Institutional warfare and its lingering political legacy

Fifteen years ago, Russian President Boris Yeltsin issued decree #1400, disbanding the Russian legislature and calling for a new constitutional referendum. In the process, he unleashed a violent assault on the country’s legislature, specifically the hardliners and intractable communists holed up inside the Belyi Dom, as a means of resolving a spiraling crisis over the constitution and the division of powers between the executive and legislative branches that had devolved from policy disputes into withering personal attacks.

The engines of Russian independence, from the fledgling civil society groups to the small opposition parties, blended factions and umbrella political "movements," to the Russian Federation Congress of People’s Deputies and Supreme Soviet, even the institution of the RF Presidency itself were damaged along with the tank-scarred and scorched Russian White House. From the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 through the onset of "shock therapy" and the deprivations of economic upheaval, Russia’s fledgling political structures were unable to meld social responsiveness and political representation with the demands of the moving target of rapid economic reforms that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet system. President Yeltsin had chosen to stake his office on the path to the market and to protect the young economists who were drawing those road maps; the legislature’s inability to frame its opposition to policy as anything less than an existential struggle with an overbearing, authoritarian executive appeared to prove prescient.
Yel'tsin's decree #1400, issued on 21 September 1993 set forth a series of reasons, more a list of crimes of the Supreme Soviet, which prompted his decision to move against the legislature:

The Congress and the Supreme Soviet are making systematic and increasingly active efforts to usurp not only the executive function but also even the judicial function.

At the same time not only have they not yet created the legislative base for realizing the Federation Treaty but the decisions adopted frequently run directly counter to the federative nature of the Russian State. (...)

Thus, the very foundations of the Russian Federation's constitutional system are being destroyed: people's power, the separation of powers, federalism. The very principle of parliamentarianism in the Russian Federation is being discredited before it has even had time to emerge and strengthen. (1)

Yel'tsin, the one time defender of the White House, instituted a scorched earth policy in his war with the legislature. A new constitution adopted following the battle, ensconced the powers of the executive; elections held to confirm the constitution also reconstituted a legislative branch, but no single opposition party held sway to challenge the executive. The executive's previous imperative to shield the government and the architects of economic reform from communist ideological revanchism in the form of legislative attacks gave way as a more cautious hand, Viktor Chernomyrdin, was appointed prime minister and put to the task of steering the reform course.

There were more skirmishes, aftershocks, in the executive-legislative battle throughout Yel'tsin's presidency, including the eventual amnesty given to those arrested at the White House in 1993, and the kompromat war with then Procurator-General Skuratov, but the issue of regime-type had been resolved:
legislative authority in Russia was undercut decisively. The question of whether a parliamentary system ever could take root remains an extant issue, if only just barely.

It is within this context of strong, central executive power dominating the interplay of opposition party politics in a legislative setting that made former President Putin's decision to use the legislature as a base for his transfer from the presidency to prime minister's seat seem so unsettling: Clearly, Putin was not looking for the challenge of debate among parties with strong foundational ideologies and social bases. Putin's choice to lead from the government, and as head (if not member) of United Russia seemed at first blush as an attempt to recreate a single party state model, something with which he would have great familiarity.

However, it appears that the Putin legislative model will encompass a range of political parties – as long as their leaders agree that cooperation with the Kremlin, rather than traditional opposition, forms the first plank in their platforms.

It is within this context that the decision by the leaders of the long time opposition party, the Union of Right Forces (SPS), to disband, merge with two other parties, and most significantly to work with the Kremlin, rather than argue against its policies (or its aggrandizement of power) seems so disconcerting. In a statement issued on behalf of SPS founders Anatoli Chubais and Yegor Gaidar, as well as the new acting Leonid Gozman the newly reconstituted Union of Right Forces suggested accommodation with the Kremlin: "If it is impossible to do without cooperation with the authorities, then there should be such cooperation." (2)

Gozman was more forthcoming in his comments, "if you want to make change in your country, you can't ignore the reality, and the reality is the Kremlin of Putin. [sic] I don't like the reality, but that doesn't change it." (3)
Shortly after the statement was issued, Yegor Gaidar announced his separation from the new SPS: "I do not believe that my participation in the new project will be useful for its success." (4)

The former chairman of SPS, Nikita Belykh, resigned rather than participate in the new "project" with the Kremlin, saying: "The Kremlin wants to create a puppet it can control, so it can imitate a multiparty system ... I don't want to be part of that show." (5) [For more on the Kremlin and SPS, see “Domestic Issues” below]

It is to the detriment of the Russian political system that parties, opposition and otherwise, require Kremlin consent to exist and thrive. As analyst Mikhail Rostovsky noted: "The problem is, political parties are not created on orders from the upstairs. ... United Russia is called a political party when it is actually a technical structure needed for the sake of appearances. All other political parties loyal to the Kremlin are imitations to an even greater extent." (6)

The decision, in 1991, to stake the new Russian presidency, and in many ways Russian independence itself, on rapid economic reforms at the expense of political reforms, cost Russia the opportunity to build respect for a balance of institutions that would allow for strong executive leadership on the one hand, and legislative representation with its ability to channel social concerns, on the other. The power concentrated in Russia's executive branch, a result of the legislative-executive battle more than a decade ago, focuses political strength on balancing personalities and clans within the Kremlin rather than the institutional demands of various segments of society. Unfortunately, the Putin-Medvedev administration isn't focusing internally when it praises multi-polarity and respect for institutions.

Source Notes:
(1) Excerpted text of Edict No. 1400 of the Russian Federation president "On Stage-by-Stage Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation," dated
Political party update: If you can’t beat them, join them

Nikita Belykh, head of the liberal democratic opposition party, Union of Right Forces, resigned on 26 September after top party officials voiced their support for shifting their party’s focus to pro-Kremlin “liberalism.” Although the reform effort was spearheaded by Anatoli Chubais, former head of Russia’s United Energy System (UES), he had the support of others including Leonid Gozman, Belykh’s deputy and the acting chairman of the SPS federal political council, who earlier had called for members of his party to cooperate with the government, in order to continue to promote the SPS agenda within the confines of Russia’s new political climate.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Rose Monacelli
While Gozman claimed that he was making the only possible choice because further refusal to cooperate with authorities would have resulted in SPS members losing stature in the business world and possibly being shut out of general political activity, (1) it was this willingness to compromise that led Belykh to quit, explaining that “[he did not] believe that [they] should keep that party at all costs.” (2) Since he was chosen to succeed former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov as the head of SPS in May 2005, Belykh openly and forcefully has been opposed to the policies of former President Putin’s administration, especially after the government reneged on its agreement to allow SPS to “win” several seats in the 2007 parliamentary elections. Prior to this ideological shift, the party had focused its efforts on lobbying business.

The consequences of its strongly anti-establishment stance already have become apparent. In addition to the party’s exclusion from the 2007 elections, SPS failed to register successfully even one candidate for the regional elections that will be held on 12 October. Even if it had been able to take part in the elections, it is doubtful that SPS would have been able to recapture its earlier popularity, which has slipped from a high of 8.6 percent in the 1999 parliamentary elections to less than 1 percent in 2007. (3)

These factors all contributed to the SPS leadership’s decision to cooperate with the current administration, after representatives approached the party about working together to strengthen their mutual relationship, an offer that included full participation in future elections. (4) Other, more personal, concessions apparently were granted, as evidenced by President Medvedev’s recent announcement that Chubais would head Russia’s new State Nanotechnology Corporation, Rosnanotech. (5)

On 3 October, the SPS leadership officially disbanded the party and announced a partnership with two other marginal democratic parties, Democratic Party and Grazhdanskaya Sila (Civil Force). The new party, which has to be named yet, will
be introduced officially on 16 November. (6) In return for his assistance in convincing other SPS leaders to agree to work with the government, Gozman was allowed to continue as one of the new party heads along with Boris Titov, current leader of prominent business association Delovaya Rossia, and Moscow Times political columnist Georgy Boyt. The leaders of the Democratic Party and Grazhdanskaya Sila both resigned after the merger was announced, claiming that they could not work with various members of SPS. (7)

In some ways, this is a win-win situation for both SPS and the current administration, as the party has been fighting against Kremlin policies since Putin began to consolidate power, only to see popular support for Putin’s policies grow among Russian citizens. Allying with the government ensures that at least some form of SPS will continue to operate, and also secures state financial support to help pay off more than $6 million in debt incurred during the 2007 parliamentary election season. (8) Further, it will allow the former SPS to promote its agenda, albeit in a modified form, to a wider audience without fear of Kremlin retribution. However, the ideological significance of SPS cooperation is much more important to the Kremlin; it allows the current administration to secure the votes of a small but dedicated group of voters; further fractures the opposition; and allows the Kremlin to present a unified front of once varied political forces in support of its policies.

It is apparent that the acquisition of SPS and its conversion to a puppet “opposition” party is yet another blatant effort on the part of the Russian government to fill the political spectrum with obedient parties. The Duma currently houses four major parties, including the Putin-led majority party United Russia, and A Just Russia, which is seen as a creation of the government, meant to act as a center-left alternative to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) and the Liberal Democratic Party, both of which criticize the government, but generally follow its policies. (9) At its most basic level, the fact that the Russian government has cultivated a party that espouses both liberal
values and Kremlin policies in such a bold, public way is a signal of the government’s growing lack of regard for international democratic standards.

**New opposition?**

Former President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev has teamed with entrepreneur Aleksandr Lebedev to create a new opposition party, tentatively called “Independent Democratic Party of Russia.” In a 29 September press release, Gorbachev and Lebedev, who jointly control 49% of Novaya gazeta, a bi-weekly newspaper that is often critical of the Kremlin, outlined the new party, including its plans to participate in the 2011 Duma elections. (10) The formation of the Independent Democratic Party of Russia (NDPR) is widely considered a reaction to the weakening of opposition parties in Russia, as exemplified by last week’s announcement that the Union of Right Forces (SPS) party will work in closer cooperation with Russian authorities.

For now, however, Gorbachev and Lebedev, an ex-KGB agent who also owns a third of Aeroflot, are focusing efforts on securing financial backing and recruiting party leadership. Lebedev has outlined NDPR’s plans broadly to “push for legal, economic, and media reform, including less state capitalism” (11) and hopefully to attract the liberal Russian citizens that have begun to leave SPS. Chief among these figures are Vladimir Ryzhkov, former leader of the Republican Party of Russia and its representative in the Duma, and recently ousted SPS leader Nikita Belykh, who told reporters that although he would follow the NDPR’s formation closely and would consult if necessary, he was not ready to fully commit to it or any other organization. He also cautioned that under the current political climate in Russia, the creation of any independent political party would be nearly impossible. (12)

Other parties’ reactions to the announcement has been mixed. The Yabloko party, while welcoming Gorbachev and Lebedev’s effort and expressing hope for a joint dialogue in the future, agreed with Belykh’s gloomy assessment of its odds
for success. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation’s (CPRF) reaction, on the other hand, was much less positive. CPRF representatives have rejected the need for a new democratic party on the grounds that CPRF already fills the role. They also have criticized Gorbachev’s involvement, saying that considering his background, it is inappropriate for him to be actively involved in organizing any party. (13)

In spite of onlookers’ predictions, the main obstacle to the success of NDPR may be the historic inability of any major democratic or social-democratic party to take root in the Russian political arena. This trend has been further complicated by both Putin’s and Medvedev’s administrations, which have spent the past decade consolidating power in the executive branch and strengthening state control over the media, the court system, and the business world.

Source Notes:
(1) SPS Will Sink Into Political Oblivion, If Not Reformed - Party’s New Leader, 29 Sep 08, Interfax, via Johnson’s Russia List, 2008-#177, 30 Sep 08.
(2) ChubaisReportedly Behind Kremlin Bid To Take Over SPS, 29 Sep 08, Jamestown Foundation, via Johnson’s Russia List, 2008-#177, 30 Sep 08.
(3) Chubais Reportedly Behind Kremlin Bid To Take Over SPS, ibid.
(5) Chubais Reportedly Behind Kremlin Bid To Take Over SPS, ibid.
(7) Francesca Mereu and Natalya Krainova, ibid.
(8) Philip P. Pan, ibid.
(9) Francesca Mereu and Natalya Krainova, ibid.
(10) Former USSR President, Banker Setting Up New Opposition Party in Moscow, 29 Sep 08, Ekho Moskvy Radio, Moscow, via Johnson’s Russia List, 2008-#177, 30 Sep 08.
(11) Former USSR President, Banker Setting Up New Opposition Party in Moscow, ibid.
(13) Former USSR President, Banker Setting Up New Opposition Party in Moscow, ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Fabian Adami

Politkovskaya update
In October 2006, Anna Politkovskaya was gunned down as she returned to her Moscow apartment. The investigation into her assassination proceeded through numerous stages, with authorities arresting several Chechens allegedly on suspicion of conspiring in her murder, and with revelations that Politkovskaya had been under satellite surveillance at the time of her death.

The most important development in the inquiry was the arrest in the fall of 2007 of a serving FSB officer, Lieutenant Colonel Pavel Anatolyevich Ryaguzov, in connection with the case. According to Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika, Ryaguzov was responsible for carrying out advanced target reconnaissance of Politkovskaya and with passing the information on to her killer. Speaking a few
days after Ryaguzov’s arrest, Chaika did not avoid the question of conspiracy, but implied that Politkovskaya’s death was ordered by someone outside Russia (presumably accusing Boris Berezovsky), and further that Ryaguzov was acting as an independent proxy, rather than as a member of a state sanctioned plot. The question of whether he could have re-tasked a spy satellite on his own authority simply was not addressed. (1)

On 22 September, the Head Prosecutor’s Investigation Committee (SKP) announced that it had turned over a bill of indictment against four persons to the Deputy Prosecutor General. Murder charges have been filed against three Chechens: Sergei Khadzhikurbanov, Ibragim Mukhamedov and his brother Dzhabrail. Lt. Colonel Ryaguzov has not been charged with murder, but with abuse of office and extortion under Articles 286 and 163 of the criminal code. (2) A separate indictment has been filed against Rustam Makhmudov, the alleged triggerman, still on the run at the time of writing. (3)

It is not yet clear whether the case will be heard by a military or civil court, but Murad Musayev, attorney for one of the accused, reacted to the indictment by stating that he had filed an injunction requesting that the case be heard by jury. Under certain circumstances, such a request apparently cannot be denied. (4) Musayev’s request likely is based on the fact that the case could go to trial in as little as two weeks, (5) and on his desire to have as much publicity as possible, so that any inconsistencies in the case can be exposed swiftly.

It must be stated that Musayev’s request is likely to be denied: first, Ryaguzov holds a military rank and as such is subject not to a civil trial, but to a court-martial. Secondly, a jury trial probably would garner precisely what Musayev wants, namely public exposure of a case that presumably consists of rather spurious evidence. The goal of the authorities in having a trial is to close the case as soon as possible. The easiest way to do so is to reinforce the narrative of a foreign-based conspiracy, carried out by Chechens and facilitated by a
mercenary FSB officer, without allowing the difficult questions to be publicized or asked through a jury trial.

**Georgia: Justify, justify!**

During the last week of August and the first week of September, it became clear that Russian Security officials were attempting, ex post-facto, to justify the invasion of Georgia. Aleksandr Bortnikov, Head of the FSB, claimed that Russian forces simply were acting on intelligence, which indicated that Al-Qaeda affiliated groups were planning attacks on Russia proper via Georgia’s secessionist regions. By invading Georgia, Russia was playing its part in the Global War on Terror, protecting herself against the evil, which “concerns humankind all over the world.” (5) The rhetoric about terrorism in the North Caucasus, and about the secessionist regions of Georgia has continued unabated during the last three weeks.

On 29 September, the Interior Ministry announced that a combined operation with the FSB had resulted in the shutting-down of an illegal arms smuggling operation between Abkhazia and Russia. According to the Interior Ministry’s press office, “2-3 consignments” of weapons and ammunition were intercepted. (6) On this occasion, the weapons seizure was only minor in nature: 19 revolvers and one semi-automatic handgun were discovered when authorities moved to make arrests. (7) The group involved has been charged with “illegal circulation” of weapons to terrorists, and is alleged to have conducted up to nine other smuggling operations. (8) What type, and what quantity, of other weapons were involved has not yet been revealed.

Speaking at an induction ceremony for newly promoted officers from the various Security Agencies, President Dmitri Medvedev noted that law-enforcement bodies needed to prioritize operations against “illegal armed groups”—read Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorists—that continue to “try to destabilize the situation in the country, and particularly in the North Caucasus.” (9) Medvedev claimed that
Russia effectively had ended the lawlessness in South Ossetia, adding that the operation in Georgia had been carried out for the purpose of “protecting” Russia’s “citizens and national interests,” as well as to “liberate” Tskhinvali. (10)

Russia long has made the argument equating the Chechen war with the US’s war against Al-Qaeda, in spite of the fact that the evidence for such a connection is very questionable. But, the insistence that the war against Georgia was necessary to protect Russian citizens is even more transparently spurious. The populations of South Ossetia and Abkhazia possess that status only because of Moscow’s (apparently successful) attempt to create facts on the ground by liberally handing out passports to those people who desired them. To speak of liberating the populations of South Ossetia and South Abkhazia from Tbilisi’s oppression is, quite flatly, a joke.

**Border Guards update**

In May 2005, General Vladimir Pronichev, Head of the Border Guards Service, announced a massive new funding program for the service. The purpose of the R15 Billion budget was to reinforce Russia’s apparently weak southern border by installing the latest surveillance technologies. A year later, then FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev announced that a significant part of the Border Guards’ budget would be dedicated to assisting the service’s transition to a fully professional force by the end of 2008. (11)

Late in September, two interviews were given to Krasnaya zvezda by senior officers of the Service. Much of the first interview, with Major-General Aleksandr Khlevnyuk, was devoted to platitudes about the Service’s history and achievements. But, there were some points of interest, most notably Khlevnyuk’s claim that selection criteria for troops have returned to the high level required during the Soviet era, with a large focus placed upon “persons with higher education” qualifications, as well as on those already at a high level of physical fitness. Education and intellect are valued due to the proficiency needed to
handle the new technologies being assigned to the Border Guards. Khlevnyuk noted that the last intake of draftees had been in January 2007, and that therefore the agency was on target to be 100% professional by the end of the year, once the class of 2007 departs. (12)

The second interview was given by Colonel-General Nikolai Lisinskiy, Chief of the Regional Border Directorate of the Russian FSB for the Southern Federal District. Lisinskiy addressed the infrastructural and personnel changes in the Southern region, explaining that 72 new outposts, 798 apartments, a training center and one service complex have been completed since the reform program was announced three years ago. (13) Border Guard troops have received more modern weapons, personal communication devices and improved general equipment. Lisinskiy claimed that, as a result of these improvements, retention in the Border Guards had risen by significant levels overall, and that discharge requests from young officers, specifically, had dropped dramatically. (14)

At the time of writing, it is impossible to verify the claims made by Lisinskiy and Khlevnyuk. It should be noted, however, that retention of young officers is traditionally one of the yardsticks used to measure the capability, professionalism, and competence of an armed force. If the statements made are true, this thoroughgoing reform of the Border Guards Service would constitute a major achievement, and one that the authorities would wish to publicize to the maximum possible degree. Finally, the professionalization of the Border Guards could be used in a point-scoring exercise by the FSB against the Defense Ministry, to “educate” the General Staff on how reform is to be achieved successfully.

Source Notes:
(1) See The ISCIP Analyst, Volume XIV, Number 13 (19 Jun 08).
(2) “Russia: Journalist Murder Case To Be Considered By Jury,” Interfax, 22 Sep 08; OSC Translated Text via World News Connection.
(3) “SKP Turns Over Bill Of Indictment On Politkovskaya Case To Prosecutor’s,” ITAR-TASS, 22 Sep 08; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

(4) “Russia: Journalist Murder Case To Be Considered By Jury,” Interfax, 22 Sep 08; OSC Translated Text via World News Connection.

(5) “Russian Security Chief Warns of Possible Terror Attacks in S. Ossetia, Abkhazia,” Interfax News Agency, Moscow, in Russian, 4 Sep 08; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

(6) “Illegal Arms Channel Between Abkhazia, Russia Shut-Down—Interior Ministry,” Interfax, 29 Sep 08; OSC Translated Text via World News Connection.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.

(9) “‘Fight Against Illegal Armed Groups in North Caucasus Should Continue’—Medvedev,” Interfax, 30 Sep 08; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

(10) “Russian Pres Urges Special Attention to Fight Against Extremism,” ITAR-TASS, 30 Sep 08; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

(11) See The ISCIP Analyst, Volume XII, Number 6 (15 Jun 06)

(12) “Russia: Interview With Head of RF FSB Border Service Personnel Directorate (This Translation provided to OSC by another government agency.) Interview of Major-General Aleksandr Khlevnyuk, Chief of the Border Service Personnel Directorate, by Dmitri Mihkaylov: Cadre Potential,” Krasnaya zvezda, 29 Sep 08; OSC Translated Text via World News Connection.

(13) “Russia: Improvements to Russia’s Southern Border Continue. (This translation provided to OSC by another government agency.) Article by Aleksandr Khrolenko: The Hot Border,” Krasnaya zvezda, 29 Sep 08; OSC Translated Text via World News Connection.

(14) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces

By Lt. Col. Erik Rundquist
**Russian military power projection: Center stage**

Russia has continued to maintain its full-court press of global military power projection with an eye towards demonstrating a strong national resurgence to the West. The Russian navy has been increasingly active in its deployment to Venezuela for a combined force exercise scheduled for November 2008. On route to the Caribbean Sea, the missile cruiser Pyotr Velikiy, anti-submarine warfare (ASW) ship Admiral Chabanenko, and other support ships departed Russian waters on September 29, where they had been conducting “communications and maneuvering drills” in the North Atlantic. (1) During the course of their 15,000 nautical mile cruise, this Russian naval task force will conduct port calls in the Mediterranean Sea, including Tripoli, Libya. (2) Not to be outdone, the Russian Pacific Fleet has been busy of late, with an “unofficial visit” of the ASW destroyer Admiral Penteleyev to Kyoto’s Maizuru Port, in order to carry out combined training with Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force. (3) Additionally, the Russian Pacific Fleet engaged in a series of battle drills involving more than 50 ships, submarines, naval aviation, and infantry, where the missile cruiser Varyag is reported to have conducted successfully surface-to-surface target engagements, while ASW ships Admiral Vinogradov and Marshal Shaposhnikov carried out surface-to-air missile engagements. (4)

While completing the recent TU-160 strategic bomber deployment to Venezuela, the Russian Air Force also has continued to flex its muscles, using exercises and training in the “near abroad” with strategic implications. The “Stability 2008” exercises are on-going through October 21 with the objective of practicing strategic deployment of the armed forces, including components of its nuclear forces in Belarus. Russian Air Force Commander-in-Chief Colonel General Aleksandr Zelin noted, “The exercise will involve the majority of personnel and strategic aircraft in service with strategic aviation.” (5) The Russian Air Force has forecasted over 200 exercises and 350 live-fire drills for the second half of 2008. (6)
Ground-based air defense forces also are participating in “Stability 2008” tactical maneuvers, where Special Purpose Command (SPC) anti-aircraft defense forces are focused on defeating enemy air incursions into Russia. To the traditionally “static” air defense options, this exercise will test SPC elements with the ability to establish new positions to support forward operating airfields. (7)

The Russian Army also has continued to press hard recently on some well-advertised exercises. Assistant to the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Land Forces Colonel Igor Konashenkov noted the “Centre 2008” exercises in Orenburg would involve motorized infantry, tanks, artillery, interceptor aircraft, and army attack aviation. It also would involve tactical missile firing at long-range targets coupled with airborne paratroop drops involving three IL-76 aircraft. (8) There is a push for interoperability and combined force training with parts of the exercise focusing on Russo-Kazakh command and control and live-firing exercises. (9) Russian President Dmitri Medvedev visited the troops and apparently was pleased with the close cooperation between the Russian and Kazakh ground forces. The 74-day training event has been one of the largest exercises in over twenty years. (10)

At the strategic and operational levels, the recent armed forces deployments and exercises indicate, on the surface, a Russian military resurgence. At the tactical level, however, there are still some significant obstacles to overcome. Sergei Melnikov, a Sukhoi test pilot, recently noted in an interview regarding advanced fighter tactics, “Unfortunately the development of such combat aerobatics is seriously impeded by severe lack of new aircraft in the air force, as well as by the shortage of fuel and spare parts which results in less training for pilots.” (11) In addition, analysis of the recent actions in Georgia indicates that there were both tactical and technological shortcomings. The Russian army in Georgia lacked unmanned combat aerial vehicles to provide real-time tactical reconnaissance, requiring the use of TU-22M3 Backfire strategic bombers to perform this mission.
Moreover, the lack of effective radars, computers for coordinating air-to-ground targets, outdated electronic countermeasure systems, the absence of an integrated command and control system, lack of “smart weapons” for Russian fighter aircraft, and a serious lag in combat-support systems also have come under scrutiny. (13)

Added to this, there have been consistent calls at the highest levels to overhaul strategic nuclear systems in Russia’s arsenal. President Medvedev has ordered his military chiefs to submit plans by December 2008 on how Russia will upgrade its nuclear submarines and enhanced aerospace defense systems by 2020, in order to achieve “dominance in airspace.” (14)

While recent exercises and deployments have thrust the Russian military onto center stage, it may be too early to determine if these efforts are a true “coming-out” for the Russians. President Medvedev recently has echoed calls for providing the military with better equipment, improving military members' standard of living, and adding new submarines to the fleet. (15) Despite the massive and well-publicized exercises, these calls for modernization and enhancement clearly indicate that Russia has plenty left to accomplish. In fact, United States Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted, “Though Russia’s recent air and naval forays into this hemisphere have grabbed headlines, it’s also worth noting that in the last 15 years the Russian navy has launched just two new major warships. Russia does present serious challenges, but ones very different from the past.” (16)

Source Notes:
(6) Ibid.
(9) Ibid.
(10) “Russia’s Medvedev sees Tsentr-2008 exercise on final day,” BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 26 Sep 08 via Lexis-Nexis.
(13) Ibid.

The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the United States government.
Latin America and petro-politics
Russia is mounting a substantial effort to deepen its ties with a number of Latin American states. Vice Premier Igor Sechin headed a delegation that traveled to Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba in September, shoring up political and economic ties between Moscow and the left-leaning governments of these countries. The diplomatic activity appears meant to demonstrate Russia’s renewed global assertiveness and, more specifically, to respond to perceived American intrusions into Moscow’s “sphere of influence” in the former Soviet Union. (1)

Venezuela
Venezuela remains Russia’s key partner in Latin America; a position solidified by a significant bilateral energy sector agreement last month. While in Caracas, Vice Premier Sechin’s delegation conducted preliminary discussions on the formation of a joint oil and gas consortium that will bring together Gazprom, Rosneft, Surgutneftegaz, TNK-BP, and Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA). The proposed operation would aim to protect investments by Russian member companies in Venezuela, while allowing PDVSA to benefit from the capital and technical know-how of its partners. (2)

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez visited Russia on September 25th and 26th to sign a joint memorandum of understanding on the consortium indicating that a draft agreement would be written by the Russo-Venezuelan Intergovernmental Commission at the end of October. Russian Minister of Energy Sergei Shmatko stated that implementation of the venture probably would take place “not later
than spring of [2009]" and that Russia potentially could invest “tens of billions of U.S. dollars” in Venezuela under the arrangement. (3)

While it seems clear that the Russian companies are filling the void left by Western oil concerns after the latter were forced out of Venezuela by President Hugo Chavez’s nationalist economic policies, at least one oil executive attempted to downplay this political context. Rosneft President Sergei Bogdanchikov stated that his company “sees no real grounds for [such] allegations.” (4) In addition to providing a destination for investment capital, Russia’s growing energy ties with Venezuela would give it a stake in a market of substantial importance to the United States; Venezuela is the fourth largest source of crude oil for the US. (5) While there have been suggestions (6) that this could be exploited for political leverage by Moscow, it remains uncertain whether Russia would be willing (or even able) to use its Venezuelan energy ties in this way.

In his meetings with Prime Minister Putin and President Medvedev, Chavez reportedly also discussed cooperation on nuclear energy and the formation of a natural gas cartel. After speaking with Chavez, Putin said that Russia was “ready to consider a joint use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes” with Venezuela. (7) Meanwhile, Gazprom CEO Aleksei Miller stated that part of the talks between Chavez and Medvedev focused on the possibility of creating a natural gas cartel, though he would not specify any other details. (8) Both suggestions are ill-defined and largely speculative, but the fact that they were publicly broached at all is indicative of the deepening bilateral relationship between Moscow and Caracas.

Nicaragua, Cuba, and Bolivia
Elsewhere in Latin America, Igor Sechin’s delegation met with Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega to discuss a variety of bilateral issues, including energy cooperation. (9) In Cuba, Anatoli Perminov, head of the Russian Federal Space Agency, discussed the possibility of a joint Cuban-Russian space center that
would allow Cuba to access the GLONASS satellite navigation system, as well as other scientific systems. (10) And in Bolivia, Gazprom made an agreement with the state-owned YPFB and the French company Total to acquire a 24.5 percent stake in a joint venture to explore the Acero natural gas field. (11)

The likely aim of all this Russian activity is to capitalize on the deteriorating relations between Washington and the governments of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, and the existing antipathy between it and Cuba, in order to establish a political and economic foothold in America’s Western sphere of influence. These Latin American countries, saddled with significant poverty while trying to implement extensive social and economic reforms, benefit from the largesse that an oil rich Russia has to offer, while Moscow can assert its great power status and reap some diplomatic rewards. It should come as no surprise that thus far the only country aside from Russia that has recognized the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is Nicaragua. (12) It is possible that other Latin American states may follow suit.

Looking East: Russia-Korea Summit
South Korean President Lee Myung-bak paid a visit to Dmitri Medvedev at the end of September that resulted in a major energy deal and the formation of a new “strategic cooperative partnership” between the two. (13) One Kremlin source quoted by Itar-Tass noted the growing economic significance of South Korea to Russia by explaining that bilateral trade grew almost seven times between 2002 and 2007, from $2.8 billion to $15 billion, making the Republic of Korea Russia’s third largest Asian trading partner behind China and Japan. (14)

During the summit, Gazprom reached an agreement with the Korean state-owned enterprise, Kogas, to supply 10 billion cubic meters of Siberian natural gas to South Korea over 30 years, beginning in 2015. (15) The two would prefer to do this via a proposed pipeline from Vladivostok across the Korean peninsula, an arrangement obviously complicated by the unstable regime in North Korea,
whose approval would be needed. However, liquefied natural gas transported by sea is an alternative if the pipeline proves impossible.

In addition to securing its ties to a key Northeast Asian economy, this deal permits Russia to diversify its gas export markets, making it less reliant on European consumer countries with whom it has more volatile relationships. If a future agreement is reached with Pyongyang on pipeline construction, the deal will have the added benefit of injecting much needed cash into the North Korean economy (to the tune of $100 million per year), perhaps helping to forestall a potential regime collapse that neither Moscow nor Seoul is anxious to see. (16) Finally, the partnership with South Korea should facilitate some much needed capital investment in the Russian economy, especially in the relatively poor far eastern regions.

Source Notes:
(1) Interview given by Dmitry Medvedev to Television Channels Channel One, Rossia, NTV, 31 Aug 08 via http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/text/speeches/2008/08/31/1850_type82912type82916_206003.shtml.
(2) “Russian minister on consortium accord with Venezuela,” Itar-Tass, 26 Sep 08 via Lexis-Nexis.
(3) “Russian companies taking part in Venezuela oil and gas projects,” Itar-Tass, 17 Sep 08 via Lexis-Nexis.
(4) “Russo-Venezuela oil consortium project in the making,” Itar-Tass, 26 Sep 08 via Lexis-Nexis.
(6) “Russian daily says Gazprom targets U.S. energy market, report by Sergey Kulikov: ‘Gazprom sets its sights on the States,’” Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 29 Sep
Russian Federation: Energy Politics

By Creelea Henderson

Connecting the dots: Igor Sechin sets Russian energy policy

For a whirlwind survey of the issues that have shaped Russia’s recent energy policies, one would do well to peruse the last few pages in the daily diary of
Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin. The month of September marked his appointment to head a government commission to oversee the country’s newly privatized electricity industry. (1) September 9 found him in Vienna, heading the highest-level delegation that Russia ever has sent to an OPEC conference. (2) One week later, he was in Caracas with President Hugo Chavez discussing, among other topics, cooperation between the two countries’ national petroleum industries. (3) And with the arrival of October came the announcement that Sechin had been nominated to the board of directors at Inter RAO electricity trading company. (4) Wherever Sechin goes of late, there, too, goes Russia’s national energy policy.

Sechin’s high profile campaign to shape national energy policy highlights two interlocking interests. As first deputy prime minister, he manages the country’s energy sector. In addition to his political office, Sechin is chairman of Rosneft, the state-controlled oil company that is Russia’s largest producer of crude. A political hardliner and cutthroat businessman by reputation, Sechin combines his powerful profit-seeking motive with a penchant for nationalist politics. The result is a volatile energy policy agenda.

Energy priority issue 1: Falling output
It is often impossible to distinguish public from private interests in policy initiatives. Certainly, either interest would suffice to alert Sechin to the fundamental problem facing the Russian energy sector: falling output. This year’s drop in production volumes of oil and gas has caused grave concern in the government, which relies on windfall profits from oil and gas exports for its annual budget, and in global markets that depend on Russian oil supplies.

As an oil executive, Sechin favors a gung-ho extraction policy that maximizes output in the short term. This short-sighted approach, typical among Russia’s energy producers, has led to a rapid decline in energy production as mature oil fields in Western Siberia are tapped out. After achieving an eleven percent rise in
output in 2003, oil production in Russia increased by only 2.3 percent last year. In the first eight months of 2008, oil output actually fell by .5 percent. (5) In order to increase output levels energy producers will have to drill new wells in remote, inhospitable regions of the country. The most promising new fields, located on the Yamal Peninsula, the northern Timan-Pechora province, East Siberia and the Arctic, will require a massive influx of capital that is unlikely to be raised on international stock markets bracing for the impending global recession.

To provide companies like Rosneft with financial incentives to invest in new oil and gas fields, Sechin pushed the government to provide special tax breaks for Russian energy producers. At the urging of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the government recently amended the federal tax code to lower the tax on mineral resource extraction and give tax breaks to energy companies that undertake exploration and development projects in remote regions. The changes will come into force next year. (6)

**Energy priority issue 2: Cartel**

Sechin maintains a high profile in international energy circles and makes use of his notoriety, when it suits his purpose. His appearance at the head of a 20 member delegation to the 149th meeting of OPEC in Vienna was a gesture calculated simultaneously to ingratiate Russia with OPEC and to discomfit energy consumers in countries where leaders took a critical view of Russia’s military strike against Georgia. In the wake of the Georgian conflict, the vulnerability of Russia’s economy to outside shocks has been laid bare. Stern calls from Brussels to prevent Russia’s “energy stranglehold” are not as unwelcome in Moscow as news of volatility in world oil prices. (7) Russia needs consistently high oil prices in order to support its economy at current levels, which is undoubtedly why Sechin approached OPEC in September with an offer of cooperation aimed at finding “a stable pricing environment” for all parties. (8) In Moscow, a formal memorandum of understanding presently is being drafted to serve as a blueprint for future cooperation between Russia and OPEC members.
Sechin has been credited as the prime mover behind this recent rapprochement between oil market competitors. (9) His initiative has nudged Russia along the path toward a price-fixing energy cartel.

**Energy priority issue 3: Electricity sector privatization**

Although the architect of Russia’s recent privatization of its electricity industry, Anatoli Chubais, may believe his legacy to be secure, the government has not proven its commitment to the concept of an independent electricity sector. When Unified Energy System (RAO UES) was broken up and auctioned off late last spring, the government held back a small number of units that it labeled “strategic assets.” One of those units, Inter RAO, is the leading exporter and importer of electric power in Russia. Its power stations, located in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Armenia and Moldova, generate 8,0000 megawatts of electricity today and there are plans to boost its capacity to 30,000 megawatts by 2015. Inter RAO’s electricity flows to markets in Finland and Turkey. With the breakup of RAO UES, Inter RAO shares were transferred into the holding of Rosatom, the state nuclear corporation. (10)

On October 23, Inter RAO shareholders will meet to sort out candidates and reshuffle sitting directors elected to the board at the company’s inception last June. One board member who will not be considered for reelection is Aleksandr Voloshin. He served as Kremlin Chief of Staff under Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, until 2003, when hardliners, led by Sechin, launched a campaign against Mikhail Khodorkovsky, chief of the Yukos oil company. (11) This month Voloshin once again will tender his resignation, this time as director of Inter RAO. It is expected that he will be replaced on the board by Sechin.

Sechin is an interesting choice for the board of directors, since he vigorously fought the breakup of UES. He filed a total of seven lawsuits in the Moscow Arbitration Court related to companies in which Rosneft held shares. His opposition aroused the indignation of privatization tsar Chubais, who said “a
state-run company is preventing the realization of our investment program. This is unprecedented.” (12) Sechin’s legal suits eventually were thrown out and privatization efforts pushed ahead toward the July 1 dissolution of RAO UES.

Then, in September, Sechin was appointed to head a government commission to oversee the newly privatized electricity industry. He is charged with ensuring that investors who bought power generators during the breakup of UES follow through with their obligations to invest in the country’s power generation infrastructure. Indications that the government is not entirely comfortable with the concept of privatization are bolstered by the recent appointment of Sechin to the board of directors at Inter RAO, one of the few remaining state-controlled electricity companies.

Source Notes:
(2) Anatoly Medetsky, “Sechin Leads Team To OPEC Summit,” The Moscow Times, 10 Sep 08 via (http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/600/42/370803.htm).
(4) “Sechin Set to Join Inter RAO Board,” Moscow Times, 6 Oct 08 via (http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/600/42/371455.htm).
Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Robyn Angley

GEORGIA
EU monitors deployed as Russians withdraw
The head of Russia’s “peace-keeping” force in the “buffer zones” (areas bordering the Georgian separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that were seized by Russian troops during their August invasion of Georgia) announced that his soldiers would begin pulling back from six “peacekeeping observer posts” surrounding South Ossetia on 8 October. The commander anticipated that the withdrawal would take 24 hours. (1) Georgian media outlets reported that Russian forces already have begun preparations for withdrawal in the following areas: the villages of Urta, Ganmukhuri, Kveda Chkhorotsku and Kanti, near Abkhazia, and Sachkhere, near South Ossetia. (2)

According to revised the deal negotiated by French President Nicolas Sarkozy in his position as head of the EU, Russian President Dmitri Medvedev agreed to a
withdrawal of Russian troops from the buffer zones within ten days of the deployment of EU monitors to those areas. The EU monitoring mission began patrols in Samegrelo (near Abkhazia) and Shida Kartli (near South Ossetia) on 1 October and consists of more than 200 monitors. (3) The mission has a one year mandate with the option of renewal at the end of that period. Prior to the deployment of the EU monitors, access to the buffer zones was restricted, and even the delegation from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) needed the accompaniment of Duma Deputy Leonid Slutsky in order to pass through the checkpoint at Karaleti (19 miles from South Ossetia) in late September. (4)

The issue of a Russian military presence inside Georgian territory in the separatist republics will continue to be one of intense debate. Disturbingly, a PACE delegation visiting Moscow in mid-September was informed by Russian officials that, because Russia had recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia formally, any Russian military presence in those two regions would be negotiated bilaterally between Moscow and the de facto leadership in the regions. (5) This clearly would contravene the Sarkozy plan, which called for a withdrawal of Russian troops to their pre-invasion positions.

**Refugees shelter in schools as winter approaches**

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center has estimated that 158,000 persons left their homes as a result of the war with Russia. Of those persons, around 30,000 relocated to North Ossetia in the Russian Federation. The rest were displaced to other areas of Georgia, most notably the capital of Tbilisi, with 59,000 not having returned to their homes as of mid-September. (6) UNHCR estimated that of that number, 31,000 refugees would not be able to return to their homes in either South Ossetia, Abkhazia, or portions of the buffer zone deemed “inaccessible” for the foreseeable future. (7) These numbers are in addition to the refugees resulting from conflicts in the early nineties. The number of persons displaced at that time is a matter of great dispute, but could be
estimated at around 250,000, predominantly from Abkhazia (where ethnic
Georgians outnumbered the Abkhaz population nearly 3:1 in 1989). Those
refugees were never resettled; many ended up in poor conditions in Tbilisi and
the city of Kutaisi. This population recently has begun to lose the welfare services
associated with refugee status, including free public transportation and
exemption from military service.

Georgians in the capital and other cities have responded to the new refugees
with open arms, offering food and clothing. However, the situation remains
serious, with many of the refugees taking shelter in public buildings such as
kindergartens. A representative of the Education Ministry, Iraklii Todua,
estimated that some 50,000 children in Tbilisi and Gori would not begin
kindergarten until after Christmas because of the refugee crisis. (8)
Kindergartens are not the only educational facilities affected. Todua said that
about ten percent of Tbilisi’s schools have been pressed into use as refugee
shelters. (9) While the state is attempting to respond adequately to the needs of
the displaced, the approach of winter—and the need to resume classes in those
facilities now housing refugees—raises the stakes. Georgia’s refugees soon will
need more permanent places of shelter and adequate clothing as Georgia enters
winter and continues to sort out the aftereffects of the Russian invasion.

Source Notes:
(1) “Posts from S Ossetia’s security zone to be removed Oct 8,” ITAR-TASS, 7
(2) “Russian Forces Start Removing Checkpoints,” Civil Georgia, 5 Oct 08 via
(3) “EU Observers Start Patrols in Georgia,” Civil Georgia, 1 Oct 08 via
Local Kyrgyz elections spark national uproar, amid fraud allegations and threats
Elections for 491 city and town council posts across Kyrgyzstan have set off a
national scandal and provided fresh fuel to political opposition leaders in their
battle to bring an end to President Kurmanbek Bakiev’s stranglehold on power.
The storm broke roughly one week ahead of election day, when members of the
opposition released a video statement by Klara Kabilova, longtime chair of the
Central Election Commission (CEC), to the national media. In the filmed
statement Ms. Kabilova accused the president’s son, Maksim Bakiev, of exerting
pressure on her, stating: “I am Klara Kabilova. I am the current head of the Kyrgyz Central Elections Commission. I officially state that I was subject to blatant pressure, insults and offences in front of employees of the CEC secretariat on behalf of Maxim Bakiyev, a son of the Kyrgyz president, during the period of the acute election campaign.” Ms. Kabilova further explained that Maksim Bakiev’s efforts to intimidate her began after the CEC made the undoubtedly controversial decision to permit opposition member Ishenbai Kadyrbekov to stand in local elections, even though he is being held in pre-trial detention by law enforcement authorities, (1) for alleged financial misconduct. (2) Kadyrbekov, who was arrested last April, is the former director of the State Agency on Architecture and Building and was a prominent anti-Akaev activist, who even served briefly as interim president, until Kurmanbek Bakiev took office. (3)

Although, Kyrgyz opposition leaders reported that Kabilova had fled the country, following the junior Bakiev’s threats, the CEC press service reported that Kabilova merely had gone to Belarus to accompany a delegation of Kyrgyz election observers who had been invited to Minsk to help monitor the September 28 parliamentary elections. (4) Unfortunately, that same day Kyrgyz ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Belarus Lidiya Imanalieva announced that, in fact, Kabilova had not traveled to Belarus as part of the delegation and further stated that “she was not authorized to comment on or make any assumptions in connection with the fact that the CEC chairperson had not arrived in the capital of Belarus.” Other members of the delegation allegedly told media outlets that Ms. Kabilova had been taken ill and remained in Moscow. (5) Wasting no time and perhaps hoping to quell additional public furor over the matter, President Bakiev issued a decree relieving Kabilova of her post as CEC chair on September 26, (6) and then promptly appointed Damir Lisovskiy as acting chair. (7)

Although the president has ordered an investigation into Kabilova’s charges and his son has been questioned by the Prosecutor General’s office, all of the
opposition members who were present at the news conference where Kabilova’s video was first released also were summoned to come in for questioning on October 2. (8) These included three parliamentary deputies, Bakyt Beshimov, Isa Omurkulov, Roza Otunbaeva, as well as Ata Meken party chair Omurbek Tekebaev, Akshumkar party chair Temir Sariev, and opposition activist Cholpon Jakupova. (9) Although no details about their questioning have been released to the press thus far, according to Adilet legal aid group spokesperson Cholpon Jakypova, the Prosecutor General’s main interest in the case seems to be centered on discovering precisely how Kabilova’s video reached the opposition’s hands, not to mention who made the decision to broadcast her statement on television. (10)

Regardless of the gravity of Kabilova’s accusations and their implications that the election process might have been compromised, the October 5 polls were held as scheduled, while the investigation into the matter seemed to proceed. However, the integrity and impartiality of those conducting the investigation is also open to question. Prosecutor General Elmurza Satybaldiev was noticeably reluctant to open an inquiry into the former CEC’s chair’s charges, saying that the video in and of itself constituted insufficient grounds for a criminal investigation and stating “If Klara Kabilova makes an official complaint about threats received by her, we will open a criminal case and conduct an investigation.” He also wasted little time in declaring that as far as his office is concerned, President Bakiev has no connection to the accusations against his son and is completely removed from the investigation. (11)

Bakiev’s administration, including his supporters in the Ak Jol party (which won an overwhelming parliamentary majority in the last elections) has adopted the view that Kabilova issued the video only as a means of deflecting attention from her own misconduct as CEC chair. Acting CEC chair Lisovskiy told the media that due to Kabilova’s poor management skills, the CEC did not receive funding with which to conduct the October 5 elections, “Klara Kabilova's lack of
professionalism has meant that the draft budget for staging the local council elections was not sent to the government on time and was therefore not included in the republic’s budget.” (12) The government also seems to have attempted to stifle further discussion of the election scandal by the media, refusing to allow Radio Azattyk (Radio Liberty’s Kyrgyz service) to broadcast a program called “Awkward Questions” on October 1, on which Ata-Meken opposition party chair Omurbek Tekebaev and CEC member Amankul Moldaliev had been invited to participate as guests. National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation (NTRB) chair Melis Eshimkanov asserted that it was Radio Azattyk’s failure to pay fees in the amount of US$173,000 to the NTRB that had prevented the program from airing and that other programs also may be shut down, (13) but whatever the reason, it certainly does seem to be an odd, and very convenient, coincidence.

Discussion of Kabilova’s video statement has been banned in the Kyrgyz parliament, as well – Parliament Speaker Aitibai Tagaev (member of the Ak Jol party) not only instructed the other MPs to avoid the topic, but went so far as to shut the microphone off when one deputy from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) attempted to address the former CEC chair’s accusations. (14)

However, for the most part, opposition members have remained undeterred, refusing to recognize the results of the most recent elections and using Kabilova’s allegations as grounds, once again, to call for the last parliamentary elections to be declared invalid and for all of the CEC’s members to resign. (15)

Even without Kabilova’s charges against Maksim Bakiev, the integrity of the October 5 polls was highly questionable – Ruslan Shabotoev, member of the Social Democratic Party disappeared under mysterious circumstances on the Tuesday prior to the election and just two weeks before Shabotoev vanished, the son of another SDP member disappeared. (16) International observers were barred from monitoring the voting procedures, ostensibly because, according to
senior CEC representatives, all of those who applied to observe the elections
either missed the deadline or did not fill the applications out correctly (17) – yet
another odd, if also convenient, coincidence. 60% of voters at one polling station
in the No. 6 Asanbaev electoral district arrived to discover that their names were
not on the voter registration list and most reportedly left without casting their
ballots. (18)

Although neither the fallout from Klara Kabilova’s accusations nor the
irregularities and allegations of intimidation during the most recent elections
seem to have helped Kyrgyzstan’s opposition gain sufficient momentum finally to
push Bakiev out of office, or at least force him to enact real political and social
reform, if the average Kyrgyz citizen’s socioeconomic circumstances deteriorate
much more, opposition leaders may be able to achieve their aims, possibly even
within the next few months. Kyrgyzstan’s population seems to have resigned
itself to tolerate a certain level of corruption, incompetence, and simple
disinterest on the part of governing officials for the needs of their constituents.
However, if, by midwinter, the majority of people are unable to heat their homes
and put food on the table, the Bakiev administration’s political capital may be
down to nothing but crumbs, as well. President Bakiev and his cronies derive at
least part of their power by being able to keep their supporters employed and fed
– since even Bishkek is now subject to eight-hour electricity black-outs every day
and the cold weather has yet to set in, Bakiev’s future looks increasingly dire.
With no electricity to fuel the country’s business and industry, there will be no
revenue for the political elite to skim off and rebellion among the upper power
echelons could ensue. The opposition can conserve its strength and wait for the
winter’s deprivations to assist their political aims.

Source Notes:
(1) “Bakiyev decrees to dismiss CEC head (Part 2),” 26 Sep 08, Interfax via
Lexis-Nexis Academic.

(3) “Ex-Director of State Agency on Architecture detained,” 28 Apr 08, The Times of Central Asia via Lexis-Nexis Academic.

(4) “Kyrgyz Electoral Body Denies Rumours Its Head Disappeared,” 26 Sep 08, Kabar; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic.


(6) “Bakiyev decrees to dismiss CEC head (Part 2),” 26 Sep 08, Ibid.


(8) “Kyrgyz president's son questioned,” 30 Sep 08, Central Asia General Newswire; Interfax via Lexis-Nexis Academic.

(9) “Head of Kyrgyz CEC forced to flee; investigation launched,” 3 Oct 08, The Times of Central Asia via Lexis-Nexis Academic.


(12) “Local elections in Kyrgyzztan seen marred by controversy - Russian website,” 30 Sep 08, Ibid.


(15) Yrys Kadykeev, “Kyrgyz Opposition Rears Head Over Video Scandal,” 8 Oct 08, Ibid.
(17) “No International Observers In Kyrgyz Local Elections – Agency,” 5 Oct 08, 24.kg; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic.
(18) “First Violations Reported In Kyrgyz Local Elections,” 5 Oct 08, 24.kg; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic.

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