreign and Iraqi insurgents have been reported to be posing as refugees and hiding among communities of Iraqis fleeing the war.

²⁷ For example, the Beslan crisis of 1 September 2004 when Chechen separatists took more than 1200 school children and adults hostage, resulting in the deaths of 334 civilians, 186 children. It is now widely accepted that the Chechen rebels were aided extensively in the operation by North Ossetians sympathetic to radical Islamic ideology.

conduct WMD operations. According to Turkish, Romanian, Georgian, and US law enforcement authorities and analysts in the region, though extremely unlikely, the potential for PKK personnel to become part of a threat convergence scenario is real, due to extensive and ongoing Kurdish involvement in the illicit trade of contraband in southeastern Turkey, northern Iraq, parts of Syria and Iran, and throughout Europe. Perhaps most troubling are the proven PKK links to weapons, drug, and human trafficking in Europe and across the EU frontier in the Balkans.²⁸ According to European and Turkish officials, PKK personnel or sympathizers annually sell tens of tons of opiates and hashish and have trafficked thousands of weapons and units of communications equipment each year, with annual revenues of over US \$100 million dollars.²⁹ This also appears to be a significant transit point for Iraqi refugees and some insurgents exiting and entering the Middle East and Europe. European authorities describe Kurdish traffickers as quite skilled, remitting their revenues to provide incomes for families and for the armed insurgency in Turkey, including multiple, deadly terrorist attacks in major cities and against government personnel in the southeast.

In addition, according to the TNP, there have been dozens of cases of PKK-facilitated drug, weapons, and human smuggling into the European Union in the past few years, often with the high risk/low quantity/high revenue business model ideal for NR smuggling. However, it must be noted that the PKK has not focused on the indiscriminate killing of civilians outside of Turkey and, at present, does not appear to have any desire to turn the tide of world public opinion against them, although this may change given stronger Turkish response to PKK violence and changing dynamics in Iraq and the region.

In the Caucasus, although the Chechen resistance has largely been crushed and its leaders killed, there have been several incidents relating to threat convergence, including the discovery of sophisticated weapons systems trafficked in the past through breakaway Abkhazia by Chechen fighters; multiple, high-profile terrorist attacks in Moscow and regional capitals; an instance in which a low-level radioactive source was left in Moscow's Izmailovskiy Park in 1995 by Chechens who were presumably demonstrating their ability to obtain WMD; and the participation of Chechen fighters in insurgencies in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Central Asia republics, and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). These incidents appear to signal some potential motivation and willingness on the part of terrorists in or from the North Caucasus to seek or use WMD.

It should be noted that expatriate analysts and foreign officials based in Tbilisi thought the threat posed by Chechen insurgents had been grossly overblown in the past by Georgia and the US, precipitating the implementation of the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) in 2002 to flush Al Qaeda operatives from the Pankisi Gorge. According to sources present at the time, there were and remain only refugees and a few hundred weary rebels at most, far from the image of prolific Al Qaeda training camps that

²⁸ This is particularly visible at the border-crossing at Kapikule, near Edirne on the Turkish border with Bulgaria which has seen the seizure of hundred of tons of drugs, weapons, and other goods smuggled by PKK affiliates in the past ten years.

²⁹ FfP interviews, Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey, 2-9 October, and Vienna, Austria, 9 September 2007.

was alleged by Washington.³⁰ Assessing the effectiveness of US policy in Georgia must also be considered in relation to US policy toward Russia, in its ambiguous attempt at selective cooperation, occasional harassment, and ultimately containment, using Georgia as the strategic frontline.

Terrorists bent on acquiring WMD must have networks for delivering or smuggling materials out of source countries. Many have speculated that criminal networks would be natural or unwitting allies of such terrorists, knowingly smuggling any substance for a profit or unknowingly collaborating on a “don’t ask, don’t tell” basis. However, interviews with defense and law enforcement officials in each country revealed a lack of evidence of linkages between terrorists and professional criminal organizations. Although some operational collaboration is possibly already taking place on an ad hoc basis, interviewees thought that, in most cases, increased cooperation of this type is highly unlikely due to the mutual exclusivity of each group's goals. While insurgents may engage in illicit activities to support their operations, as in the case of PKK and Chechen smuggling rings, and organized crime may be interested in the transnational connections that political actors have to offer, none of these networks want to be seen as being associated with the other. According to police, the differences in structure and the inevitable competition that results from the clash of organizational cultures among the groups impede sustained collaboration. Nevertheless, recent cases in the region and elsewhere have shown that the radicalization of criminals in prison might facilitate the “trusted handshake” that could personally tie networks together.³¹ This is a risk that requires vigilance from corrections officials and increased monitoring of ex-convicts.

Finally, with respect to the terrorist connection, a note on terminology: It is important neither to overestimate the threat of terrorism in a particular country nor to reify the political rhetoric of partisan authorities regarding political violence in the region. At the same time, it is vital to recognize a threat where one exists. Leaning on the term “terrorism” too heavily has, in the past, often allowed foreign elites to mischaracterize domestic conflicts as terrorism to gain political and military assistance from the US and to suppress domestic political dissent. The danger is that in the age of media-savvy global Jihadi networks, such as Al Qaeda, indiscriminate use of the term “terrorism,” as well as the reactions that necessarily follow, could in fact strengthen terrorists by assigning more power to them than actually exists on the ground.

State Capacities to Prevent and Combat Threat Convergence

In assessing the success of bilateral and multilateral training and equipment programs aimed at enhancing regional interoperability in the fight against terrorism and WMD proliferation, our findings were mixed. In some cases, the radiation detectors provided by the US Department of Energy and other donors are simply turned off by the operators because of frequent false alarms. In others, a lack of training and endemic corruption has

³⁰ FfP Interviews, OSCE headquarters, Vienna, Austria, 9 September 2007.

³¹ FfP Interviews, Turkey, Romania and Georgia, September-October, 2007. See Louise Shelley, “Methods and Motives”, June 2005; <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211207.pdf>

undermined projects and programs. While reform of the military and police has progressed steadily in most countries, improvements to the border police and customs agencies were placed on a lower tier of priority, potentially scuttling millions of dollars in US and international training and equipment assistance to combat nuclear proliferation.

Another problem reducing the effectiveness of Western aid in all countries visited was the level of job-related stress encountered in the regional border security and customs services, contributing to an unusually high rate of personnel turnover. High turnover leads to a loss of institutional learning and ultimately undermines assistance programs, particularly those that apply a “train the trainer” model for maximum efficiency. NATO and the Southeast European Cooperation Initiative Center (SECI Center)³², for example, stand at the forefront of efforts to improve the use of these “train and equip” programs to build local capacity for combating nuclear terrorism in national militaries and police. Although many are successful, these programs are frequently under funded and suffer from the same interstate tensions at the political level that hamper effectiveness at the tactical training level.

Georgia: Georgia will likely continue to be a major hub for smuggling of all types due to geography (including proximity to FSU sources of NR material), lax border control, widespread corruption, an insufficient capacity to control migration, lack of sustainable political settlement in the breakaway regions, high risk of foreign interference, political disunity, and institutional disorder. The border guard service in Georgia is said to be extremely deficient and, while international efforts have made the military and police “much more professional,” according to some interviewees, the current US focus on equipping border forces needs to be complimented by serious attention to training, which is currently being shored up by the EC and OSCE without a sufficient level of coordination with US equipping programs.³³ The level of corruption has dramatically fallen following implementation of post-Rose Revolution reforms over the past three years. Many of the ministries are headed by young professionals in their early thirties with the goal of rooting out entrenched corruption. However, according to observers in and outside Georgia, the old guard remains in power at the local level, just under the glossy veneer of reform at the national level. Fundamental change in the Ministry of Justice is the only way to ensure the gradual eradication of endemic corruption; so far, this has progressed at a painfully, and dangerously, slow rate.³⁴

Georgia’s external relations are, in general, quite positive. It cooperates with Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan on a broad range of issues, including border security and investigations. US-facilitated intelligence sharing is an obvious avenue of cooperation with these countries and it would be welcomed by Georgia in particular. Georgia’s border with Russia is only tightly controlled by Russia “when Russia feels like it,” according to one senior Georgian official; although the Russian Federation certainly has a

³² The SECI Center was created to “support common trans-border crime fighting efforts of SECI participating countries” in Southeastern Europe. See <http://www.secicenter.org/>

³³ FfP Interviews, Tbilisi, Georgia 17-24 September 2007.

³⁴ Ibid

long-term interest in securing its borders.³⁵ The frontier terrain is notoriously difficult to police, and Russian-Georgian cooperation is virtually nonexistent due to ongoing conflict over the fate of Russian bases on Georgian territory, Russia's tacit support to breakaway South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and historical enmity.

Turkey: In Turkey, the situation is significantly more stable than Georgia, as Turkish military, gendarmerie, and the Turkish National Police are, for the most part, capable, professional organizations compared to their counterparts in other Black Sea states. While the military and gendarmerie are occupied with Kurdish separatists in the violent southeast, the TNP have control over counter-terrorism and organized crime investigations, intelligence gathering, and special operations in about 85% of the Turkish territory. The TNP is regarded as having good general capacity, little corruption, good interagency cooperation, and an increasing capacity to interdict NR smuggling.³⁶ According to foreign officials and independent analysts, the TNP is only slowly gaining the will to act on non-Kurdish terrorists, due partially to widespread TNP disbelief that ethnic Turks could ever be involved in terrorism or nuclear smuggling on Turkish territory, an ethno-centrism derived from decades of combating Kurdish rebels. Nor are they at capacity in terms of NR interdiction, an apparent result of the relative rarity of such seizures. In stark contrast to these findings were revelations that the Turkish Customs Service is considered an utterly corrupt institution at the local level. Recently, senior customs officers were secretly filmed showing younger officers how to extract "tips" from foreign merchants, shippers, and tourists, that were then pooled for shared profit. According to interviewees, this is an old Ottoman model that persists where provincial border control posts are auctioned off by officials against projected future revenues, which then reinforces the complicity of the central government and provides cover all the way down the line to the officer taking bribes at the border.³⁷

Turkey's domestic politics is colored heavily by its external relations and internal political tensions. Increases in Islamic influence in Turkey could be a dangerous trend according to secular Turks and some expatriates, although others believe this threat is exaggerated and that the longstanding secularism of Turkey is irreversible. Internal political tensions in Turkey are adding to the current cooling of relations with the West as the Turkish military and pro-Islamic AKP-led administration battle for control of the national discourse and key constituencies. Prevalent in this rhetorical battle is the ongoing war in Iraq, which is seen as the most destabilizing factor in regional and domestic politics by the vast majority of Turks. Turkish relations with Romania and Bulgaria are cordial but not warm as Turkish perceptions of increasing US hegemony in the region has caused alarm among policy elites. Popular opinion has soured on a West that at times appears to distrust this moderate Muslim nation, and on an EU whose member states are often openly hostile to Turkish accession. Turkey's relations with

³⁵ FfP Interview, Georgian Ministry of Interior, Tbilisi, 20 September 2007.

³⁶ The TNP admits to having some structural problems and being outdated, but claims that its decentralized and communicative super structure, honed in the nineties for counter-terrorism operations, is far more effective than the federal/local divide that plagues US counter-terrorism efforts; for example, with less stove piping and active, multi-party intelligence analysis and sharing.

³⁷ FfP interviews, Ankara and Istanbul, Turkey, 7-9 September and 6 October, 2007.

Azerbaijan are quite close, particularly given the population of ethnic Azeris living in Turkey and strong ethnic and linguistic ties. However, this relationship has had the effect of reinforcing the open hostility between Turkey and Armenia, particularly over the border and over Armenian claims that Ottoman Turks committed genocide against ethnic Armenians at the end of World War I. Turkey's warming relations with Russia are an increasing cause of concern among NATO and US officials and derive primarily from their mutual need for strategic depth in the region and from a desire to establish a bulwark against creeping "Atlanticism."³⁸

Due to Turkey's strategic position straddling Europe and Asia, or "plate tectonics" as one US official put it, the country will remain a major hub for many types of trade, both licit and illicit, including the smuggling of nuclear and radiological materials. Neighboring conflict "hot spots" in the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East, and sharing the Black Sea with Russia and other NIS, Turkey perfectly adjoins the tense political and historical divisions that have characterized post-Cold War security threats. The emerging threat of nuclear terrorism lies within Turkey's strategic space. Weak neighbors and ongoing wars provide opportunities for groups that wish to employ WMD against a number of targets, many of which are just over the border in the European Union.

However, Turkey is also the key to an integrated regional strategy to contain threat convergence. A limited Turkish-facilitated rapprochement with Russia could go far in stabilizing the region and helping prevent WMD terrorism. US support of Turkish efforts on this front would likely be positively received by all sides. Perhaps even more importantly, Turkey remains the only party broadly perceived as a "neutral" broker by all states in the region, including Iran, and Ankara could bring significant weight to bear on jump-starting talks on resolving the "frozen conflicts." Turkey has an interest in facilitating such talks, including building clout, prestige and influence in the region and with the EU and the US. Turkey also has significant minority populations tied to these disputed areas, including the world's largest Abkhaz Diaspora community. The net gain for Turkey in terms of supporting regional stability could be significant.

Romania: In the Balkans and greater Black Sea region, Romania is an historic trans-shipment point between the Orient and Occident. It recently has become a principal route and stopover for organized crime and, to a lesser extent, terrorists entering and exiting Europe. As the new frontier of the European Union with equal access to Balkans, Middle Eastern, and Western European markets, Romania's formal accession to the European Union at the beginning of 2007 made this young democracy one of the most attractive smuggling transit points in the Black Sea region. Despite rich flows of bilateral and multilateral aid, Romanian institutions are trying desperately to catch up to Western standards before the Schengen agreement and Maastricht treaty³⁹ open the gates to

³⁸ FfP interviews, Ankara and Istanbul, September and October, 2007.

³⁹ The Schengen agreement refers to two documents signed in 1985 and 1990 by 25 EU and three non-EU countries that systematically relax border controls while promoting police coordination across national boundaries in signatory nations. The Maastricht Treaty (1993) governs the establishment of Euro Zone common market and the adoption of the Euro by its 15 member countries.

greater Europe with the establishment of visa free travel and adoption of the Euro in Romania and Bulgaria.

Additionally, corruption at the local level in most branches of the Romanian government is said to be ubiquitous, entrenched, and -- apart from geography -- the greatest single reason Romania is an enabling environment for threat convergence. According to senior officials and analysts, the Romanian National Police have neither the mandate nor the capacity to deal with terrorism or WMD trafficking. Counter-WMD terrorism responsibility rests within a special unit of the military, although, according to senior defense officials, Romanian intelligence services only “keep tabs” on suspected terrorists, so as not to involve the legal apparatus by making arrests. Romanian border control was described as weak and corrupt by multiple sources. The Romanian border police, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, are said to be improving in professionalism but were described as “inefficient” and face threats stemming from geography, the presence of criminal family members on both sides of multiple borders, and drug trafficking.⁴⁰ Kurdish trafficking in drugs, weapons, and human beings through this country is said to be highly efficient, lucrative, and entrenched. Kurds are the largest minority in Romania and, according to Romanian law enforcement, are a difficult group to police as, unlike the Romanian mafia, Kurds have contacts spanning two continents. The Bulgarian, Albanian, Chinese, and Turkish criminal networks are still not as successful as Russian families, although there has been a certain “division of labor” among such groups to focus on the comparative advantage each has to offer. Romanian law enforcement officials, overall, appear to find it difficult to acknowledge that organized crime and terrorists could cooperate to any significant degree due to a lack of common goals and operating principals.⁴¹

Cooperation among branches of the Romanian security apparatus appears sufficient, for instance, between the military and border police on security for the Balkan borders. However, most security forces are concentrated at the western border while the principal dangers are coming from the eastern borders, according to Romanian defense officials. Interoperability among law enforcement and the military in Romania is increasing internally as well as externally, especially with neighboring Bulgaria.

Romania has been described by US military officials as “very cooperative” on intelligence sharing.⁴² In general, Romanian openness to American overtures has been rewarded richly and has placed Romania, along with Bulgaria, as recent top regional recipients of bilateral aid and military-to-military assistance. NATO and EU accession at the edge of post-Soviet space has resulted in considerable tension with Russia, a competitor, and Turkey, an ally, which nevertheless sees intensive US encroachment into the Black Sea as a threat. As one senior analyst put it, Turkey treats the Black Sea as an

⁴⁰ Examples of drug pipelines crossing through Romania include one for opiates originating in Afghanistan, which travels through Bulgaria to Romania and on to Vienna for distribution to Western Europe, and from Russia through Ukraine and Romania for designer drugs.

⁴¹ FfP Interviews, Romanian Ministries of Defense and Interior, 10-12 October 2007.

⁴² FfP Interview, US Embassy, Romania. 18 September 2007.

“Ottoman lake” that cannot change in legal status without threatening the sovereignty of Turkey.⁴³

Impediments to Regional Cooperation

Political tensions within the NATO alliance have at times hampered regional cooperation, particularly among the newer Black Sea NATO member states of Romania and Bulgaria and older, traditional allies, such as Turkey. In particular, Turkey, a key NATO member and American ally, which views itself as a strong regional power and the best broker for regional stability, is nevertheless facing increased threats from within and without. Turkey sees the threat of rising Islamism and terrorist activity by the PKK as due in large part to US actions in the region. The fallout from Operation Iraqi Freedom has angered broad sectors of the Turkish public, putting pressure on government and military leaders to respond to PKK attacks on soldiers and civilians in southeastern Turkey with incursions into northern Iraq. According to Turkish and US security officials, American representatives often approach their Turkish counterparts without the proper respect or cultural sensitivity necessary to ensure open cooperation. For example, because of strong US pressures to investigate NR trafficking, the TNP commonly reassign sensitive cases to local, and less public, jurisdictions,⁴⁴ resulting in a loss of international cooperation on what are essentially transnational issues.⁴⁵

These and other cultural misunderstandings are having a broad chilling effect on US-Turkish relations. They have hampered Turkish willingness to share intelligence or involve the US in domestic investigations of nuclear trafficking or terrorist related activities. Turkish officials further depicted American pressure for a greater maritime presence in the Black Sea as a threat to Turkish sovereignty and a potential erosion of the 1936 Montreaux Convention, which regulates the passage of war ships into the Black Sea and codifies Turkey’s control over the straits leading to the Black Sea. Given Turkey’s long history as a stable, secular, Muslim republic in a vital strategic location for US interests, Turkey’s importance as a regional partner for stability and security could not be greater. American security interests must be better balanced against Turkish sensitivities surrounding issues of national sovereignty and the capacities of the Turkish state to protect its citizens without direct US oversight.

Georgia’s late-2007 political crisis, although stemming from internal dynamics, was preceded by intensifying pressure from Russia over the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to Georgian officials, Russian hostilities, including several aerial incursions into Georgian territory and what Georgian officials describe as “officially sanctioned” clandestine attacks and sabotage on energy resources used by Georgia, has limited the operating room of the Georgian government and worsened the deteriorating political stalemate over the break-away regions. These developments

⁴³ FfP Interviews, Bucharest, Romania, 18 September 2007.

⁴⁴ Local law enforcement authorities generally retain much more power over counter terrorism activities within their jurisdictions than in the US federal model.

⁴⁵ FfP Interviews, US Embassy, Ankara, 12 October 2007 & Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 October 2007.

greatly affect the context in which the threat of WMD terrorism, and its successful control, will evolve.

In the Black Sea and Caucasus, energy politics, the strategic maneuvering of Russia and Iran, and the escalation of "frozen" historic conflicts exacerbate the dangers of WMD proliferation and terrorism. To mitigate this threat, the US must clearly evaluate its long-term intentions in its relationship with Georgia. The country is increasingly perceiving itself to be strategically isolated and under direct threat from an aggressive and expansionist Russia. Georgia is still attempting to define itself as a Western-style democracy in post-Soviet space, while facing new challenges stemming from globalization, the "nuclear renaissance," and the global war on terrorism. However, like Romania, Georgia has allied with the West, in particular the US, a risky move given that regional instability has a direct impact on the Georgian economy, politics, and its national security.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the Black Sea region remains the sum of its conflicted parts and this increases its vulnerability as an enabling environment for WMD terrorism. While the current risk of threat convergence resulting in an act of nuclear terrorism is moderate, there are a number of factors that could heighten the risks facing the Black Sea region in the future if steps are not taken soon to contain emerging vulnerabilities. Despite nearly two decades of counter-proliferation activities, unaccounted for, or minimally secured, stockpiles of nuclear and radiological material have escaped the FSU and ended up in the hands of traffickers who are intent on moving this dangerous cargo to a buyer. The break up of the Soviet Union also resulted in multiple "frozen conflicts," insecure borders, and zones of competing governance in the former Soviet Union that could facilitate and enable rogue actors to acquire WMD. The current lack of capacity and motivation to carry out mass casualty attacks, including the use of WMD, among the region's indigenous terrorist groups does not diminish the fact that opportunities abound for such groups to acquire NR materials for radical, external patrons through their extensive, transnational networks. With the help of imported ideological and financial sponsors, or through increased disenfranchisement with states, these groups could be induced to join a more radical movement that would compel the use of WMD. Furthermore, historical, state-to-state conflicts between relatively "strong" states have hampered cooperation and coordination for containing threat convergence in the region. Finally, inconsistent and uncoordinated efforts on the part of the international community, including the US, have further deepened and entrenched the conflicts that directly feed into wider regional instability. In order to effectively combat the potential for threat convergence in the Black Sea and Caucasus region, multilateral institutions, regional governments, and foreign actors, including the US and EU, must devote more attention and resources to the complex issues involved. This can be done through the creation of a comprehensive counter threat convergence strategy that will effectively deal with the growing risk of WMD terrorism in weak and failing states.

Strengthen Existing Policy: While this report does not attempt to evaluate all relevant current policy, FfP research findings support the strengthening of current broad-based multilateral and bilateral programs. In particular, all signatory nations should implement UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which seeks to combat non-state actor's access to fissionable materials by criminalizing proliferation in each UN member state, and by strengthening the role of the 1540 Committee and the role of NGOs in nonproliferation activities.⁴⁶ US policy makers should continue to support the US Department of Energy's Second Line of Defense program that seeks to strengthen border controls and install radiation detection equipment around the world, as well as the President's Proliferation Security Initiative,⁴⁷ and the Global Initiative (GI) to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.⁴⁸

The GI, in particular, is a useful tool as it is: 1) the most comprehensive framework for combating nuclear terrorism to date, 2) an initiative of the two parties most vulnerable to WMD terrorism (WMDT), the US and the Russian Federation, and 3) supports existing US and international policy and "brands" security interests in a way that can be communicated to partner governments, thus covering more ground than multilateral agreements alone. While the GI has accomplished much in the realm of harmonizing domestic, bilateral, and multilateral efforts in a single framework since its inception in July 2006, the gains have largely been normative, derive mostly from preexisting efforts, and most of its provisions have not been translated into concrete activities. For example, the GI does not have a funding mechanism, relies exclusively on voluntary agreement by friendly nations, does not significantly combat enabling environments, does not provide additional funding or direction to current capacity building programs, and it has not yet been implemented to a significant degree.⁴⁹ To improve upon these shortcomings:

- The US Department of State should ensure that each US Embassy has at least one knowledgeable officer that serves as a point of contact for all GI activities.
- The GI, as an effort at "branding" global efforts aimed at halting the transfer of dangerous technologies, must be publicized more effectively.
- The GI must be brought down from the secretary/ministry level to the operational level through innovative, multinational technical workshops, development of research and policy papers, and by holding a global conference at the ministerial/secretary level to promote the GI's adoption and implementation by a wider range of partners.
- The US and the Russian Federation should establish a trust fund to support the broad vision of the GI and allow member states to apply for targeted grants, administered by a multinational committee.

Develop an Integrated Threat Convergence Strategy: Going beyond the GI's voluntary promotion of counter WMDT policies, the US Congress should of a comprehensive intelligence assessment on the global risk of threat convergence. This assessment should be used to construct and implement a broad, integrated, and government-wide strategy for

⁴⁶ See Monika Heupel "Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540: A Division of Labor Strategy," June 2007, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

<https://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19365&prog=zgp&proj=znpp>

⁴⁷ See <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/proliferation/>

⁴⁸ See "Fact Sheet: The Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism," White House; <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/07/20060715-3.html>

⁴⁹ See <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/rls/fs/69062.htm> for a list of accomplishments.

combating WMD terrorism and the environments that could enable terrorist acquisition of nuclear and radiological material, region by region. This strategy must work to rectify the disparate, redundant, and sometimes misaligned policies spread throughout dozens of agencies in the US Government.

Improving Regional Relations and Promoting Cooperation on Countering Threat Convergence: In order to effectively combat the rising trend of regional instability in the Black Sea and prevent the current polarization that is occurring between the West and its traditional allies, such as Turkey, an integrated multilateral approach must be fashioned. This approach should also take into account the existing strengths that states in the region bring to bear in resolving the conflicts in their own neighborhoods and the enduring weaknesses that persist. What was characterized as Western heavy-handedness, and spill-over from US actions in the Black Sea region, may be backfiring, making traditional allies question their historic alignment with the US while pushing nominal competitors, such as Russia and Iran, to court disaffected allies and engage in destabilization. Efforts to compel Turkey to accept a more permanent US military presence in the Black Sea is, for example, putting the Turkish government on the defensive, a move that could cause Turkey to turn away from NATO in favor of Russia for collective security initiatives.

- The US Government should draft a regional strategy for the greater Black Sea and Caucasus area. The US government should identify an overarching vision for the US government's interaction with the Black Sea and Caucasus region including the long term problems of energy, intractable conflicts, nonproliferation and counter terrorism policy, and the role of nation building and foreign direct assistance. Importantly, the US should draft a strategy to work with Russia to ensure the security of the Caucasian border region and help to contain spillover from both Georgian and Russian separatist insurgencies.
- The US Departments of State and Defense must revitalize the Trans-Atlantic Alliance through frequent, respectful, and culturally sensitive communications with all member states in the region, especially Turkey, and should publicly acknowledge it will not violate sovereignty in the Black Sea as enshrined in the Montreaux Convention of 1936. The Trans-Atlantic Alliance should also support Operation Black Sea Harmony⁵⁰ and Turkey's leadership of future NATO initiatives in the Black Sea region, such as regional capacity building and maritime counter-smuggling initiatives.
- The US and EU should work to lessen friction in the Black Sea and help to build consensus among riparian states on security issues by supporting regional organizations such as the Organization of Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC) based in Istanbul, the SECI Center based in Bucharest, and the NATO Center of Excellence-Defense Against Terrorism (COE-DAT), which is based

⁵⁰ Black Sea Harmony is a naval operation initiated by Turkey in March 2004 in accordance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1373, 1540 and 1566 aimed at deterring terrorism and smuggling in the Black Sea, similar to the NATO-led Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean. Turkey has extended invitations to each littoral state to join Black Sea Harmony. In order to counter potential threats in the Black Sea and Turkish Straights, the Turkish Navy conducts periodic surveillance and reconnaissance operations in these waters. Statistics concerning suspect ships are collected and shared with NATO and other littoral nations. Only Turkey and Russia maintain a permanent presence in joint operations centers.

in Ankara. The US should send and maintain a national representative, where applicable, at each center.⁵¹

- BSEC member states, as well as observers and allies, should support a series of technical workshops and high level symposia on countering threat convergence trends in the Black Sea through BSEC, as the only multinational diplomatic forum for Black Sea littoral states. Specifically, support should be given to BSEC's working group on organized crime and terrorism, and regional forums focused on consensus-building around security issues in the Black Sea region.
- The US and the Russian Federation must continue to work together to build broad support for the principals of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and extend that security cooperation to the Caucasus and Balkans regions on issues of sovereignty, self-determination, and territorial integrity through the GI's offices in the US State Department and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as in their embassies. The continuation of antagonistic relations between the two countries must be replaced by active diplomacy and the mutual acceptance of realistic security interests on both sides.

Dealing with Frozen Conflicts: Although not all secessionist territories are vectors for trafficking in NR materials, the lack of a final settlement on many of these conflicts adds greatly to regional instability. In politically complicated countries, such as Georgia, with its two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and its geo-strategic importance to many actors, US training and support to the central government needs to remain consistent while an amicable political settlement is reached.

Since the IAEA is a member organization and can only operate in areas over which its members give permission, breakaway territories largely fall outside their purview. In order to promote universal compliance with the provisions of the nonproliferation regime and support security in the region, the IAEA should be given permission by each regional government and secessionist authorities to investigate incidences of NR material trafficking in breakaway or autonomous regions according to the mandate of the IAEA.

- Turkey has, in the past, offered to take the lead in trying to resolve the conflict over Abkhazia. It should be encouraged to do so by the West. Ankara has the most political influence to bring to the table, ethno-linguistic ties to the Abkhaz, and the trust of the key parties involved: Georgia, Russia and the Abkhazian de-facto authorities. The US, in giving its support to such a Turkish-led initiative, should attempt to engage with Russia on the threat of proliferation in this region without further exacerbating issues of sovereignty or independence.
- OSCE member states should authorize the immediate expansion of the OSCE observer mission in South Ossetia above the line of control, including the so-called "road of life" and Roki Tunnel by authorizing and funding OSCE personnel to travel freely within the territory. Further, member states should immediately authorize funds for increased capacity building for the Georgian border guard and to combat terrorism. This aspect of assistance is often overlooked in security enhancement programs.

⁵¹ The US already seconded personnel from US Customs and the Department of Justice at the SECI Center.

- The US Government, using its considerable influence with Tbilisi, must work with the Georgian Ministry of Conflict Resolution to authorize the above expansion of OSCE observer mission in South Ossetia and to calm the confrontational rhetoric regarding both secessionist regions. The US must also strongly encourage Tbilisi to allow an IAEA investigative team unfettered access to former nuclear sites in Abkhazia and information on the Sukhumi I. Vekua Institute (SIPT) in order to investigate allegations of HEU disappearances in the early 1990s.

Combating Terrorism: The US, multilateral institutions and local governments alike, must work to reduce the societal drivers of terrorism in the Black Sea region as well as to take active measures to combat existing groups. Conceivably, a transnational group, such as Al Qaeda, could co-opt a local, indigenous group through the manipulation of discrete, deep-seated historical and territorial disputes. Popular disaffection with state institutions, particularly the police and military, staggering poverty, and endemic corruption at the local level could stimulate local sympathy for radical, jihadi causes. However, for WMD terrorism to occur, the radicalization of indigenous movements would have to be accompanied by financial inducements from wealthy patrons or criminal networks and dovetail with a growing ideological support for catastrophic acts of terror, events that can be combated with specific measures outlined below. Likewise, the failure of governments to provide economic alternatives to flourishing criminal markets leave the region awash in drugs, weapons, and counterfeit money. These illicit networks could expand into nuclear trafficking across zones of conflict and areas of competing governance, for political as well as economic gains. Economic development and a concerted effort to support democracy and participation in each unique enclave will go far to ameliorating these conditions. Terrorism is a fact of daily life in many countries, and must be dealt with as a long-term political, social, and law enforcement problem rather than as a distinct enemy to be dominated in the short term by hard power alone.

- The US should continue to assist the Turkish government to contain a resurgent PKK in northern Iraq with intelligence-sharing and other support while urging the Iraqi government and Kurdish leadership to stop hosting the PKK. The US should continue to urge restraint from the Turkish government to avoid a military confrontation. Potentially, a joint border monitoring unit could be established that is amenable to both the Turkish and Iraqi leadership but serves as a deterrent to future cross-border incursions on both sides.
- The US should encourage the EU to continue to consider Turkish accession while urging the Turkish government to implement existing laws in accordance with EU accession and NATO requirements. In particular, the Turkish Government should consider 1) giving more cultural and civil rights to Kurds in southeastern Turkey, 2) reforming Article 301 of the Turkish national penal code that makes it a crime to insult "Turkishness," as well as to 3) promote rural development and literacy, 4) and improve police/public relations in the southeast of the country.
- NATO, the EU, and the US should cooperate with the Turkish General Staff and National Police to thwart the threat of nuclear proliferation and home-grown terrorism. Increased intelligence sharing and military-to-military exchange programs and joint exercises should be mounted. Turkey remains an ally of the US and Europe

and this relationship should not be allowed to falter, both for Turkey's good and that of the Trans-Atlantic Alliance.

- NATO COE-DAT should be given resources to create a center for the study of threat convergence while continuing to host multinational workshops and symposia on WMDT, paying special attention to issues of governance in the Black Sea and Caucasus region. With a member state in the lead, the COE should formulate an outreach strategy to all regional governments and foster relationships with other bodies, such as the Counter Terrorism Center at West Point, and the National Defense University in Washington, DC.

Technical Security Assistance: Multilateral and bilateral efforts aimed at improving the technical capacity of law enforcement, intelligence, military, customs, and border security in Georgia, Romania, and Turkey are substantial and yet FfP researchers found evidence of gaps in both coverage and delivery that must be improved. Turkey and the US participate in productive joint NATO and military to military trainings, though accusations of US chauvinism and insensitivity at the administrative level have raised tensions. On the other hand, Turkey has exported some technical security capacity to Georgia, for which it claims to be the main sponsor. The US, EU, EC and OSCE provide training and equipment to Georgia and Romania for national defense and domestic stability.

At the operational level, a failure to consider the distinct nature and institutional cultures of the various national line ministries that are recipients of US and foreign bilateral- and multilateral training assistance has led to wide gaps in capacity. While a focus on reforming corrupt military and police institutions has been largely successful, particularly in Romania and Georgia, a failure to include capacity-building programs for border guards and customs officials has left national frontiers weak and open to trans-national trafficking activity. A failure to understand the impact of a “train the trainer” approach in the face of high turnover rates in the border services of each country has also wasted millions of dollars in aid and has led to an uncoordinated duplication of efforts. The reliance on technical solutions to complex security problems in US bilateral technical assistance programs, such as the “second line of defense” program administered by the DOE, which provides radiation detection equipment among other things, has left gaps in both human resources and institutional capacity among the agencies that are supposed to implement the measures. The EU and US embrace of Romania and Bulgaria has been positive in transforming those countries’ political and defense structures, but it is inconsistent and occasionally haphazard, often supplying equipment and initial training without the necessary institutional development to make these stand-up forces sustainable. Both countries still struggle with severe institutional weakness and require more support than ever, particularly in combating criminal trafficking and terrorism.

- The US and the EU must take a leading role in facilitating more intelligence sharing among its friends and allies, particularly between Georgia and Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Romania and its neighbors. This will aid greatly in counter-terrorism and anti-crime initiatives.
- The US should invest more in regional collaborative bodies such as the SECI Center in Bucharest, to facilitate intelligence sharing among Southeastern European and

Balkans nations. This will demonstrate that the US and its allies are interested in enhancing regional capacities for self-sustained cooperation and encourage information sharing among member states, either through enhanced International Narcotics and Law Enforcement programs (INL) or directly through the International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) of the Department of Justice.⁵²

- Turkish naval assistance to littoral states should increase, especially in the area of intelligence gathering, surveillance, coast guard, and anti-smuggling activities as Turkey's capacities in these areas are some of the most advanced in the region.
- The US, EU, (and OSCE in Georgia) should coordinate security assistance on training for institutional capacity building, transparency, and anti-corruption in the Georgian and Romanian police, border guard, and customs service by more closely integrating its initiatives at the strategic and tactical levels.
- US Embassies in the region should support joint research, workshops, and technical exchanges on threat convergence with its partners in the security services of each host country in the Black Sea, which are largely *ad hoc* at the moment.

Capacity Building for Security and Stability: Building the rule of law is of prime importance to each country. There must be sufficient and sustained multilateral investment in capacity building within the legal apparatus of each country in the region. This would allow for real gains in anti-corruption to take effect, promote democratization processes, and encourage other investments in the national infrastructure to be more durable and sustainable. Capacity building could include:

- International assistance in the form of legal experts to reform the penal code in emerging and transitioning democracies to ensure effective and fair prosecution of individuals accused of involvement in trafficking or terrorism.
- International assistance to develop and institute robust anti-corruption measures, particularly in security and customs services. This should include, where necessary, reform of the legal apparatus that must investigate and prosecute such crimes.
- Enhanced international assistance to conduct and monitor elections and the formation of broad-based political parties.
- Local and international NGO partnerships, in coordination with existing national and international projects, aimed at spearheading national dialogue on issues of terrorism and organized crime, to raise awareness among the public.
- The promotion of research into threat convergence risks among regional think tanks and government-sponsored research institutions, including on popular attitudes towards potential for WMD use among the region's terrorist groups.

⁵² ICITAP was first created in 1986, to respond to a request by the US State Department for assistance in training foreign police forces, specifically at that time in Latin America. Its main purpose is to enhance the policing capabilities of foreign police forces, mostly serving in countries recently ravaged by war, with the intention to assist those governments in stabilizing their own security issues. Although commonly confused as a portion of the International Police, the two are separate entities. Similarities between the two are that both require experienced police officers with an extensive background in certain fields of expertise. Of the two, ICITAP is more exclusive, desiring police officers with extensive training backgrounds and experience, whereas the International Police prefer police officers who are better geared for in-field work.

- The sponsorship of national studies on the issues and groups in the region related to threat convergence

If the international approach to containing the risk of terrorist acquisition of WMD in the Black Sea region is to be truly effective, it must go much further in synchronizing efforts at the strategic and operational levels. In a region where a political spark could very well light the entire tinderbox, the US and its Western allies must learn to balance the concerns of new asymmetric threats with the necessities of statecraft. The factors that shaped the Great Game, the nineteenth century battle for Central Asia waged between Czarist Russia and the British Empire, and the Cold War still play a major role in shaping the security landscape in the Black Sea region. Competition for resources, geography, and strategic influence among the major powers could lead to an increase in proxy wars being fought through disaffected intermediaries and regional instability. Cooperation among the great powers is necessary to combat the enabling environments that could lead to an act of WMD terrorism. Given the strategic importance of the region and the presence of demonstrated pathways to proliferation and terrorism, the need for a fresh and holistic approach is imperative.



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