R-E-S-P-E-C-T
Whatever else one might say about Russia’s diarchy, the essential grease that keeps the dual mechanism running smoothly has been a certain level of respect (if not always a consistent level). Despite evidence of disagreements, differences in approaches on issues, or perhaps even pressure from their patronage tails to pursue a power war, Putin and Medvedev have maintained a certain cordiality and deference in relations that assuages concerns about political elite clan warfare.

The foundation of the diarchy is a relationship that finds its expression in the mutual respect displayed. As Putin remarked recently about Medvedev, “We are of one blood and common political views.” (2) While Putin chose Medvedev to succeed him (yes, yes – all duly confirmed by the electorate in 2008) and Putin continues to nod, if but formally, to Medvedev as president, it is, in fact Medvedev’s behavior that keeps the tandem in two-step. From his earliest personnel appointments, to his visits with critical media outlets, to his war on state corruption, Medvedev had opportunities, and has been watched worldwide for indications that he might sidestep his former boss and assert his own political authority as president.

Recently, Medvedev has been urged by Russia’s chattering classes to pursue an independent presidential policy, and Putin has been advised to stand aside and give Medvedev a chance to develop as a truly independent president. (2)
Last month the ability of Russia’s two heads to relate, really to chill, together was put on display at Sochi, as the president and prime minister relaxed at a café, walked along the water, and indulged in a photo op game of Badminton. It does appear, however, that they well may have had an issue or two to iron out during this vacation break, and some analysts suggest that such a public display, after a long, dry spell between meetings of prime minister and president points to tandem tension. (3)

So often, personnel issues pose the thorniest problems, and it seems likely that Putin and Medvedev had a few to discuss, including Kremlin concern over Putin pal and Rostekhnologii Head Sergei Chemezov who had been appointed to the Kremlin Commission on Modernization of the Economy. Not long after his meeting with Putin, Medvedev dismissed Chemezov from the Kremlin commission. Putative justifications for the removal of so close a Putin ally ranged from interclan warfare, concern over Chemezov’s business dealings (namely with AvtoVAZ), a Medvedev initiative to revamp the state corporation structure, and the most likely explanation, Chemezov’s lack of respect for the appointment and therefore the president. (4)

Despite the lofty title of the president’s commission, Chemezov apparently had the mistaken impression that he simply had received another no-show job: “Chemezov was removed from the commission for insufficiently active work.” It seems Vice Premier Sergei Sobyanin recommended Chemezov’s ouster because “[he] had not been to either of the two commission meetings (held on 18 June and 22 July) and had not submitted a single proposal.” (5)

Worse yet, the commission’s membership includes that Stakhanovite, Anatoli Chubais, who apparently went to extraordinary lengths—interrupting a trip to the US to catch a red eye back to Moscow for a commission meeting, then returning to the states to finish his business after the meeting ended—to demonstrate respect for the president and his commission on modernization. (6) Chemezov,
by not attending, failed to show proper respect – and that is an unacceptable, even dangerous, error.

While Putin apparently took umbrage at his friend’s disrespectful behavior toward the president and his commission, Putin also has demonstrated that respect for Medvedev stops well short of Putin’s own political ambitions. At this year’s Valdai Club meetings, Putin reportedly was asked (by the World Security Institute’s Nikolai Zlobin) about his plans for 2012. While brushing aside concerns over a rivalry with Medvedev, Putin explained their collaborative approach to democratic succession: "When it comes to 2012, we'll work it out together, taking into account the current reality, our own plans, the shape of the political landscape, and the state of United Russia, the ruling party." (7) Putin, of course, heads up United Russia.

While Putin’s remarks seemed to knock the knees out of a Medvedev presidency by proposing to make his successor a lame duck with two years left in his term, Medvedev had some well-targeted analysis of his own, particularly on the ills of Russia’s developing democracy. In an article, characterized as a Manifesto, Medvedev described the “baggage” that an unreformed Russia might carry: “Should we continue to drag into our future a primitive raw-materials-based economy, chronic corruption, and the inveterate habit of relying, in resolving problems, on the state, on abroad, on some "omnipotent doctrine," on whatever or whomever you like, only not on ourselves?” (8) Inherent in Medvedev’s descriptions of the current state of Russia, is a stinging criticism of his predecessor, whose ten year rule is briefly noted to have helped stabilize some disintegrative trends, but nonetheless has left: “an inefficient economy, a semi-Soviet social sphere, an immature democracy, negative demographic trends, an unstable Caucasus.” (9)

Perhaps the shared vacation photo ops in Sochi were not quite as amiable as has been suggested.
Medvedev also released photos from his own vacation that seemed to mimic Putin’s earlier PR pics from his Siberian vacation. Medvedev’s photographs lack Putin’s requisite shirtless shot, but then again, there are pictures of Medvedev’s wife, as they apparently vacationed together along the Volga. (10)

Medvedev’s Kremlin website also has undergone some changes, both cosmetic and in tone. Since the August meeting, the Kremlin.ru site has twice reported that Medvedev “issued instructions” to Putin, a phrase that seems not to have appeared before. (11) Medvedev also addressed the Valdai crowd on the subject of 2012: “I do have a plan,” Medvedev was quoted as saying, “But I'm not making any predictions.” (12)

With more than two years to go in Medvedev’s presidency, it seems decidedly premature to discuss the individual political plans of its diarchical duo. Perhaps it is sufficient to note that a very strong element of competition appears to have invaded the relationship of prime minister and president. It seems certain their respective clans will have noticed, too.

Source Notes:
(3) “Russia: Tensions seem set to continue despite tandem’s show of unity,” 10 Sep 09; OSC US Open Source Center Analysis via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL) 2009-#169, 11 Sep 09.
(4) See, for example, “Locomotives on Petrodollar Thrust,” by Maksim Blant, Yezhedenievnyy zhurnal, 14 Aug 09; BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, 20
It's election season: Let the accusations begin

The campaign season for next month's Moscow City Duma elections officially begins this week, and as usual, with it comes a fresh batch of accusations of
government corruption and election misconduct. This year, however, some of the regime’s detractors are stepping away from direct accusations of fraud and are looking instead for other, more creative ways to discredit the government. The latest target is Yuri Luzhkov, member of United Russia and the Kremlin-backed mayor of Moscow, whose seventeen-year term in office has been questioned by Boris Nemtsov, an opposition politician and critic of the Putin government.

Last Tuesday, former governor and deputy Prime Minister Nemtsov blamed Luzhkov for the persistent traffic problems that plague Moscow and its adjacent suburbs. He published a study claiming that these issues, which ostensibly stem from the city’s lack of sufficient infrastructure to handle the approximately ten million commuters that enter the city each day (doubling its population), persist because of “corruption and ties between road builders and authorities.” (1) Nemtsov’s main concern appears to be that these connections are stifling competition, which is driving up costs and slowing the pace of construction on a planned ring road, Moscow’s fourth, that would ease traffic congestion.

The study further alleges that the new ring road will cost 7.5 billion rubles ($380 million) per mile compared to the $4.8 - $9.6 million per mile in most European and American cities. Luzhkov’s office claims that the road is only expensive because the budget takes into account the need to demolish old residential areas near the construction site, but even after adjusting the price, the road still will cost approximately $334 million per mile. (2) The road is intended as part of a wide-scale renovation and expansion of Moscow that Luzhkov’s administration has worked to execute in tandem with the federal government over the past several years. At the height of the oil-fueled economic boom of the first half of this decade, this construction reflected the prosperity and stability that the country was enjoying. Now, most of these plans have been shelved as the funding has been reallocated to social relief programs. (3)
Obviously, tales of corruption are nothing new in Russia, and Moscow is an especially easy target. A study conducted last September by Russia’s Public Opinion Foundation found that 42 percent of Muscovites admitted to bribing public officials at least once, making it the most corrupt city in Russia. (4) In general, Medvedev’s open war of words against corruption has done little to reverse the countrywide inclination to combat everyday inconveniences by throwing money at the problem. Even though the past year’s economic crisis greatly reduced the average citizen’s ability to spend, the amount of money paid in bribes actually has risen. Yuri Shalakov, the head of the Interior Ministry’s department for economic security announced last week that the average bribe has tripled over the past year to 27,000 rubles. (5) Bribery is not the only corruption-related financial crime on the rise; Shalakov’s department also noted a sharp increase in white-collar offenses such as money laundering and organized crime.

The question remains, then, if corruption is so commonplace, why would Nemtsov focus his efforts on traffic congestion in Moscow? The answer may not have anything to do with the ill-fated fourth ring road. Rather, it is likely that Nemtsov is seeking political retribution after city officials recently prevented his supporters from participating in the upcoming Moscow City Duma election.

Seven candidates from Nemtsov’s independent Solidarity party were rejected from the ballot, including Ilya Yashin, Ivan Starikov, Sergei Davidis, and Igor Drandin, who were removed after officials ruled that a significant portion of the signatures they had collected from supporters were invalid. Davidis was told that there were handwriting discrepancies between many of the signatures he collected and the dates, and many of Starikov’s supporters wrote ‘Moscow’ instead of their specific district. In both Yashin and Drandin’s cases, all of their signatures were rejected for what the local election commission called “gross violations and improper execution.” (6) Former Deputy Energy Minister Vladimir Milov, another of Solidarity’s erstwhile candidates, reported that 30 percent of the
signatures he had collected had been deemed false—including his own. (7) Yashin has challenged the commission’s ruling, but with the October 11 election less than a month away, it is unlikely that his complaints will have any effect on the now-closed nomination process. (8)

This is not Solidarity’s first clash with the government over its ability to take part in the political process. After Nemtsov and Gary Kasparov co-founded Solidarity last December with the goal of uniting Russia’s various opposition forces, the party faced its first major challenge in March when Nemtsov attempted to run for Mayor of Sochi, home of the 2014 Winter Olympics. Nemtsov, who ran on an anti-Olympics platform, was never officially allowed to participate in the election and claimed that he was denied the local media coverage afforded to the United Russia candidate and eventual winner Anatoly Pakhomov. On March 23, youth activists from the Kremlin-backed youth movement Nashi strengthened his claims of corruption in the Russian government when they allegedly threw ammonia in Nemtsov’s face as he exited his campaign headquarters. (9) After hearing that the four Solidarity candidates had all been removed from consideration Nemtsov wrote in his blog that “if the cowardly and thriving regime thinks that in doing so it has won, it is deeply mistaken. The battle will continue. In the streets. Watch for developments.” (10)

Other independent parties have faced similar challenges. Only one of four candidates representing Russia’s Right Cause Party (CPRF) was allowed to run, prompting party leader Leonid Gozman to call the campaign “a farce.” (11) The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, on the other hand, is in the election, but has found it nearly impossible to campaign. First deputy chairman of CPRF Ivan Melnikov accused the government last week of limiting the party’s ability to canvas the city by limiting its advertising time on the two city television channels to two hours and preventing ads on the subway. (12) Sergei Obukhov, a CPRF representative in the State Duma, echoed Melnikov’s accusations, claiming that Moscow authorities are trying to remove all mention of opposition candidates
after 68 billboards paid for by CPRF-supporting newspaper Pravda were put up around the city and removed less than 24 hours later. The billboards, which read, “Are you living or surviving in this city? Look the truth in the eye!” were removed after city hall requested half the space for ‘social advertising’ and claimed that the other half of the billboards needed repair. Today, many of the billboards now sport United Russia ads, the rest carry “available for rent” signs. (13)

Moscow’s City Duma has long been a significant force because of the city’s size and central position in Russian politics, but for the first time, this year’s new members will enjoy the additional responsibility of approving the city’s Mayor after a candidate wins the popular vote, (14) which might further explain why City Hall has been so determined to manage the current election. Beyond that, analysts generally view the City Duma elections as a major indicator of future trends in both the State Duma and the presidential elections. (15) So far, the current election season is proving that not much has changed since the last election – the same government that speaks openly of ending corruption is more than willing to do anything it takes to remain in power.

Source Notes:
(2) Ibid.
(8) “Opposition Activist lists his complaints against Moscow electoral commission,” Text of report by Gazprom-owned, editorially independent Russian radio station Ekho Moskvy via BBC Monitoring, 10 Sep 09 via JRL, 2009-#169, 11 Sep 09.
(10) “Four Opposition Candidates Removed from Moscow Duma Election,” Ibid.
(11) “Russian Parties Say Shut Out of Moscow Duma Election,” Ibid.
(12) “Russian Communist Party faces obstacles in election campaign,” Interfax, 9 Sep 09 via JRL 2009-#168, 10 Sep 09.
(14) “Russian Parties Say Shut Out of Moscow Duma Election,” Ibid.
Russian Federation: Security Services

By Fabian Adami

Supreme Court rules on Politkovskaya
Early in August, Anna Politkovskaya’s family filed an affidavit with Russia’s Supreme Court. The document argued that any further judicial proceedings in the case should be suspended until such time as the assassination’s mastermind had been uncovered by proper investigation. Politkovskaya’s family and colleagues claim that the three individuals who were accused, tried, and acquitted in the case probably were merely the agents for the crime’s true commissioner. Their request to the Court was a response to the earlier decision to overturn the defendants’ acquittals and order an immediate retrial. Speaking to the press at the time, lawyers for the Politkovskaya family expressed the concern that their appeal might constitute a purely symbolic gesture: the authorities would create a fait accompli by failing to schedule a hearing before the beginning of a new trial. (1)

Surprisingly, the family’s assumption was incorrect, and the Supreme Court heard their case during the first week in September, issuing what might be termed a split-judgment. First, the panel upheld the annulment of the original verdict. Although this was not unexpected—Murad Musayev, attorney for the defendants noted that the Judges had not even requested full documentary disclosure for this question (2)—it constituted a victory of sorts for prosecutors, who had argued effectively that a flawed jury was somehow to blame for the not-guilty decision. The second part of the Supreme Court’s decision however, favored Politkovskaya’s family. The panel ruled that no retrial should occur, at least for now. Instead of a retrial, the case has been sent back to the Prosecutor General’s Office, (3) which has been enjoined to “merge” a new investigation of
the three accused with those against the alleged trigger-man (Rustam Makhmudov) and the mastermind. (4)

The Supreme Court’s decision has been welcomed—albeit cautiously—by those connected to Politkovskaya. Karina Moskalenko, one of the family’s lawyers, noted that a “new opportunity” now existed, but that it was “an open question” whether the Prosecutor General’s office would actually seize the moment and “answer the main questions of the case.” (5) Reporters Without Borders declared itself hopeful that new “facts may yet emerge,” but expressed the fear that Russia’s Security Forces would “block all attempts” to solve the crime. (6) Dmitriy Muratov, Politkovskaya’s former editor at Novaya gazeta, claimed that the Supreme Court had made the right decision in sending the case back to the Prosecutor’s Office (rather than to the Military Courts) for investigation, since the case would now be carried through by a “professional investigations team.” (7)

Realistically, it seems naïve to believe that all the facts in the murder will be revealed, that the Security agencies will not assert pressures, and to believe that an investigation carried out by one agency rather than another will somehow succeed. The interesting question about this ruling is why it was made. It seems likely that the decision was political and came from the highest corridors of power. The Kremlin and the Security Services want the Politkovskaya case to go away. Decision-makers clearly believe—given the publicity accorded the case—that the best way to achieve closure is to prove that Rustam Makhmudov really was the assassin, and to demonstrate that they have discovered the person or persons behind the plot. The odds are not in favor of the latter. Those individuals likely are the superiors of the very people carrying out and supervising the investigation.

**SVR Archives and Poland**

On 25th August, RIA Novosti carried a brief statement from Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) to the effect that SVR soon would be releasing a
swath of declassified documents on Soviet Polish policy between 1935 and 1945. The documents to be released would include transcripts of talks between the two states’ Security and Foreign Services, as well as those of inter-military discussions. (8) According to the agency’s press officer, the decision to release these documents was taken in order to mark the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II, to help historians answer such vital questions as why an anti-Hitler coalition was not formed more quickly. Not surprisingly, the documents chosen for release have been carefully selected: Press Spokesman Ivanov acknowledged that not all documents from the time period would be released. (9) What was notably missing was any mention of the Katyn Massacre. Russian authorities moved relatively swiftly to head off any questions on the matter. Yuri Ushakov, deputy head of the Russian Government Staff, noted on 30th August that “certain procedures” for declassification had been followed, and that it was “illogical” to challenge Moscow on the point, because no “compromise” could be found. (10)

Moscow did not open its Polish Archives for altruistic or historic anniversary reasons. The announcement of declassification was timed to precede a visit to Poland by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, where bilateral talks on items such as shipping in the Kaliningrad Bay and the export of spent nuclear fuel to Russia were to be discussed. (11)

The Polish response to the lack of Katyn documentation was predictable, with Prime Minister Donald Tusk assuring the national media on 27 August that he would address the question with his counterpart. (12) Putin responded to Tusk’s statement by publishing an editorial in Gazeta Wyborcza on 30 August, in which he argued that the “shadows of the past” should not “darken relations between” the two countries. Russia and Poland together, Putin wrote, must “cherish the memory of the victims” of the “crime” that Katyn constituted. (13) The Russian Premier’s conciliatory tone continued during his stay in Poland. At a joint press conference Tusk announced that they had reached an agreement on the creation
of Polish-Russian centers to study Katyn, (14) while Putin claimed that Russia would make its archives on the period available to Polish experts, provided Poland reciprocated. (15)

Putin’s language was surprising. Until very recently, Russia refused to acknowledge the Katyn Massacre and has referred to it in dissembling and oblique terminology. Since 2004, Polish historians consistently have been refused permission to travel to Moscow for research, while much of the Russian national media persists with the assertion that the massacre was a Nazi crime. Given these facts, it is legitimate to ask why Moscow suddenly has changed its tune, and what the Kremlin hopes to gain by (potentially) allowing access to the remaining classified documents. The most likely answer is that Russia will ask for access to US-National Missile Defense installations in Poland and possibly for Polish abstention or even a negative vote when the question of Georgian membership in NATO is next before that body’s governing council.

Source Notes:
(1) See The ISCIP Analyst, Volume XV, Number 15 (20 Aug 09).
(4) “Court to Reopen Case of Murdered Journalist,” The Times of London, 4 Sept 09 via Lexis-Nexis.
(7)”Editor Welcomes Court Ruling in Russian Journalist Murder Probe,” Ekho Moskvy Radio, 4 Sept 09; OSC Summary via World News Connection. (8)

(9) Ibid.

(10) “Russian Official Urges Poland Not to Press For Katyn Papers to be Declassified,” Interfax, 30 Aug 09; OSC Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.

(11) “Putin Seeks To Oppose Revision of WWII Results in Poland,” ITAR-TASS, 30 Aug 09; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.


(13) “Shadows of the Past Must Not Cloud Russia-Poland Relations-Putin,” ITAR-TASS, 31 Aug 09; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

(14) “Russia, Poland to Create Joint Centers to Study Katyn Tragedy,” Interfax-AVN Online, 1 Sept 09; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

(15) “Russia Could Open Historical Archive for Polish Experts on Reciprocal Basis-Putin,” Interfax, 1 Sept 09; OSC Transcribed Text via World News Connection.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Lt. Col. Andrew Wallace (USAF)

Arctic Sea saga – sources of speculation
In dramatic fashion, the Russian Federation Navy recovered the hijacked vessel Arctic Sea on August 17 off the coast of Cape Verde and saved all fifteen Russian crewmembers without firing a shot. (1) Russia’s NATO Ambassador, Dmitry Rogozin stated, “…the operation has been carried through successfully. It was done with brilliance.” (2) The Arctic Sea, which allegedly was seized by pirates off the coast of Sweden on July 24, is a Russian owned, Maltese registered, dry-cargo vessel. The ship was reported to be transporting a benign cargo of timber worth nearly $2 million from Finland to the Algerian port of Bejaia.
(3) Despite the highly successful rescue by the Russian Navy, speculation abounds that the Arctic Sea was carrying much more than just timber.

Analysts and journalists have forwarded theories that the ship carried everything from advanced weaponry (S-300s or X-55s) to illicit drugs. So far, investigators have found only timber and cut lumber on board the vessel. (4) Why then has the Arctic Sea captured the interest of the international community and sparked so many theories? The main sources of speculation stem from unanswered questions about the hijackers’ motives, the resources Russia expended on the rescue, and the opaque communication strategy Russian officials have employed.

Why would “pirates” target a Russian ship transporting timber to Algeria? (5) Was the motive to secure a reported $1.5 million ransom or was it to acquire an illegal cargo of advanced S-300 or X-55 missiles, as some have posited? (6) So far, official reports do little to shed light on their motives. Reports of the hijacking indicate that eight men pulled up to the Arctic Sea in the territorial waters of Sweden, near the island of Oland, in a small inflatable boat. (7) The team boarded the ship, subdued the crew at gunpoint, and disabled the ship’s tracking device. (8) The ship then continued its journey toward Algeria, notifying both the Belgian coast guard and British sea traffic controllers that all was well and there was no cause for authorities to be concerned.

After passing the English Channel on July 28, the ship disappeared from radar and avoided satellite detection. (9) On August 3, the insurance holder for the Arctic Sea reportedly received a phone call from an unknown person demanding a $1.5 million ransom. According to the caller, if the demand was not met, the crew would be eliminated and the ship would be sunk. (10)

Most experts agree that the seizure of the Arctic Sea has little in common with “traditional” acts of piracy or armed robbery. (11) In an interview with Time
Magazine regarding the hijacked Arctic Sea, Admiral Tarmo Kouts, the European Union’s rapporteur on piracy and former commander of the Estonian armed forces stated, “As a sailor with years of experience, I can tell you that the official versions are not realistic.” (12) In other reporting, an “unnamed Russian general close to the investigation” indicated there may have been advanced weapons (S-300 or X-55 missiles) on board that were offered for sale by an illicit weapons mafia. (13) Other reports indicate that the missiles were smuggled on board the ship while she was in Kaliningrad for repairs before heading to Finland. (14) So far, Russian officials have categorically denied that an illegal weapons cargo was on board the Arctic Sea. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said, “As for S-300 on board of the Arctic Sea…it is absolutely not true.” (15)

The Russian Navy’s rescue effort in this incident also raises questions about the Arctic Sea’s actual cargo. A search and recovery party consisting of at least three battleships, a frigate, submarines and three IL-76 transport aircraft constitutes a far more significant show of force than would normally be required to track down one cargo ship. (16) Just the three IL-76s alone, capable of carrying more than 120 passengers each, would seem more than enough to transport eight prisoners, several crewmembers and two investigative teams back to Moscow. (17) If, as Russian officials claim, S-300s were not on board the Arctic Sea, what justified such a significant Russian Navy rescue effort?

Throughout the saga, Russian officials have been less than forthcoming regarding the events surrounding the Arctic Sea. In fact, Dmitry Rogozin, Russia’s permanent representative to NATO, admitted that false information was distributed to the mass media intentionally during the operation, in order to keep Russian plans secret. (18) Now that the ship has been in custody for more than three weeks, there has been very little official information forthcoming regarding the investigation, the hijackers, or the cargo. This obscure communication strategy has done little to abate speculation.
On the diplomatic front, one day after the Arctic Sea was recovered Israel’s President Shimon Peres conducted two days of talks with Russian President Medvedev. The major outcome of the talks was President Medvedev’s pledge to reconsider the sale of S-300 air defense missiles to Iran. (19) Less than three weeks later on September 7, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu made a secret diplomatic visit to Moscow, apparently as part of a continuing effort to negate Russian plans to sell the S-300 missile system to Iran. (20) Both leaders’ visits, along with unsubstantiated reports that Israel’s intelligence service, Mossad, tipped off Russian government to the hijacking, continues to carry the debate forward as to what role the Arctic Sea played in this international gambit. (21)

The Arctic Sea has generated much speculation and garnered significant notoriety in a short amount of time. Russian Foreign Mister Sergey Lavrov, in response to questions about rumors regarding the Arctic Sea, has promised a transparent investigative process that he anticipates will dispel any suggestions that the ship was carrying an illicit cargo. (22) The challenge now falls on Russia to offer plausible explanations to these inquiries over the next several weeks.

Source Notes:
(1) RF Navy Ship Releases Arctic Sea Crew Without Single Shot, ITAR-TASS, 18 Aug 09; OSCE Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(2) NATO Highly Commends Operation to Spot Arctic Sea Vessel – Rogozin, Interfax, 18 Aug 09; OSCE Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(3) Suspects Claim They Did Not Hijack Arctic Sea, Interfax, 28 Aug 09; OSCE Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(4) No Other Cargo But Timber Found on Board Arctic Sea, Interfax, 8 Sep 09; OSCE Translated Excerpt via World News Connection.
(6) The Truth is Adrift with the Arctic Sea, Central Asian Times, 26 Aug 09; via http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/KH26Ag01.html.
(7) ITAR-TASS, 18 Aug 09, Ibid.
(11) Recovered Ship May Have Been Delivering Russian Arms to Syria or Iran, Novaya gazeta’s Website, 25 Aug 09; BBC Worldwide Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis Academic.
(15) FYI – Russian FM Denies Arctic Sea Was Carrying S-300 Missile Systems, Vesti TV, 8 Sep 09; OSCE Translate Excerpt via World News Connection.
(18) ITAR-TASS, 18 Aug 09.
Russian Federation: Energy Politics

By Creelea Henderson

Taking the nukes out of nuclear energy

Driven by concerns about global warming, energy supply insecurity, and volatile fossil fuel prices, the world seems prepared to embark upon a second atomic era. The International Atomic Energy Agency foresees a doubling of global nuclear power capacity by 2030, from 370 GW(e) (gigawatts of electricity) currently installed, up to 810 GW(e). (1) It is a vision of the future that Russia is eager to usher into reality. However, its bid to lead the nuclear power renaissance puts the country at the center of a dilemma—how to separate civilian from military programs in countries seeking to establish nuclear programs? Without Russia’s full participation in implementing safeguards to protect sensitive nuclear enrichment technology from the start, the global non-proliferation regime could be gravely undermined.

Building on its legacy as a nuclear superpower, Russia has taken advantage of its technological expertise and raw uranium resources to position itself as a
leading supplier of fuel, technology, and equipment to the developing world. Starting in the 1990s, Russia’s atomic energy ministry, and later the State Atomic Energy Corporation, Rosatom, won contracts to build reactors in India, China, and Iran. (2) In the decade since, Russia has moved steadily to advance its share of the emerging nuclear energy market. In the past year alone, Rosatom launched new nuclear power projects in Bulgaria, Turkey, and Jordan, and signed agreements on prospective cooperation in the field of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes with Ecuador, Egypt, Nigeria, and Ukraine. (3)

As a key competitor in the nuclear power market, Russia has assumed a prominent role in non-proliferation schemes. Rosatom’s participation in the construction of a nuclear power plant at Bushehr, in Iran, serves as a key example. Rosatom has provided Iran with Russian technology and expertise together with an assured supply of low-enriched uranium for the power reactor. With a guarantee of nuclear fuel delivery and retrieval, Iran has no need to develop uranium enrichment capabilities to secure a steady fuel supply. The concept of separating the fuel cycle makes sense from an economic standpoint, both for developing countries that can ill afford the high cost of developing domestic enrichment facilities, and for developed countries, where uranium enrichment is more expensive than simply importing fuel. Russia has promoted its plan for an International Uranium Enrichment Center (IUEC) to serve as a fuel bank from which any country that wants nuclear energy may draw, provided that the country agrees to forgo enrichment. The IUEC could provide guaranteed access to fuel, while safeguarding the secrets of the fuel cycle from countries that would use the technology for weapons purposes, according to its proponents. (4)

Russia initiated the IUEC in 2006 in collaboration with Kazakhstan. Since then, Ukraine, Armenia, South Korea, Finland, Belgium, and Mongolia have entered into negotiations to join the fuel bank based in the Russian city of Angarsk, in Irkutsk Oblast. (5) The IAEA is currently reviewing the project for its potential effectiveness at curtailing the spread of nuclear weapons technology. (6)
Nonetheless, the plan is contentious; Russia has declared that it will supply fuel only to countries that have signed the NPT, leaving India, a country that has already expressed interest in joining the fuel bank, ineligible. The plan is also risky. The IAEA would prefer that the IUEC be multilaterally owned and operated under the auspices of the Agency to separate the fuel bank from the political realm.

Another security initiative undertaken by Russia is the removal of spent fuel from foreign reactors for reprocessing and safe disposal in Russian facilities. In the past year, Russia cooperated with the IAEA to retrieve nuclear waste from Serbia, and signed an agreement to accept spent fuel rods from a research reactor in Poland. (7)

By creating a controlled system of nuclear fuel supply and retrieval, Russia is making important contributions to the international non-proliferation regime. However, Russia’s commitment to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy has been tainted by its simultaneous support for the nuclear ambitions of rogue states, most notoriously, Iran. Russia’s refusal to back stringent sanctions against Iran in the United Nations Security Council, and its dismissal of a US timetable for securing progress from Iran on ending its nuclear-enrichment program cast doubt on Russian efforts to check the spread of nuclear weapons. (8)

At this critical stage in the development of nuclear technology, the opportunity for cooperation in the international community is real, if fleeting. The race for nuclear power may outstrip good intentions, leaving the world a more dangerous place.

Source Notes:


(5) Ibid.


(7) Serbia: “Statements of the Director General,” IAEA website, 7 Sep 09 Via (http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2009/ebsp2009n009.html); Poland: “Poland will transport spent nuclear fuel from a research reactor to Russia,” Kommersant, 1 Sep 09 Via (http://www.interfax.ru/society/news.asp?id=98356&sw=%F0%EE%F1%E0%F2%EE%EC&bd=9&bm=8&by=2009&ed=9&em=9&ey=2009&secid=0&mp=0&p=1).