

## Putin's Mediterranean Gambit: Endgame Unclear

Thursday, April 29, 2021  
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 p.m. ET  
Online Event via Zoom

### Speaker Bios

**Chris Bort**

*National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia, National Intelligence Council*

**Chris Bort** has served as the National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia on the National Intelligence Council (NIC), the center for long-term and strategic analysis for the Intelligence Community, since 2017. This is his second tour on the NIC. Chris has been a specialist in Eurasia in a variety of roles for the Intelligence Community since 1981.

**Laura K. Cooper**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia, US Department of Defense*

**Laura Cooper** is currently serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia. Ms. Cooper is a career member of the Senior Executive Service. She has responsibility for policy concerning Russia, Ukraine, Eurasia (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, and Moldova), and Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) as well as Conventional Arms Control. Ms. Cooper previously served as a Principal Director in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security Affairs, with responsibility for policies on mission assurance, defense continuity of operations, critical infrastructure protection, homeland counterterrorism, global antiterrorism policy, and the Council of Governors. Ms. Cooper previously served as a Principal Director in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Global Security Affairs, with responsibility for policies on mission assurance, defense continuity of operations, critical infrastructure protection, homeland counterterrorism, global antiterrorism policy, and the Council of Governors. Prior assignments in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy include: Director of the Strategy office, where she helped manage the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review; Acting Director for South Asia; and Afghanistan Team Chief, Stability Operations Office. Prior to joining the Department of Defense in 2001, Ms. Cooper was a policy planning officer at the State Department in the Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism. She has also served as a Junior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International

Peace. Ms. Cooper has a Master of Science in Foreign Service degree from Georgetown University, a Master of Science in National Resource Strategy degree from the Industrial College of Armed Forces at National Defense University, and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern University.



**William F. Wechsler**

*Director, Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East Programs, Atlantic Council*

**William F. Wechsler** is Director of the Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East Programs at the Atlantic Council. Wechsler's most recent government position was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combatting Terrorism. He advised multiple Secretaries and helped coordinate interagency policies on a wide range of direct and indirect actions. His portfolio included the Department's policies, plans, authorities and resources related to special operations and irregular warfare, with an emphasis on counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, information operations and other sensitive operations. He also helped provide civilian oversight for the service-like responsibilities of the United States Special Operations Command. Previously Wechsler served as Deputy

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats, where he directed a budget of \$1.6 billion and oversaw military and civilian programs around the globe. His key areas of focus included integrating law enforcement operations into our military campaigns in Afghanistan and institutionalizing military counter threat finance structures and doctrine. During the Clinton Administration Wechsler served as Special Advisor to the Secretary of the Treasury, where he helped establish the legal regime and policies we use to impose foreign sanctions and combat money laundering. He had previously served as Director for Transnational Threats on the National Security Council staff, and prior to that was a Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Wechsler is currently also President of the Center on Illicit Networks and Transnational Organized Crime and the Treasurer of the American Historical Association. He was previously a Senior Fellow at the Middle East Institute and a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress. Wechsler has also had a separate career in finance. He has been Vice Chairman of Capitol Peak Asset Management and Managing Director of Greenwich Associates. He is a CFA charter holder and also holds the Series 7 and Series 63 securities licenses. Wechsler is a graduate of Cornell University and received a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He has been an adjunct lecturer at SIPA and is currently an executive committee member of the SIPA alumni association. He has contributed chapters to two edited volumes and has been published in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Foreign Affairs, and the National Interest, among others.

## Moderator Bio



**Mark N. Katz**

*Nonresident Senior Fellow, Rafik Hariri Center and Middle East Programs, Atlantic Council*

**Dr. Mark N. Katz** is a nonresident senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Middle East Programs. Dr. Katz is also a professor of government and politics at the George Mason University Schar School of Policy and Government. Katz was born and raised in Riverside, California. He earned a B.A. in international relations from the University of California at Riverside in 1976, an M.A. in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in 1978, and a Ph.D. in political

science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1982. Before starting to teach at George Mason University in 1988, he was a research fellow at the Brookings Institution (1980-81), held a temporary appointment as a Soviet affairs analyst at the U.S. Department of State (1982), was a Rockefeller Foundation international relations fellow (1982-84), and was both a Kennan Institute/Wilson Center research scholar (1985) and research associate (1985-87). He has also received a U.S. Institute of Peace fellowship (1989-90) and grant (1994-95), and several Earhart Foundation fellowship research grants. He has been a visiting scholar at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Riyadh, May 2001), the Hokkaido University Slavic Research Center (Sapporo, June-July 2007), the Higher School of Economics (Moscow, March 2010), the Middle East Policy Council (Washington, DC, September 2010-January 2011), the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (January-March 2017), and the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (Helsinki, April-September 2017). In 2018, he was in the UK first as a Fulbright Scholar at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) (January-March), and then as the 2018 Sir William Luce Fellow at Durham University (April-June). In January 2018, he became a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs.