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Kremlin: Battles over energy may lead to wars

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV, Associated Press Writer - Wed May 13, 5:49 am ET

MOSCOW – A Kremlin policy paper says international relations will be shaped by battles over energy resources, which may trigger military conflicts on Russia's borders.

The National Security Strategy also said that Russia will seek an equal "partnership" with the United States, but named U.S. missile defense plans in Europe among top threats to the national security.

The document, which has been signed by President Dmitry Medvedev, listed top challenges to national security and outlined government priorities through 2020.

"The international policy in the long run will be focused on getting hold of energy sources, including in the Middle East, the Barents Sea shelf and other Arctic regions, the Caspian and Central Asia," said the strategy paper that was posted on the presidential Security Council's Web site.

"Amid competitive struggle for resources, attempts to use military force to solve emerging problems can't be excluded," it added. "The existing balance of forces near the borders of the Russian Federation and its allies can be violated."

The paper didn't elaborate or name any specific nations.

Medvedev's predecessor Vladimir Putin, who is now Russia's powerful prime minister, often accused the West in the past of trying to expand its clout in the ex-Soviet nations and push Russia out of its traditional sphere of influence. The Kremlin has fiercely opposed NATO's plans to incorporate its ex-Soviet neighbors, Ukraine and Georgia.

Russia currently controls most natural gas export routes out of the former Soviet region, but that grip is coming under growing pressure from China and the West.

The European Union, which depends on Russia for about one-quarter of its gas needs, has sought alternate supply routes, including the prospective Nabucco pipeline that would carry the Caspian and Central Asian gas to Europe but skirt Russia.

Intensifying rivalry for influence in the ex-Soviet region fomented tensions and helped stage the ground for last August's war between Russia and Georgia, which sits astride a key export pipeline carrying Caspian oil to Western markets.

The war erupted when the U.S.-allied Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili sent troops to regain control over the separatist province of South Ossetia, which had close links with Russia. After routing the Georgian army in five days of fighting, Russia recognized both South Ossetia and another Georgian rebel province of Abkhazia as independent nations and permanently stationed nearly 8,000 troops there.

The war in Georgia has badly strained Russia's ties with the West.

President Barack Obama's administration has sought to rebuild ties with Moscow, which plummeted to a post-Cold War low under his predecessor and focus on negotiating a new nuclear arms control deal. Medvedev and other Russian officials have hailed what they called the new administration's constructive approach and voiced hope that Washington will drop plans to deploy missile defense sites in Poland and

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the Czech Republic — a top irritant in U.S.-Russian relations.

Reflecting the Kremlin's hope for better ties with Washington, the strategy paper said Russia will seek "equal and full-fledged strategic partnership with the United States on the basis of coinciding interests."

But it warned that missile defense plans and prospects to develop space-based weapons remain a top threat to Russia's security, and said Russia will seek to maintain a nuclear parity with the United States. However, it added that Russia's policy will be pragmatic and will exclude a new arms race.

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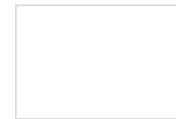


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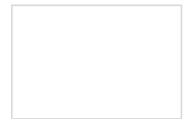


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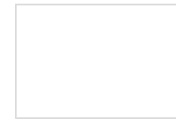
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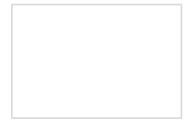
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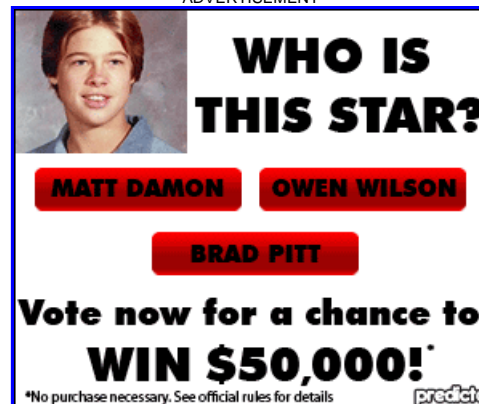
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