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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

The Great Game appears to be in its final phase as the phenomenon of "Talibanization" squeezes Western influence out of the region. The Central Asia States and Russia stand tall against this amorphous "terrorist" movement, which spans everything from the Taliban regime to Osama bin Laden to Chechen insurgents and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Tensions continue to escalate. The Taliban have pushed closer to the Uzbek border with anti-aircraft weapons and tanks in tow, promising to hold Central Asia responsible for any airstrikes against them. Kyrgyzstan is poised to repel another invasion of the IMU from Tajik territory, while last year's incursion mastermind, Juma Namangani, is taking refuge in Taliban-controlled territory. Perhaps the most bizarre microcosm of Talibanization was this month's revelation about a terrorism center in southern Afghanistan. An epicenter of Wahhabi subversion, the center seeks to create an Islamist state in the Fergana Valley and China's Xinjiang Province, and carry out subversive activities into the depths of Central Asia (INTERFAX, 30 May 00, FBIS-SOV-00-0530, via World News Connection). Ironically, the West's position on terrorism in Central Asia makes it increasingly difficult to dislodge these states from Moscow's influence, while other CIS states (GUUAM) move in the opposite direction (See CIS section above).

Certainly the US is in a difficult position to criticize any strikes against Afghanistan given Washington's unilateral missile attacks in 1998. And what of NATO-ally Turkey? This month Turkish officials discussed a Kazakh role in the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. Foreign Minster Ismail Cem also asserted an interest to share information to help combat terrorism and promote an Afghan settlement with Kyrgyz officials (AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 13 June 00, via lexis-nexis).
Yet this is the same Kyrgyzstan which this month adopted Russian as an official language to help to bring it into the "world community". President Akaev has asserted that "Russia was, is, and will remain our main strategic partner" (INTERFAX, 6 May 00, FBIS-SOV-00-0506, via World News Connection).

As for Kazakhstan, Astana lashed out at moderate Islamic nations including Egypt for exporting terrorism to Central Asia. It is not surprising that Turkish Minister Abdullah Cay warned his Kazakh counterpart of Putin's neo-Soviet designs on the region, which the Kazakh minister largely brushed aside (Anakara Anatolia in English, 30 May 00, FBIS-WEU-20000-0530, via World News Connection).

Most startling is Uzbekistan, a linchpin of GUUAM and NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and staunch member of the Turkic world. After May's Putin-Karimov summit, the Uzbek President stated what could become an inscription on the Great Game gravestone: "There must be no doubt that our views fully coincide" (Moscow ITAR-TASS, 19 May 00, FBIS-SOV-2000-0519, via World News Connection). Putin declared that an "arch of instability" had risen in Central Asia, while Uzbek Defense Minister Yuri Agzamov asserted that he was pleased by Putin's declaration that Russia would come to Uzbekistan's aid should its territorial integrity be threatened.

Add to this the fact that Gazprom will import 5 billion cubic meters of Uzbek gas to Russia over five years, and that the Duma will rule on a dramatic military cooperation pact between the two countries, and it seems as though Moscow has few stumbling blocks in Central Asia (INTERFAX, 18 May 00, FBIS-SOV-2000-0518, via World News Connection). Does the Taliban regime have military reach to cause chaos on the Tajik or Uzbek borders? Are bin Ladin, the IMU, and Chechen insurgents brothers-in-arms, equipped to subvert the Central Asian states? These questions may be viewed as little more than issues for the future, with obtaining a lasting sphere of influence over its former Central Asian
colonies. This must be kept in mind should the Taliban move against the Uzbek border or the IMU attempts another invasion of Kyrgyzstan. For Turkey and the West, the window of opportunity is closing quickly, thanks to "Talibanization."

**Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: the start of greater Chinese involvement?**

There are signs this month that relations between Bishkek, Astana, and Beijing are strengthening. For the Central Asian nations, China represents large export market, especially for Kazakh oil. Meanwhile, the PRC pursues an active engagement of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to strengthen its hold on the volatile Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Clamping down on any Uighur separatism and opening a prosperous return to the Silk Road is designed to defuse what has been traditionally a turbulent Northwest frontier for China. And, as indicated above, Talibanization has a tendency to bring states closer together. Since the end of the Cold War, China has been especially fearful of an Islamist bent to Uighur separatism. The occasional rumor that bin Ladin was planning a Uighur insurgency was an extreme example in the 1990's. At the same time, some Uighurs did obtain experience fighting against the Soviet Union in the Afghan War. Concern over Talibanized Uighurs is increasing. The Afghan-based terrorism center (see above) is being pitched by Russian intelligence as a series of stepping stones: first the Fergana Valley, then Xinjiang (BBC, 01 June 00, via lexis-nexis). But Central Asia (including Xinjiang) is not the only region where these subversive Uighurs are feared. There are indications that Islamist Uighur violence is on the upswing throughout China, and even Hong Kong has tightened up security at army barracks, government offices, and businesses after receiving tip-offs about looming attacks (SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST, 04 June 00, via lexis-nexis).

Kyrgyzstan has been more then willing to help its giant neighbor. On May 25, two Chinese government officials (both Uighurs) were gunned down in Bishkek, by what are believed to be Islamist Uighur terrorists. This can be seen as a tragedy and an embarrassment for Kyrgyzstan. Earlier in the month, Kyrgyz authorities
convicted five terrorists who were accused of bombings in Osh in 1997. The five consisted of a bizarre rogue's gallery of three Uighurs, one Turkish ultranationalist "Grey Wolf", and a Karachay who was trained by bin Ladin henchman Khattab in Chechnya (BBC, May 29, 00, via lexis-nexis). Bishkek and Beijing further cemented their firm ties after a June 2 high level meeting between Kyrgyz Defense Minister Esen Topoyev and Chinese Vice President Hu Jintao. Both leaders agreed to increase cooperation at all levels, including military-to-military contacts (ITAR-TASS, 1 June 00, FBIS-SOV-2000-0601, via World News Connection).

Kazakhstan also has a role to play in clamping down on Islamist Uighurs, but it is also instrumental in providing the oil which could stimulate needed development in Xinjiang. Caspian oil tends to elicit extreme feelings of despair or euphoria. Not surprisingly, the discovery of potentially vast oil finds in the Kazakh sector of the Caspian Basin this month evoked the following declaration from Prime Minister Tokayev: "if this is confirmed, we can count Kazakhstan among the world's leading oil powers" (INTERFAX, 12 May 00, FBIS-SOV-2000-0512, via World News Connection). This could be very important for China. The chief of Kazakhstan's national oil transport company has suggested that China is Kazakhstan's most lucrative market for export, given that there is less competition over pipeline to the east than routes to the Black Sea, Mediterranean, or Persian Gulf. Astana is eagerly eyeing a deal to send oil to China in a joint venture with Gazprom. This month, Kazakhstan also formalized agreements with Beijing clarifying territories on the Kazakh-Kyrgyz-Chinese border, and also steps to safeguard Chinese and Kazakhs living in each other's territory (BBC, 18 May 00, via Lexis-Nexis, and BBC, 21 May 00, via lexis-nexis).

China's engagement of Central Asia should take the spotlight at the Shanghai Five summit in Dushanbe on July 5. This group, consisting of Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, plans to increase "confidence building measures" on borders and jointly "combat terrorism and religious extremism."
With Kyrgyzstan capable of surpassing Islamist Uighurs and Kazakhstan holding a its petroleum trump card, this may be the beginning of a more vigorous China in Central Asia. Shanghai Five's drive to stamp out regional terrorism could introduce a more assertive Beijing, still seeking to stabilize and develop its turbulent Northwest periphery. Such a China would be an augmenting, not a conflicting force in the Russian/Central Asian drive to crusade against "Islamicist terror."

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations
By Chandler Rosenberger and Sarah Miller

Moscow rallies support
Does it matter that a test of the United States' antiballistic missile system failed on 7 July? Russia, the system's chief opponent, has rallied world opinion to its side so successfully that even if the trial run had succeeded, the White House would still face international opposition to deployment. In fact, Russia has "wrong-footed" the American government on so many diplomatic fronts that one has to wonder if the US administration is even trying to make a case for missile defense among its allies.

In the month since the Clinton-Putin summit highlighted differences on revising the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Moscow has been able to rally support across Asia and the Middle East without a whisper of American rebuttal. In many cases, Russia has won support by improving ties to the very countries -- for example, North Korea and Iran -- which the American government has argued must be kept in check.

But in dealing with European capitals, Russia has used a very crude combination of half-baked promises and full-throated threats. A determined White House might have easily convinced its allies to support its own plan. Instead, White
House silence has virtually ensured that America will be boxed into a corner if the missile defense issue comes up at the G-7 meeting to take place in Japan beginning 21 July.

The sherpas embrace
In the critical months following the US-Russia summit of early June, the United States fixated on arms control talks with Russia rather than on trying to win the hearts and minds of its European allies. In mid-June, Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott convened his "strategic stability group," a set of arms-control style meetings with Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov. (INTERFAX, 13 Jun 00; via lexis-nexis) A week later, John Holum, Clinton's advisor on disarmament, met Russian diplomat Yury Kapralov in Geneva. (AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 27 Jun 00; via lexis-nexis)

Such meetings in the bureaucratic foothills had failed to secure an agreement on arms control before Clinton and Putin met. Despite coy Russian hints at compromise throughout, the Russian government subverted its staid meetings with American diplomats by rallying European governments to its side. Russian negotiations appear to have been a stalling tactic designed to give Moscow time to build up international opposition to missile defense.

On the western front
While low-level Russian diplomats were comparing notes with Talbott, the Kremlin's high-flyers were whipping up opposition wherever they could. During a state visit to Berlin from 15 to 17 June, Putin earned so much admiration from German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder that the two planned vacations with their families the following winter. Schroeder, of course, was also quick to insist that the United States adhere to the ABM Treaty. "Russia and U.S., " Schroeder said, "bear the responsibility for averting a new arms race." (INTERFAX, 1419 GMT, 16 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0616, via World News Connection)
In Great Britain, members of the Russian Duma warned British MPs of America's intent to break the ABM Treaty first, then persuade its allies to follow along later. (ITAR-TASS, 1957 GMT, 21 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0622, via World News Connection) "I think that Europe is a bit tired of the USA's embraces when it comes to security issues," Duma deputy Zaynulla Bagishaev told Russian television. (RUSSIA TV, 0920 GMT, 2 Jul 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis)

Throughout its diplomatic offensive against US plans, the Russian government has touted its own proposal for a European theater defense system as an alternative that would avoid throwing Russia and the West into a new arms race. Although Putin never elaborated how his proposed system would work, the Russian government insisted that the Russian system was the only alternative to a new Cold War. Otherwise, Rossiyskaya gazeta, the government daily, opined, "the United States will deploy individual elements of [its] system on Europe's territory. What will Russia do if that happens? It will have to adopt appropriate measures." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Jun 00; FBIS-WEU-2000-0620, via World News Connection)

Indeed, Russian officials explicitly threatened that Moscow would deploy more warheads of shorter range -- thus endangering Europe -- if the United States continued with missile defense plans. Vladimir Yakovlev, commander-in-chief of the Strategic Missile Troops, told Rossiyskaya gazeta that a US defense system would prompt Russia to build new combat "mobile and silo-based Topol and Topol-M systems" and even "return to the highly effective intermediate-range and shorter-range." (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 26 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0626, via World News Connection) Although Yakovlev and Russian Defense Minister Gennady Sergeev reiterated Russia's threats several times in the run-up to the 7 July test, the United States government offered no response.

Playing a weak hand well
The perversity of the Russian argument made the White House's silence all the stranger. Here, after all, was Moscow threatening to aim short- and medium-range missiles at European soil if the United States did not abandon a program designed to defend its own territory. By making such threats, Moscow was abandoning not only the arms agreements of the 1990s, but also the drawdowns of the late Soviet period, such as the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Wasn't Moscow pursuing exactly the kind of nuclear blackmail that a missile defense system was meant to defuse? If so, why wasn't the White House able to turn Moscow's virulent rhetoric against it?

Moreover, the White House has been silent at a time when the Russian government has given European capitals good reason to reconsider their initial embrace of the Putin government. Moscow has not been shy about smearing American missile defense plans with the taint of other aborted (as it turns out) US-led missions in Europe, such as Kosovo. (See The NIS Observed, 16 May 00) Given recent reports of the Kremlin's abuse of Chechen prisoners and threats to the freedom of the media and political parties, Russia might have been in a weak position to sell itself as a reliable, stable partner. A White House determined to press its case for missile defense could have taken a cue from the Russian Foreign Ministry and subtly undermined the credibility of its opponent.

The first green shoots of opposition to Putin's Russia have been springing up in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which has ignored pressure from the governments of its member-states and railed instead against Russian abuse of Chechen civilians. On 29 June, PACE re-affirmed its April expulsion of the Russian delegation, citing "concern about continued aerial attacks and bombardments in Chechnya, arbitrary arrests of non-combatants, continued harassment and ill-treatment of civilians by Russian federal forces, restrictions on the freedom of movement and the deteriorating situation with regard to media freedom in the republic." (PACE PRESS RELEASE, 29 Jun 00; via http://stars.coe.int)
PACE has not only expressed concern about the current Russian government, but may have instigated indirectly one of the Kremlin’s most worrying moves against a domestic political party. The only Russian party not to adhere to the foreign ministry’s attempted boycott of PACE is the liberal Yabloko, the one party consistently opposed to the campaign in Chechnya. Perhaps not coincidentally, Yabloko has complained that the Russian Federal Security Services, successor to the KGB, have been spying on its members. (INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, 23 Jun 00; via lexis-nexis) Vladimir Gusinsky, the media mogul briefly arrested in June on tax evasion charges, had been a strong supporter of Yabloko candidate Grigory Yavlinsky in the March presidential elections once his other ally, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov, dropped out of the race.

An assault on Yabloko for its continued opposition to Russia's Chechnya campaign is entirely consistent with the spirit of Putin's new foreign policy doctrine. In a speech to the Russian parliament, Putin called for a stronger state to help fight "systemic challenge to state sovereignty and territorial integrity" by presenting an "objective perception of Russia" and "accurate information about events on our country. Today," Putin said, "it is a matter of both its reputation and national security." (ITAR-TASS, 8 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis)

A Russian government that threatens European countries with nuclear confrontation and moves against political parties opposed to its Chechen campaign might not have the strongest moral case to take to the court of Western opinion. But the US administration has made no effort to counter Russian arguments against its missile defense plans.

The 7 July test of the antiballistic missile failed on a (relatively minor) technical glitch, when the interceptor did not free itself from its booster rocket. Every other system, including the radar that tracks incoming missiles and the battle management software, worked better than expected. The diplomatic effort to
promote the system abroad, on the other hand, has failed at every conceivable stage. The White House, one might conclude, has even less interest in stopping diplomatic salvos that it does in blocking incoming missiles.

**Putin: Drumming up support on the way to the G-8**

As the G-8 summit approaches, National Missile Defense (NMD) will undoubtedly sneak into the discussions. Although technically an economic forum, the G-8 has tackled political issues in the past, most notably during the Kosovo crisis. And even though Russia is scheduled to unveil its newly approved economic development program at the summit, Moscow's fast-paced diplomacy and hard-nosed rhetoric against NMD since President Clinton's visit to Moscow in early June suggest that Putin doesn't plan to let the issue slide at the summit. (ITAR-TASS, 0554 GMT, 29 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0629, via World News Connection)

If and when NMD comes up at the summit, Putin has not only the 7 July test failure of the US system to cite, but also the support of numerous governments behind him. For some time, Moscow has argued against the system, discounting the threat posed by "rogue nations" and repeatedly warning that NMD would spark a new arms race. Over the past month and a half in particular, Moscow has successfully rallied diplomatic support for its position across the Asian continent, indicating that Putin is using NMD to his political and economic advantage.

In meetings with the 12 CIS states, Putin made even this group sign the Statement on Strategic Security. This statement, like the Dushanbe Agreement signed only two weeks later by the Shanghai Five (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan), pledges support for the ABM treaty as the "cornerstone of international security." (RIA, 0819 GMT, 5 Jul 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0705, via World News Connection)
In separate meetings in Dushanbe with Chinese President Jiang Zemin, the two leaders spoke of the necessity to "preserve the ABM treaty," indicating that, despite China’s ruffled feathers over the Putin-Clinton summit, Russo-Chinese alignment on ABM has not unduly suffered. (See The NIS Observed, 21 Jun 00) (ITAR-TASS, 0547 GMT, 5 Jul 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0705, via World News Connection) The leaders will have another opportunity to discuss their similar views during Putin's official visit to Beijing from 18-19 July.

Some of the most interesting supporters of Putin's position are the "rogue nations" themselves, which Russia has actively wooed. After years of strained diplomatic contacts, Moscow this year finally signed a new Friendship Treaty with North Korea and Putin is scheduled to travel there on his way to Okinawa, presumably to send a loud message to the US about the decreasing North Korean threat.

In another visit that takes a jab at US NMD plans prior to the G-8 summit, Russia has stepped up bilateral contacts with Iran. Long accused by the US of sharing sensitive nuclear information with Iran, Russia has denied these claims and until recently limited military contacts with Tehran. But as of late June, Moscow and Tehran conducted a series of visits that signal a reinvigorated bilateral relationship. In fact, on 25 June Russian General Ivashov led the first Russian military delegation to Iran since 1991 while the Iranian foreign minister paid a visit to Moscow. Upon his return to Moscow, Ivashov reiterated Russia's argument that Iran simply does not have the "technical potential" to pose a threat to the US. Following this statement, Ivashov added that his visit was aimed at improving military cooperation with Iran. Plans for a presidential summit in Moscow as well as a defense ministers' summit are forthcoming. (IZVESTIA, 6 Jul 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0706, via World News Connection)

Even though Russia's pre-G-8 diplomatic maneuvering cannot prevent the US from developing NMD, it certainly does send a clear signal to the US about the
global impact that its decision could have. Even more importantly, with this kind of support behind him, Putin will enter the summit as well as the upcoming Millennium summit in September and the APEC meeting in November with renewed confidence about Russia’s place in the world. And if nothing else, NMD has become just another point on which Russia and other non-Western states have found common ground to improve their relations. In the end, these relations will translate into a diplomatic and economic win for Russia, even if it loses to the US on NMD.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Michael Thurman

POLITICAL PARTIES
Yabloko and SPS join forces
Duma Deputy Chair Irina Khakamada and Duma Deputy Vladimir Lukin signed an agreement "On steps to unite the Union of Right Forces (SPS) and Yabloko political organizations" on 21 June in Moscow.

The agreement was reached due to "the need to consolidate democratic liberal forces in Russia and combine efforts to strengthen fundamental common values such as a civil society, market economy and legal state."

"The Union of Right Forces and Yabloko regard it necessary to organizationally unite all political public organizations defending democratic liberal values into a unified coalition within one or two years."

SPS and Yabloko "regard it necessary to nominate unified lists of candidates in the common federal electoral district and single-mandate districts in the next
elections to the State Duma." Both parties "will immediately begin taking steps at regional and local levels to coordinate the actions of SPS and Yabloko regional and local branches in an effort to complete formation of unified organizations in the majority of the regions in 2001 [and] will immediately start setting up a united political council on a parity basis which will coordinate the work of SPS and Yabloko branches at the federal, regional and local level," the statement said. (INTERFAX, 0919 GMT, 21 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0621, via World News Connection)

The new union was first enacted at the regional level in Tatarstan when the regional organizations of Yabloko and SPS merged. (RIA, 0556 GMT, 25 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0625, via World News Connection)

Perhaps this is the beginning of a truly liberal party -- one in opposition to worn-out communist solutions to social problems, and the pro- Putin Unity party and its allies. Numerous attempts have been made to create such a coalition and they have all failed. Let us hope that this venture meets with more success.

REGIONS
Irkutsk regional elections invalidated
Local law requires 25 percent turnout of eligible voters to validate the regional elections. This occurred in only 25 out of 45 constituencies. In order to be valid, 43 of the 45 constituencies must have been elected. Turnout was low also in the cities of Irkutsk, Bratsk, and Ust-Ilimsk. (ITAR-TASS, 1528 GMT, 25 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0625, via World News Connection)

New elections will be held, of course, but this will not solve the problem of a high level of voter apathy. Perhaps the 25-percent rule should be re-examined with an eye toward removing the artificial hurdle as is the case in other areas of the federation. Democratic elections would be much smoother and less costly.
**FEDERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Duma passes law on police**

Slowly extending his power over the regions, President Putin’s law on reforming the police presence in the regions has passed a second reading. Under the proposed amendment, chiefs of the interior ministry and interior directorates can be appointed and dismissed in regions by the Russian interior minister without agreement from regional governors. (ITAR-TASS, 0826 GMT, 21 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0621, via World News Connection)

This would clearly give Putin a great degree of control over how the regions are policed, which in turn would provide him with a tool for influencing political and economic decisions in the regions. The regional legislatures had better be careful lest they pass this and other similar laws in the spirit of national renewal only to find themselves in the end totally subservient to the masters in Moscow.

**Newly Independent States: CIS**

By Sarah Miller

**Agreements flow, but where's the substance?**

Judging by all the hoopla surrounding the 19-21 June CIS Summit in Moscow, the nearly moribund body has had a miraculous recovery since last January’s meeting. Looks, however, can be deceiving: Although the CIS presidents signed agreements on many unresolved issues, including the Free Trade Zone (FTZ), an Anti-Terrorism Center, and further military cooperation, there appears to be little substance to the agreements or flowery rhetoric emanating from Moscow.

At their second meeting with President Putin since January 2000, the CIS presidents do not seem to have toned down very much of their previous expressions of support for Putin’s leadership. Even Russia’s main opponents within the CIS, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and Ukrainian
President Leonid Kuchma, joined in the rhetorical flourishes. Shevardnadze spoke of the Russian president's ability to bring "an atmosphere of confidence, mutual responsibility and consideration for others' interests," while Kuchma likewise noted that Putin brings "a more pragmatic, thoughtful policy" to the CIS. (ITAR-TASS, 1107 GMT, 26 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0626, via World News Connection) But even if one assumed these statements to reflect sincere sentiments, Putin's ability actually to get things done in the CIS has yet to be demonstrated. Post-summit, the main successes touted by the presidents and press alike included the Free Trade Zone, the Antiterrorism Center and military cooperation, but despite Russia's new "pragmatism" under Putin, in the days following the summit actions quickly belied rhetoric and pomp.

What is most impressive about the FTZ accord is that it was reached at all. The accord follows years of unsuccessful negotiation, a fact which in part explains the ambiguous terms of the current agreement. In fact, despite the participants' positive appraisal of the text, it is unsurprisingly devoid of specific measures to insure implementation. The presidents simply papered over the contentious issues (see The NIS Observed, 21 Jun 00) agreeing instead to implement "mechanisms" to create an FTZ as early as 2001. (ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 22 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0622, via World News Connection) But, other than parliamentary ratification, details on these "mechanisms" or a more reasonable time frame for implementation have yet to be released, suggesting that beneath the hype, there remains little substance to the agreement and few chances that it will be implemented soon.

Likewise, concerning the Antiterrorism Center, the presidents agreed to create a consultative intelligence-sharing and analysis center but overlooked the main issue of contention -- the creation of an Antiterrorism Unit with operational capabilities. Here as well, it appears that the agreement still faces such fundamental hurdles as funding, mission definition, and size, suggesting that, although it had unanimously support, some states, especially GUAM members
(Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Moldova), remain leery of cooperative measures with Russia which could give Russia even stronger control in the CIS. (Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 3 Jul 00)

On military cooperation, the CIS was again split along familiar lines, as Georgia and Ukraine refused to sign any of the several defense cooperation measures adopted at the summit. (INTELNEWS, 0600 GMT, 22 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0622, via World News Connection)

Thus, as usual, practical steps remain few and traditional CIS divisions could not be avoided, despite the positive spin adopted by the participants at the latest CIS summit. In fact, the most notable summit agreement was actually the joint statement on strategic stability, a non-binding statement in which all member states but Tajikistan affirmed the "historical importance" of the ABM treaty as a "cornerstone of peace, security and strategic stability." (ITAR-TASS, 1228 GMT, 21 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0621, via World News Connection) But ultimately, this was probably more of a Russian-orchestrated potshot at US National Missile Defense plans than an indication that the CIS can or will undertake concrete cooperative measures to ensure the treaty's survival.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

The Ukrainian paradox
President Leonid Kuchma -- a master at successfully balancing himself between two diametrically opposed positions -- has outdone even himself. According to Kuchma, Ukraine is making great strides forward, moving nimbly toward Europe, while at the same time it is stagnating and unable to function as a European country would or should. So, how can Ukraine be moving toward a European model while at the same time not? Yes, it is a paradox, to say the least.
The problem stems from the clashing of Kuchma's two most fervent desires: a resumption of IMF lending, and a restructuring of parliament that would give him significantly greater power. To receive any further lending from the IMF, Kuchma must convince the West that the Ukrainian parliament, with its new pro-presidential majority, is willing and able to implement needed reform measures. To maintain public support for his plan to restructure that very parliament, however, he must convince voters that the institution remains unable to pass needed laws. So, what's a president to do?

Kuchma has apparently discovered the answer: Allow the prime minister to tout loudly every one of parliament's achievements to the West, while you yourself downplay or ignore those same achievements within Ukraine. Hence, while Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko has repeatedly heralded the economic growth made by Ukraine over the first quarter of the year (GDP up 6.1% and industrial output up 10.2% compared to the same period last year), Kuchma has suggested that the growth is not sustainable, and is probably an aberration. Similarly, while Yushchenko has studiously informed the IMF of recent privatization, anti-corruption, tax and other reform measures overwhelmingly passed by parliament, Kuchma has made scarcely a peep about them.

This is truly a shame, because it appears that the country finally may be on the verge of scratching its way out of the economic abyss it was plunged into following the Russian ruble's collapse in 1998. Even more importantly, the country's leaders finally appear to understand which reforms must be implemented to help Ukraine join the capitalist club. From private land ownership, to energy consolidation and privatization, to anti-corruption and anti-piracy laws, the country truly does appear to be moving forward. This is a message Yushchenko repeatedly spreads, as does Kuchma when he is abroad or speaking to the Western press.
Recently, there was evidence that this message even may be getting through to the long-skeptical leaders of the European Union. Last year, Guenter Verheugen, the EU's commissioner for enlargement, called talk of Ukraine entering the EU "irresponsible," adding, "I think anybody who thinks Ukraine should be taken into the EU ... should perhaps come along with the argument that Mexico should be taken into the US." (REUTERS, 25 Nov 99; via Russia Today) Just two weeks ago, however, Verheugen backtracked, saying Ukraine is "strategically an important part of Europe and we can't afford to leave it behind. We should leave our options open on Ukraine." (BLOOMBERG, 1223 EST, 29 Jun 00; via lexis-nexis)

Did Kuchma rejoice? On the contrary: To suggest that the country is on the right road would be to suggest that the new pro-presidential parliamentary majority is doing a good job -- or at least a satisfactory one. To do that may erode public support for his plan.

That plan would amend the constitution to (1) eliminate parliamentary immunity; (2) cut the number of parliamentary deputies from 450 to 300; and (3) allow the president to disband parliament if it fails to form a majority within one month or does not pass a budget within three months of its submission by the executive branch. These initiatives have already been overwhelming endorsed by the Ukrainian public in a non-binding referendum. Now, they must be passed by a two-thirds majority of the parliament. According to several parliamentarians, however, that seems unlikely. So, it is conceivable that Kuchma may depend on his popularity with the public, and the parliament's unpopularity, simply to disband the chamber.

In what could be an ominous sign of things to come, Kuchma recently told a group of community leaders that, if the parliament does not pass the measures approved by referendum, "I will be forced to fulfill the people's will." (UNIAN, 1402 GMT, 6 Jul 00; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, via lexis-nexis) A
dissolution of parliament would, of course, be blatantly unconstitutional and a huge step back for a country that is finally moving forward. After years of parliamentary gridlock, though, and thanks to Kuchma's skill at downplaying the achievements of the new majority, the public would likely support this decision.

International organizations would not, however. One can hope that Kuchma is using his recent threats to pressure parliament, but does not intend to implement them. It was Kuchma, after all, who worked hard to push the country's constitution through parliament. It is also Kuchma who skillfully captained Ukraine from a dependent "little Russia" to a regional force and a country now recognized as strategically important and worthy of attention. International focus on a disbanded parliament is surely not the attention Kuchma would want his country to receive as it stands on the verge of something so much better.

MOLDOVA

Power to the parliament!

After months of wrangling, it's finally over: President Lucinschi has lost his bid to increase his powers; instead, he will have no power. On 5 July, communist, centrist and nationalist parliamentary deputies joined forces to amend the constitution, making their country a parliamentary republic. The country will now have its president elected by parliament rather than by direct elections. When Lucinschi sits back to examine how this could have happened to someone who seemed just a year ago to be in full command of the government, he should look no farther than his mirror for an explanation. The president's attempts to increase his power through dubious political alliances and machinations resulted in his alienation from almost every deputy in the parliament.

Lucinschi's attempt to change the Moldovan constitutional government structure to a presidential republic began early last year, when he tried to hold a non-binding referendum on the subject. At the time, some international organizations and analysts actually supported the idea of a Moldovan presidential republic; the
parliament was stagnant and unable to pass needed reforms, and the Moldovan president had little constitutional ability to help address the situation. Lucinschi quickly began using the proposed referendum as a starting point for his re-election campaign, however, and the issue mutated into nothing more than a partisan power struggle, with the Moldovan economy and people seemingly forgotten.

During the year-long struggle, Lucinschi supported a vote of no confidence in his own reformist cabinet, in an attempt to form an election year alliance with the majority communist party. This no-confidence vote precipitated a five-month search for a new government benign enough to garner the support of both Lucinschi and the communists. The president appeared to see every potential cabinet as a possibility for new alliances designed to increase his re-election or power. In a parliament filled with such partisan politics, however, this strategy was bound to fail. All parties resented the president's oft-shifting alliances, and soon had one thing in common; they agreed that a major part of their problem was the president.

So now, the Republic of Moldova faces yet another transition period, during which its major economic problems will undoubtedly be unaddressed. The country has no IMF funding, food and electricity shortages, massive debts to Russia, and a breakaway republic. It is unfortunate that the president and parliament could not have worked as hard on these issues over the last year as they did on ousting each other.

**Peek-a-boo... I-don't-see-you**

An illuminating press release issued last week by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), noted, "On the second day of a two-day visit to Moldova, the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Austrian Foreign Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner, expressed the hope that new initiatives could lead to a settlement of the conflict with Transdniestria.... She expressed her satisfaction
that the Russian Federation had provided the Moldovan authorities with a timetable for the withdrawal of Russian forces ..., which will be formally presented later this month in Vienna. She welcomed the fact that Russian President Putin, during his recent visit to Moldova, repeated his commitment to the Istanbul Summit Declaration, which called for a complete withdrawal by the end of 2002."
(OSCE PRESS RELEASE, 7 Jul 00)

Oh, would that it were so. The statement "repeated his commitment to the Istanbul Summit Declaration" is, however, a bit of a stretch. As reported in numerous papers covering the joint press conference with Presidents Putin and Lucinschi, Putin carefully sidestepped the OSCE issue by suggesting that he supported the OSCE Declaration and that he would try to fulfill Russia's obligations. As Nezavisimaya gazeta said, "When asked whether Moscow would fulfill the obligations to withdraw its military contingent from the Trans-Dniestr Territory it undertook at the Istanbul OSCE summit, President Putin stated that Russia would take into account both the resolutions of the international organizations and the Moldavian Constitution (which does not stipulate presence of foreign military bases on Moldavian territory) and aspire to observe them."
(NEZAVISIMAYA GAZETA, 20 Jun 00; Defense and Security, via lexis-nexis)

Even more importantly, Putin noted that it would be necessary to take into consideration the "interests of all population groups living in the region, including the Trans-Dniestr population ...." (UPI, 17 Jun 00; via lexis-nexis) It is no secret that the "Trans-Dniestr population" is fighting hard to keep the Russian troops there, and has lately been encouraging a proposal that would legalize Russia's presence in exchange for free gas to Moldova.

Clearly, the OSCE is partaking in a bit of wishful thinking. But then, as regards Moldova, this is nothing new. Unfortunately, we may be reading similar press releases from the OSCE in 2003.
CHECHNYA

Victory parade on hold

Less than a week after the Russian high command declared that the war in Chechnya was over, Aslan Maskhadov threatened to liberate Gudermes, the seat of the Russian administration. In a 6 July address carried on "Voina" (War) television which interrupted the government network programming on a local station, Maskhadov encouraged Chechen civilians to flee the area.

Since 9 June the alarm has expanded to Grozny, Argun, and Urus-Martan in addition to Gudermes. The four areas represent a very large portion of central Chechnya, and belie any Russian claim to controlling territory south of the Terek river.

Maskhadov said the operation would start on 10 July and hundreds of civilians heeded Maskhadov's warning, boarded up their homes, and fled into Ingushetia. (UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL, 11 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis) On 12 July, he issued a new warning that the "last and decisive" attack would come in early August. (RFE/RL NEWSLINE, 12 Jul 00) But already by 12 July there were skirmishes in the outskirts of Grozny and an explosion on the railroad tracks near Gudermes.

Initially, Russian commanders assured the population that a large-scale operation could not possibly be in the offing: This would contradict their earlier statements that the war is over and Maskhadov does not control the fighters. (SEGODNYA, 8 Jul 00; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis) However, they also beefed up checkpoints, limited refugee traffic out of Chechnya, and intensified security measures. Recent appointments indicate no change in Russia's policy of installing puppets to manage Chechnya's administration. General Vladimir
Bovikov was appointed deputy to Kazantsev, who is Putin's representative for the North Caucasus region, on 10 July. (AFP, 10 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis) Two days later, Beslan Gantemirov was made Kadyrov's deputy, to take charge of a new Chechen police force. This completes the chain of command -- Kazantsev, Bovikov, Kadyrov, Gantemirov. (See The NIS Observed, 21 Jun 00)

The threatened counteroffensive comes on the heals of a bombing campaign. Two unexplained explosions in Vladikavkaz and Rostov-on-the-Don which claimed four lives on 9 July followed four simultaneous suicide bombings against Russian military installations at Argun, Gudermes, Urus-Martan, and Novogroznensk, which killed more than 100 armed forces and MVD personnel. (AFP, 9 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis, and Jamestown Foundation MONITOR, 3 Jul 00)

While the kamikaze attacks against Russian military and MVD targets in Chechnya were clearly the work of the Chechen resistance, the authorship of the explosions in a shop in Rostov and in a marketplace in Vladikavkaz remains highly dubious. Of course, Chechen "bandits" were blamed immediately, but so far no one has taken responsibility for the blasts. In fact, pro-Chechen web sites have suggested that the FSB set these bombs to frame the Chechen resistance, in an operation similar to last fall's bombings in Russian cities. (JIHAD IN CHECHNYA, 11 Jul 00; via Johnson's Russia List)

There is a striking similarity between the bombings in Rostov and Vladikavkaz and the bombings in Volgodonsk and Moscow last fall: the political timing. In both cases, the attacks followed occasions on which the security services had been scolded by the president for poor performance. In this case Putin went to Gudermes to criticized poor security in Chechnya, saying the suicide bombings were avoidable. Last fall, Yeltsin vented his anger at the military command's lack of professionalism in repulsing Khattab's second incursion into Dagestan.
It is clearly too early to write off the Chechen resistance. An independent military analyst, Pavel Felgenhauer, noted that the simultaneous bombing attacks in different parts of the country indicate a coordinated policy. "The Chechen resistance seems to be an organized, motivated force that in the future can be expected to use a combination of terrorist and 'conventional' guerrilla tactics against Russian forces." (MSNBC, 9 Jul 00; via Chechnya-sl)

Indeed, a resistance movement to liberate the cities may yet emerge. It would need to draw on civilian Chechens who would become combatants overnight to reclaim the cities for the resistance. In fact, after the suicide bombing in Argun, for which local residents are held responsible, there was a protracted gunfight with apparent locals. (SEGODNYA, 8 Jul 00; What the Papers Say, via lexis-nexis) In Grozny a substantial weapons cache was found over the weekend.

Several scenarios for a major Chechen counteroffensive have been the subject of speculation over the last few weeks. Since pivotal points in the last war (the raid against Budennovsk and the liberation of Grozny) represented dramatic events which demonstrated the futility of the Russian campaign, some have expected similar feats to turn the tide this time around. The basic scenarios mooted include: a new offensive to engulf Dagestan, the liberation of Grozny, or terrorist attacks on Russian cities.

Ingushetia's president, Ruslan Aushev, who has been a consistent proponent of negotiations, suggested that a new offensive is possible and that it might have been triggered by Russia's overconfidence. The Chechen fighters "do not have problems either with personnel or weapons. The most terrible thing Russian politicians can do is boast." (INTERFAX, 8 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis)

The most recent TASS reports allege that members of the General Staff of a certain NATO member (read: Turkey) planned last week's bombings and this week's threatened offensive to distract attention away from a phantom group of
1,500 mercenaries who have gathered in Georgia's Panskiski gorge and plan to enter Chechnya. The attack will be timed to coincide with the opening of the G-8 summit in Okinawa. (gazeta.ru, 11 Jul 00) This fanciful scenario serves several political aims: It alleges that Maskhadov is irrelevant; It takes the offensive against the West in the runup to the G-8 summit, warding off possible criticism of Russian aggression in Chechnya; and it threatens Georgia (which has issued a denial) with the possibility of broadening the conflict to its territory.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Nicholas Burk

KAZAKHSTAN
For Kazakh president, the world is in balance
Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev got quite a nice present for his 60th birthday: his "coronation" by parliament as a "monarch" with lifetime political powers. And in what a delightful spot Nazarbaev's regime appears to be. The Kazakh economy seems to be on the upswing. GDP has increased by almost 10% over the first half of this year, compared to 1999. Astana's foreign trade balance is favorable to the tune of $1 billion. The military, complete with a new strategic doctrine, will receive a funding increase of 20%. The economic recovery has generated thousands of telegrams from "ordinary people" to Nazarbaev thanking their president for the prosperity. (ITAR-TASS, 3 Jul 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0703, INTERFAX, 1 Jul 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0701, via World News Connection, and BBC SUMMARY OF WORLD BROADCASTS, 8 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis)

Even better, the prospect of oil riches is coming tantalizingly closer. While the consortium Offshore Kazakhstan Operating Company, comprising Phillips Petroleum, Exxon Mobil, Inpex (Japan), Agip, BP Amoco, Royal Dutch/Shell, and TotalFina (France) expresses caution, Nazarbaev has declared that the Caspian
reserves will outstrip the Tengiz fields by a factor of six. "This is a great aid to our independence, our future, and our future prosperity," he announced proudly. Whether the future is truly so bright will be clarified later this month, when the oil consortium makes its findings official. (AFX EUROPEAN FOCUS, 5 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis)

And, for Nazarbaev, Kazakhstan's external enemies are not Russia, China, NATO, nor other Central Asian states, but rather the pesky problems of drug trafficking and Islamist terror. Yet the steppes of Kazakhstan are considerably insulated from the Islamist instability du jour in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and of course Afghanistan. The biggest difficulty Astana seems to have with this "threat" is rejecting the suggestion that 300 Chechen rebels are taking a hiatus from the fighting in Kazakh territory. (INTERFAX, 22 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0622, via World News Connection)

Geopolitically, Kazakhstan seems to have few grand enemies. NATO Secretary-General George Robertson suggested that, as a Partnership for Peace country, Kazakhstan should have as "special" a relationship with NATO as with Russia. Is this an attempt by NATO to dislodge potentially oil-rich Astana from Moscow's orbit? No -- Russian influence was not so much on the agenda as was the traditional Russian and Central Asian mantra: terrorism and drugs. (BBC SUMMARY OF WORLD BROADCASTS, 6 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis) When it comes to the "security architecture of Central Asia," Kazakhstan backs the developments of Shanghai Five in full -- Central Asian security can only be strengthened with the active participation of Russia and China, and the eventual accession of Uzbekistan to the Shanghai process. A CIS antiterrorism center is also a nice asset to Nazarbaev, as is a CIS customs union which could guarantee greater economic integration between the former Soviet states. (ITAR-TASS, 17 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0617, via World News Connection)
The centerpiece to Nazarbaev's geopolitics, clearly, is Moscow. On the cooperation between Astana and Moscow in the power industry, Putin said this month "what was created within the former Soviet Union and was not operable, has started working now." (ITAR-TASS, 19 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0620, via World News Connection) To use this phrase as a metaphor for Russian-Kazakh relations in general is not that far a stretch. June's Putin-Nazarbaev summit produced agreements on the Baikonur space center, further integration in the field of defense technology, a strengthening of the Collective Security Treaty (CST), and even an exploration of a common economic space between the two countries.

NATO will have much to do to replicate this "special relationship." Then again, Nazarbaev was enthusiastically traveling through Europe this month (not so surprisingly when his lifetime powers were bequeathed to him). He signed an agreement to cooperate with the European Commission on scientific matters, and we can also expect Jacques Chirac to pay a visit to Astana in the near future. (INTERFAX, 30 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0630, and ITAR-TASS, 28 Jun 00; FBIS-WEU-2000-0628, via World News Connection)

Nothing better symbolizes the ability of Kazakhstan's potential oil power to achieve some balance vis-a-vis various global players then the massive military exercises to be staged in September. American, Russian, British, Turkish, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Azeri, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Mongolian troops will work alongside Kazakh troops in their home territory. As host, Astana will have all exercises under its own military command. (INTERFAX, 21 Jun 00, FBIS-SOV-2000-0621, via World News Connection) The spectacle will be seen at a time when Nazarbaev has managed to deepen ties to NATO, Europe, China, and Central Asia, while remaining entwined with Russia.

In the Central Asian tradition, President Nazarbaev shows no sign of leaving the scene in the near future. With obfuscation and some wit, he has dodged the
question into what exactly lifetime powers will translate. One can expect to see
Nazarbaev through at least 2006, and if he runs for election again, possibly
through 2013. If the Caspian oil reserves are indeed as impressive as he says
they are, Kazakhstan could be vastly different by the time he leaves office. What
probably will not be different is Astana's international orientation -- firmly within
the bear's hug while playing off China, Central Asia, and NATO. Nursultan
Nazarbaev as a player may not be too much removed from an Islam Karimov or
a Saparmurat Niyazov. But Karimov and Niyazov would be justified if they were
jealous of Nazarbaev's current privileged position.

TURKMENISTAN
Standing tall at home, and abroad
Question: What Central Asian country was not present in any form at Shanghai
Five? Hint: That country also clamped down on such "serious" threats as foreign
nationals and Internet use within the last month. The answer is Turkmenistan, led
by the North Korean-like regime of Saparmurat Niyazov.

This month yielded some typical events in the tradition of the Turkmenbashi.
First, Chinese President Jiang Zemin continued Beijing's active engagement of
Central Asia (see The NIS Observed, 21 Jun 00) by discussing the possibility of
a 10-year gas project between Turkmenistan and China. Additionally,
Turkmenistan will export liquefied gas to China in 2001. But most interesting was
this joint declaration by Zemin and Niyazov: "No state is entitled to interfere in the
internal affairs of other sovereign states, no matter what the pretext, including the
argument that 'human rights have priority over sovereignty'." (INTERFAX
RUSSIAN NEWS, 6 Jul 00, via lexis-nexis; and SUMMARY OF WORLD
BROADCASTS, 8 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis)

Certainly Ashgabat is one of the best allies China can find to declare that national
sovereignty ranks above human rights. Crime in Turkmenistan has supposedly
diminished by 16% this year, thanks to the fact that 30,000 people have been
kindly released from jail and have been "rehabilitated." In the words of Niyazov, this policy is part of Turkmenistan's "humanization of society." (INTERFAX RUSSIAN NEWS, 5 Jul 00; via lexis-nexis) This is a hint that life under Niyazov remains difficult, now particularly for foreign nationals, who will soon be monitored by a brand new computer system per order of the Turkmenbashi. Also, Uzbek border guards will now be treated to five new marble or granite monuments to Niyazov on the Turkmen border, with spires over 30 feet high. (INTERFAX, 16 Jun 00, and INTERFAX PRESIDENTIAL BULLETIN, 16 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0616, via World News Connection)

This mix of a Soviet-style personality cult and the trampling of human rights has worried the European Union -- despite Ashgabat's ratification of a 1998 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) to bolster the prosecution of criminal cases, ban the search of houses, and declare 8 March to be a holiday for Turkmen women. The European Parliament has yet to ratify the PCA, and needs more information on Turkmenistan's dismal human rights situation. (INTERFAX, 15 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0615, via World News Connection)

Besides being an antithesis to the spread of global democracy, Turkmenistan also holds the privileged position of being Russia's most prickly Central Asian neighbor. Unlike Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, which have expressed great gratitude and praise for Moscow, Niyazov has said that Turkmen-Russian relations are just "average." Turkmenistan was noticeably absent from the Shanghai Five summit. And, during an impressive display in which the Turkmen Armed Forces were firing off rounds of their air defense system, Niyazov made an important proclamation: He will not attend the unofficial CIS summit next month. Furthermore, Turkmenistan will not become part of any CIS Free Trade Zone because it stands to lose nearly $500 million. (ITAR-TASS, 6 Jun 00, FBIS-SOV-2000-0620; and INTERFAX PRESIDENTIAL BULLETIN, 27 Jun 00; FBIS-SOV-2000-0627, via World News Connection)
In the near future, one may expect much of the same with regard to Turkmenistan's internal affairs. The cult of Niyazov intermingled with a wrenching human rights situation shows little sign of getting better. What will be interesting to follow is how the Shanghai Five (six counting Uzbekistan) react to their isolationist neighbor. With its supply of natural gas and its ability to influence the Afghan situation, Turkmenistan has a still developing role to play in the geopolitics of Central Asia.