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Authors

Sophia Robbins
Edwin Ferrell
Isabella Cantwell



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RUSSIA: Bilateral Talks with Tehran Likely to Enhance Economic Influence in Asia

Summary: Bilateral talks between Moscow and Tehran will likely enhance Moscow's ability to project economic influence in Asia. Discussions regarding the Caspian Sea will likely strengthen economic ties, furthering the separation between Moscow and Western sanctions.

Development: On 20 October, Moscow held bilateral high-level talks to review and accelerate the implementation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Treaty, according to Russia's Pivot to Asia. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov pledged Moscow's support for Tehran as a strategic partner, according to *Al Jazeera*. Lavrov discussed cooperation between Moscow and Tehran in the Caspian region as a critically important, shared body of water, according to *Al Jazeera*. Russia and Iran share the multidomain International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a 4,500-mile trade network that follows the Caspian Sea, according to *Al Jazeera*. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian stressed acceleration of identifying energy, transportation, and trade priorities, according to Anadolu Agency. The talks during the summit identified a need for close coordination on developments in the Middle East to consolidate regional peace, according to the Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Analysis: Diplomatic talks between Moscow and Tehran will likely enhance power projection in Asia. Tehran's strategic location as the bridge between West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia almost certainly creates opportunities for Moscow to spread influence in Asia. The agreement between the nations with trade along the INSTC will almost certainly expedite Moscow's power projection. The INSTC will highly likely grow economies in the region and will likely gain more attention and security from participating nations. The strategic location of the Caspian Sea will almost certainly provide the opportunity for economic benefit for its bordering nations of Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. By cutting shipping times by roughly 20 days, this growing relationship will very likely become the preferred trade route as opposed to the Suez Canal. Joint coordination between Moscow and Tehran will likely strengthen Moscow's strategic reach across broader Asian and Indo-Pacific commercial networks over the long term. This INSTC establishes a permanent, impenetrable trade architecture that likely bypasses any Western influence.

[Sophia Robbins]

JAPAN: Military Training Operation Likely Signals Changes in Combat Focus

Summary: Japan Self Defense Force (JSDF) and partners began “Keen Sword” last week, likely shifting toward island chain combat and suggesting rehearsal for a Taiwan Strait contingency.

Development: On 19 October, the JSDF began the 18th field training iteration of joint exercise “Keen Sword 27,” according to the Japan Joint Staff Ministry of Defense. This exercise aims to improve joint operational capabilities between military branches and eight foreign militaries, according to the Ministry of Defense. Notably, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the Philippines held observer status during the last iteration in 2024 but are listed as participants this year, according to *South China Morning Post*. The JSDF is fielding approximately 45,000 personnel during the exercise, with no confirmed numbers for the other participating nations, according to the Ministry of Defense. The operation highlights mobile missile and air-defense systems across islands, according to *Military Times*. The exercise also emphasizes rapid deployment readiness of outside militaries, according to *Defense News*.

Analysis: The scattered island strategies likely point to JSDF and foreign military posturing with the purpose of a Taiwanese defense. Tokyo cannot officially treat Taiwan as an independent country, but it likely intends to indirectly disrupt People’s Liberation Army (PLA) preemptive planning. The result would likely force the PLA to look further into the future and dissuade the predicted goal of a 2027 Taiwan Reunification capability. The focus on high-speed integrations with unified foreign military strategies likely point to the prioritization of island chain defenses, a noteworthy shift from prior stances of JSDF self-defensive doctrine.

[Edwin Ferrell]

RUSSIA: Likely Using Diplomatic Strategy to Ease Tensions in the Middle East

Summary: Moscow is participating in discussions regarding its geopolitical influence, bilateral relationships, and geopolitical stance within the Middle East. Moscow is likely using diplomacy to ease tensions between Tehran and the Middle Eastern Gulf States.

Development: On 18 October, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with the Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain, according to *The National*. Gulf States of the Middle East discussed using Moscow's geopolitical influence with Tehran to end military aggression against neighboring countries and restore shipping operations through the Strait of Hormuz, according to *The National*. On 19 October, Lavrov traveled to Tehran to meet with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi and discuss strengthening regional security, bilateral relations, and regional tension de-escalation, according to *Al Jazeera*. On 19 October, Lavrov stated that Moscow's is willing to help find diplomatic solutions to end regional military aggression while maintaining its bilateral relationship with Tehran, according to *Euronews*.

Analysis: Moscow is likely attempting to balance its bilateral relationships and geopolitical stances within the Middle East. Moscow participating in geopolitical discussions will most likely help ease tensions between Tehran and other Gulf governments. However, Moscow likely seeks to maintain bilateral benefits within the Middle East. The major bilateral benefit Moscow seeks is very likely the restoration of shipping operations in the Strait of Hormuz. Maintaining bilateral relations within the Middle East would very likely allow Moscow to maintain its geopolitical influence in international trade and shipping operations within the Middle East.

[Isabella Cantwell]

About GSIS

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University's (ERAU) Bachelor of Science in Global Security & Intelligence Studies (GSIS) degree program at our Prescott Campus blends both academic and professional studies to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become future leaders in intelligence, security, and law enforcement. The program provides students with a sound foundation in the liberal arts, including international relations, foreign languages and cultures, international law, foreign policy, political and military history, and other essential topics.

About EE

Eagle Eye Intelligence (EE) is an intelligence and research organization led by the students of the GSIS program at ERAU in Prescott, Arizona.

Dr. Philip E. Jones founded EE and Embry-Riddle's GSIS program in 2002, following a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and consulting work in international development and global security. Currently, Professor Dale R. Avery, a former career intelligence analyst, serves as EE's faculty advisor.

EE strives to provide actionable intelligence and analysis to its customers during the academic year. We are driven by a number of goals – continuous development, nonpartisanship, interdisciplinary studies, global awareness, and professionalism.

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Christina Muchow, a Senior in the GSIS program, currently serves as EE's Editor in Chief. For questions or comments, contact the team at pregleye@erau.edu or Professor Avery at 928.777.4708. If you use material from this publication, you should attribute: Eagle Eye Intelligence Edition 506, a publication created by students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona.



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3700 Willow Creek Rd. Prescott, AZ 86301 eagleeyeintel.com