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Cavan, Susan

Boston University Center for the Study of Conflict, Ideology, and Policy

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Boston University
Happy birthday, Mr. President
President Putin celebrated his 52nd birthday on October 7th with a gathering of friends, including one of Ukraine’s presidential candidates, and flattering press reports on his precocious childhood, featuring a "Hero of our Time" article (in Komsomolskaya pravda) that contained an interview with his former German language teacher. (1)

There was, of course, also evidence of political wit at play: Nezavisimaya gazeta noted the "coincidence" of the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg opening its 222nd season on Putin’s birthday with a production of Glinka’s opera, "A Life for the Tsar." While this tale, which is set in the time of the troubles in the 17th century and tells the story of a peasant who sacrifices his life to save the Tsar from Polish assassins, had been a traditional season opener before the Bolshevik revolution, the theatre management has chosen an intriguing time to revive the tradition. The opening night’s performance on October 7th was a sell-out. (2)

Personnel moves
With the "promotion" of Dmitri Kozak to the post of Southern Russia/Caucasus Tsar, one of the deputy heads of the government apparatus, Sergei Naryshkin, was appointed to replace Kozak as government Chief-of-Staff. (3)

Naryshkin worked alongside Vladimir Putin in the St. Petersburg Mayor’s office under Anatoli Sobchak, and also served as an aide to the economic advisor in the Soviet (and later Russian) embassy in Belgium. (4)
suggests a connection to foreign intelligence work, thus making Naryshkin yet another of the siloviki in Putin’s administration, as well as another Petersburger. Not surprisingly, Naryshkin has announced that "interaction" between the Government Secretariat and the security organs has been strengthened in response to President Putin’s decrees on anti-terrorism. (5)

One of Naryshkin’s earliest tasks was to supervise the creation of the new Ministry of Regional Development, which will combine social, economic, ethnic and security concerns under one ministerial umbrella. At least initially, the ministry will focus on southern Russia, the northern Caucasus and Chechnya. The new Ministry is short-staffed at the moment, with only 240 employees, but Naryshkin seemed assured that the personnel would be supplemented once it is created officially. (6)

Kozak also has had to relinquish his chairmanship of the Commission for Administrative Reform, which, given the level of criticism that this particular task has evoked and the strength of bureaucratic resistance to change, may not be too great a sacrifice. The new Chair of the Commission is Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zhukov, who will now be responsible for implementing the Kozak reforms. (7) May he have better luck than Kozak had with it.

The President’s Special Representative for Resolving the Ossetian-Ingush conflict, Aleksei Kulakovsky, who has had a lot to answer for since the Beslan tragedy, also has now been dismissed. Kulakovsky’s portfolio, theoretically, will be folded into the new remit for Caucasus Tsar Kozak. (8)

President Putin recently decreed minor changes to the composition of the Security Council. Leonid Drachevsky, former Presidential Envoy to Siberia [who will now be joining U.E.S. as Deputy CEO (9)] and Vladimir Yakovlev, former Presidential Envoy to the Southern District, have been replaced by former Chief of the General Staff, Anatoli Kvashnin, who takes over for Drachevsky in Siberia,
and Dmitri Kozak, who is, of course, the new Southern District Envoy. Yuri Baluyevsky, the new Chief of the General Staff also has been added to the Council. (10) These changes appear to be primarily pro forma: the decree concerns individuals added or removed from the Council ex officio, and does not seem to reflect their relative proximity to presidential decision-making. By decree, Putin established the membership of the Security Council to reflect the accoutrements of office rather than personal authority; however, it represents a dual system of Security Council membership, with the "permanent members" drawn primarily from the security services and the heads of the legislative branch, and the "members" reflecting the President’s Representatives, the Ministers of Finance, Justice and Emergencies and the Chief of a denuded General Staff. (11) Just which members are present at which meetings would be an interesting piece of information to obtain from the Kremlin.

**Surkov speaks for the administration**

Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration, Vladislav Surkov, chose an interview with Komsomolskaya pravda to expound on the rationale behind the President’s changes regarding the political system, and the general reaction to the Beslan tragedy.

In response to a question of "Why us?"—Why terrorist incidents like Beslan happen to Russia—Surkov answered by dividing "the people making decisions in America, Europe and the East" into two groups: those who "believe our democracy has a future"; and those whose "goal is the destruction of Russia and the establishment of numerous ineffectual quasi-states in its vast expanses." (12) The interviewer did not, apparently, follow up to determine whether Russia’s "vast expanses" included the territory of the former Soviet Union, thus suggesting that the Independent States around Russia’s borders might be endangered by Putin’s response to terrorism.
Surkov did couch the conflicts in the Caucasus and elsewhere along Russia's "southern borders" in historical terms, claiming that violence in the region with the goal of weakening Russia "was already practiced in the 19th and 20th centuries." (13) He also rebuked those who call for dialogue with Chechens over the question of independence, by highlighting how poorly governed Chechnya was in the late 1990s, when it gained de facto independence from Russia with the Khasavyurt agreement, blaming "Ichkerian gangs" for the lawlessness and violence of the region (and chastising human rights organizations for not speaking louder then).

When questioned on the purpose of Putin's internal political reforms, Surkov reminded his audience that the underlying goal (apparently of terrorists and critics alike) was the "destruction of the Russian state." Putin therefore was "obligated to implement the constitutional principle of the unity of the executive branch of government to the fullest extent." (14) Surkov identified an interesting result of this unity: "The competition between the centre and the territories for the evasion of responsibility for political errors and organizational shortcomings will cease." (15) Apparently, the way to subvert external threats of violence and silence foreign critics is to stop Russian bureaucrats from trying to blame each other for administrative mistakes.

Other reforms, such as the creation of a Public Chamber, which will by inhabited by "experts" rather than the public, was conceived as a channel, not for social oversight of a weighted executive arm, but rather, according to Surkov: "The new body would be expected to place the bureaucracy under civil oversight and guarantee public appraisal of major legislative bills and administrative ordinances." (16)

Surkov's tunnel vision with regard to the need for the "power vertical" to emasculate local, regional, and perhaps even some central administrators and apparatchiki, is likely to be the product of two experiences: the first involves the
repeated efforts at reform of the government, the Kozak reforms being the most recent, and the repeated failures — graft and corruption are still rife in the Russia administration (and Russia is by no means alone in this quandary). The second experience was described by Surkov himself. It is the hangover of the Soviet era, mixed with the turmoil of transition: "The moral crisis that came into being within the pseudo-collectivist communist regime is still raging. The moral majority is taking shape too slowly. Meanwhile, the... petty thieves and gossips, informers and bribe-takers, con artists and opportunists are as active and agile as they were in the old Soviet days." (17)

Surkov's remedy is "to learn the skills of real collectivism anew. (...) [T]o study not the works of Lenin but the experience of civil society." (18) Unfortunately, Russian civil society is being denied the sunlight of open media and choked back by an oppressive security service presence in government—throughout the executive, controlling the legislative and judicial branches and now moving through the regions. Coupled with the persecution of wealthy and powerful men like Mikhail Khodorkovsky, it sounds like the present administration might make Lenin proud.

Source Notes:

(1) Independent Newspapers (U.K.), 8 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Database.
(2) RIA-Novosti, 7 Oct 04 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Database.
(3) Agence France Presse, 13 Sep 04 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Database.
(4) Gazeta, #170; RusData Dialine, 15 Sep 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(5) Interfax, 1239 GMT, 2 Oct 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-1002 via World News Connection.
Russian Federation: Security Services

By Eric Beene

The case of the alleged would-be terrorist Aleksandr Pumane, who reportedly died of massive injuries in hospital after having been detained and questioned by authorities in Moscow on 18 September, has not been resolved. Original reports claimed that Moscow police and security service representatives apprehended Pumane, who had delivered a car rigged with explosives to Kutuzovskii Prospekt, along the presidential motor route. After a few hours of "questioning" in the early morning hours, 38-year old Pumane was delivered to Sklifosovsky hospital where he died of massive injuries. (1) Initially dismissed as a case of overzealous security personnel attempting to show that they could play hardball with terrorists, new developments make this case appear somewhat more sinister.
Mr. Pumane’s wife, Natalya, arrived at the morgue on 22 September to identify his corpse, but even after half an hour, she could not verify the body was his. In fact, she claims to doubt that it is his corpse. Two former co-workers who also attempted to identify the body at the morgue, more forcefully denied that it was Pumane’s, forcing coroners to refer to dental records. The body in the morgue, evidently, is smaller in stature and does not appear to have the same scars that Pumane was known to have. (2)

Moreover, investigations have shed new light on Mr. Pumane’s past and his actions leading up to his detention and death. Pumane was a retired Russian naval officer who, some months earlier, had shown his wife an Interpol badge and identification, which he claimed constituted his credentials as a technical specialist with that agency. The Russian Interpol bureau refused to confirm his status, and his wife did not find the ID and badge among his belongings at the morgue. (3)

New details of the events on the night of his detention have been reported. Pumane allegedly was detained driving a Lada rigged with land mines and TNT set to be detonated with a remote control device. He was detained not by counter-terrorism personnel, but by police officers patrolling the area in an effort to crack down on a recent spate of car thefts. Pumane allegedly told police, during his interrogation, where to find a second car also rigged with explosives. According to police, Pumane, a St. Petersburg resident visiting the area to see a friend, had been offered $1,000 by a stranger to park the two cars at designated locations. (4) Following Pumane’s arrest, reports described a parade of up to 150 interrogators, including representatives from the Interior Ministry (MVD), the Federal Security Service (FSB), and the Main Administration for Combating Organized Crime, all eager to question Mr. Pumane. Consequently, while local police began the interrogation, there were periods of time during which outside agencies led the questioning. (5)
The FSB and MVD both have vehemently denied involvement in the beating, each blaming the other instead. In what appears to be an effort to protect his own position, Vladimir Pronin, chief of the Moscow Police, has either discharged or reprimanded ten members of the Moscow police force. Thus far only Major Vyacheslav Dushenko, a discharged supervisor with the Moscow police force’s organized crime division has been charged with a crime, albeit in absentia—he has not been seen recently. As members of the FSB and MVD likely were schooled in the value of the information a suspect such as Putame might provide, it seems unlikely that professionals of these organizations would commit such a crime. (6)

Still, enough inconsistencies have been reported, largely by Kommersant, to fuel heated conspiracy theories. Some insist Pumane was put into a witness protection program, with some homeless vagrant beaten and left at the morgue in his stead; others wonder if it was an interrupted attempt by security services to stage a pseudo-terrorist event, to be stopped just in time for the security services to claim victory and attempt to repair their reputation so tarnished by the Beslan siege. (7) The latter theory mirrors speculation concerning the events linked to the discovery, almost five years ago, of what was originally reported as three sacks of highly explosive hexogen in the basement of a Ryazan apartment building. In the Ryazan case, Aleksei Kartofelnikov, a resident of the apartment, reported to the police suspicious activity by individuals loading sacks into the basement. Police evacuated the building and carted the sacks away. The FSB later explained that the sacks contained only sugar and were planted there "to test local vigilance." Five years later, residents still are not sure whether the FSB account is correct, if the sacks actually contained hexogen and locals discovered what the security services could not, or even if government agents themselves had planted the explosives in an attempt to taint the Chechen cause, but had their clandestine plan discovered before it could come to fruition. (8)
What is clear is that the Russian mechanism for dealing with suspected terrorists and their accomplices is far from standardized or proportionate. The presence of so many interested parties indicates no clear line of responsibility in such cases. Pumane’s death indicates that there were persons involved in this process, either by design or serendipity, who appear to be unschooled in the proper techniques of interrogation. As discussed previously, the fact that local police apprehended a would-be terrorist is a clear success; his death is a setback, in practical terms and in terms of the state’s public image.

However, perhaps help is on the way. On 1 October, the Russian actor Aristarkh Livanov announced that he would lead a new non-governmental movement, Russia-Antiterror. This effort will have as its goal the "organization of preventative measures aimed at averting acts of terror, public monitoring of places of mass attendance, the holding of educational sessions and informing the authorities of violations discovered in the activities of specific organizations." The movement will rely on observations and reports of suspicious activities by members and others to the security services in an attempt to subvert terrorist actions before another Beslan siege can take place. Anatoli Bozhkov, a member of the Expert Council of Russia’s "Human Rights Ombudsman," who is another leader of Russia-Antiterror, denied that the movement was looking for informants, but media reports of the announcement offered skepticism concerning both the legitimacy of the movement and its likely effect. It appears that the movement’s call to action will result in an upswing of "nuisance reports," which may become painful reminders of Soviet past. (9)

Livanov was to travel to Rostov-na-Donu, a region noted for its Cossack traditions, for the inauguration of a new branch of the movement. Perhaps the leadership saw some benefit from linking Russia-Antiterror with the image of Don Cossacks, but violence and vigilantism are also a part of the heritage. (10) Although the aims of this movement may contain well-intentioned appeals for public caution and observation of suspicious acts, given the history of such
"popular" movements in the Soviet Union, many in Russia doubt whether chaste motives are at play. It remains to be seen, however, whether such a movement, if indeed it does take hold in Russia, will have any impact on Russian society.

Source Notes:

(2) "Pumane Was Interpol ‘Technician’," Kommersant, 28 Sep 04.
(3) Ibid.
(4) "Car Tied to Bomb Plot Linked to Chechen," by Carl Schreck, St. Petersburg Times, 21 Sep 04 via ISI Emerging Markets database.
(5) "MVD, FSB Reportedly Blaming Each Other for Terrorist Suspect’s Death," Izvestiya, 21 Sep 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0921 via World News Connection.
(7) "Keystone Kops Take on Terrorism," by Yulia Latynina, Moscow Times, 29 Sep 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
"Democracy is never perfect but always evolving towards perfection; democracy is not a mere set of laws and institutions but a way of thinking and living...; democracy is not immutable but in evolution." (1)

Keeping up with PACE
The Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe (PACE), considered the oldest international parliamentary assembly (founded in 1949), recently completed its autumn session in Strasbourg, which ran from 4-8 October. As one of PACE’s forty-six member states, Russia played an important role in this meeting, since the Council focused on issues of terrorism, human rights and democracy. Russia’s tenuous relationship with Georgia was also a relevant topic of discussion. These issues were considered in the context of President Putin’s recent initiatives following the Beslan massacre, and both direct and indirect challenges were made for Russia to fulfill the conditions of its membership to PACE which include pluralistic democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Will Russia keep up with PACE in these areas?

PACE and Terrorism
At the 6 October session, PACE called for a "common legal area" for action against terrorism in Europe, including a single definition of terrorism in the laws of the Council of Europe’s member states. (2) The resolution and recommendation that were adopted at the end of the session were based on a report by Russia’s Konstantin Kosachev, which, in summary, stated that the states of Europe have not been sufficiently alert to the grave dangers of terrorism, nor have they taken effective action to counter them. The report stressed that fighting terrorism must always be compatible with human rights and fundamental freedoms and envisaged that measures would be taken by PACE, both at national and international levels, to strengthen the common response to the challenge of terrorism.
Mr. Kosachev should be pleased with the outcome of his report, since the resolution and recommendations adopted contained numerous proposals that would bring members together in the fight against terrorism. The Assembly stated that "no cause can justify terrorism" and that "every act of terrorism regardless of the reasons given, aims pursued…is a challenge to democracy and must be considered a crime against humanity….There are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ terrorists." (3) PACE, however, reaffirmed its position of principle that the fight against terrorism must never be incongruous with the fundamental freedoms and human rights which it has the task of protecting: "wherever those rights are violated this weakens the international coalition in the fight against terrorism, and drives new supporters into the hands of the terrorists." (4) Also addressed were the supposedly deep-rooted causes of terrorism — poverty, exclusion, inequality, despair, impunity, disregard for rights of national minorities — which were assumed to provide fertile soil for terrorism.

In spite of the mixed pleasure Mr. Kosachev may have felt regarding his report’s outcome, does President Putin have a share in it? He should be pleased that the Assembly justified no cause for terrorism, not even Chechen separatism, and for the efforts PACE extended to strengthen a European coalition on terror. But what about those enumerated deep-rooted causes of terrorism? Is Putin prepared to embrace a fight against those, as well? Hate crimes against foreigners, including many Caucasians, have increased since Beslan, with innocent people being attacked in their homes, on the Metro and in their businesses; sadly, the Moscow police has described some of the actions only as "hooliganism." (5) Poverty, frustration and despair continue to dominate Chechnya and increasingly its surrounding regions — what does Putin plan to do to combat these issues? Little emphasis has been given to these core matters; instead the heavy-handed approach of response to terror prevails.

**PACE, Human Rights and Democracy**
On 7 October, PACE deliberated extensively on the situation in Chechnya, reaffirming its commitment to advance human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the Republic, as an integral part of the Russian Federation, deploring the grave conditions in which the Chechens have to live. The gross violence which persists in Chechnya and continues to be a significant formative factor for a whole generation of Chechens, was condemned and the Assembly called for concerted action by local, regional and federal Chechen authorities to help alleviate the situation. (6) Criminal acts constituting serious human rights violations, committed by all sides of the conflict were condemned as well. PACE suggested negotiations to help resolve the conflict with all those guilty of crimes receiving just punishment through appropriate judicial procedures. (7) The Assembly recognized that the conflict within the North Caucasus was spreading like an epidemic, threatening the rule of law throughout the Russian Federation (8) and must be stopped in order to prevent further casualties, destruction of property, forced disappearances, hostage-taking and continued displacement of persons from their homes. PACE urged the Russian Duma, as a matter of urgency to set up a parliamentary committee of inquiry to investigate alleged abuses by different branches of the executive and to address the apparent malfunctioning of the military prosecutor's office in charge of the region. (9) However, PACE welcomed the trend of establishing regional ombudsmen in the Russian Federation, specifically for the Chechen Republic. Unfortunately, PACE's recommendations could not specify solutions, thus generating, instead, more questions, such as with whom should Russia negotiate? What judicial procedures were in place to punish "all sides" in the Chechen conflict? And what actions might PACE take to enforce its proposals.

During the 8 October session, PACE discussed new concepts to evaluate the state of democratic development, realizing that such development is insufficient in certain member states. PACE believes that democracy today is in a crisis, reflected low turn out at elections, lack of interest/participation in public life and decreasing respect for and confidence in political parties and politicians. (10)
Democratic reform and development to counter the democratic deficit must be based on a full integration of democratic norms and practices into the administrative, political and judicial systems, including normative standards as well as their implementation at an operational level. (11) PACE desires to monitor and assist struggling democracies (like Russia) and has constituted parameters for evaluation of democracy within a given country. Transparency of governmental action and administration, accountability of decision-making bodies towards the public, openness of political decision-making, development of political pluralism and the way in which parties are financed and function, development of civic multiculturalism and equality of citizens, the independence of media from government structures and the effectiveness of anti-discrimination rules are just some of the evaluative parameters. (12) It is obvious, given Putin’s recent political "reforms," crackdown on the media and seeming blindness to Russia’s internal ethnic conflicts, that Russia needs to make a sharp reversal in these areas if it is going to be judged on par with the level of democracy PACE hopes to promote within its member states. Democracy’s nature may be one of evolution but it will take real effort to ensure Russian democracy rather than witness its collapse under the weight of Putin’s increasingly "vertical" government.

**PACE and Georgia**

On 7 October PACE held an emergency debate regarding increasingly heated Georgian-Russian relations. Konstantin Kosachev, the Russian delegation head, stated that PACE is not the rostrum for Georgia to settle a score with Russia. He came down on Georgian delegates for their allegedly harsh tone and said, "Tbilisi has problems with Abkhazia and South Ossetia [separatist regions within Georgia]. It ought to settle those problems at home, rather than on the international scene." (13) Nino Burjanadze of Georgia’s parliament accused Russia of using double standards concerning Chechen and Abkhaz (as well as South Ossetian) separatists.
Looking ahead

What lies ahead for Russia at this point, specifically concerning the issues raised and discussed during this recent PACE session, depends on Putin’s response. Many of Putin’s initiatives were challenged by PACE and concern for the fate of democracy in the Russian Federation was evident. Just how this concern translates into action, either by motivating Putin, or, if need be, sanctioning him, may provide evidence of the effectiveness of PACE.

Source Notes:

(1) Resolution 1407 of Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe (PACE), "New Concepts to Evaluate the State of Democratic Development," 8 Oct 04; (assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta04/ERES1407.html).
(2) Doc. 10312 of PACE, "Challenge of Terrorism in Council of Europe States"; 5 Oct 04; (assembly.coe.int).
(3) Ibid.
(4) "PACE Calls for ‘Common Legal Area’ for Action Against Terrorism in Europe"; 6 Oct 04; [(assembly.coe.int (CPID 1573)].
(6) Resolution 1402 of PACE, "The Political Situation in the Chechen Republic"; 7 Oct 04 (assembly.coe.int).
(7) Resolution 1403 of PACE, "The Human Rights Situation in the Chechen Republic"; 7 Oct 04; (assembly.coe.int).
(8) Ibid.
(9) Ibid.
(10) Resolution 1407 of PACE, ibid.
(11) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.
(13) RIA Novosti, "Georgia Uses PACE to Settle Score With Russia?"; 7 Oct 04 via (www.en.rian.ru/rian.index.html).
Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Robyn Angley

POLITICS AND SOCIETY
New media limitations
Curtailment and control of the media continues to be a theme in Russia, from the banning of newspaper stands in metro stations (1) to the issuing of eighteen media warnings to nationwide news services in the last three months. (2) Although the Duma recently voted down a bill restricting media coverage of special operations during hostage events, (3) media freedom does not appear to have a promising future.

The decision to clear Moscow metro stations of newspaper and other vendors is part of the government’s "anti-terrorism" precautions. A side effect of the decision is the potential for one media company or a coalition of such companies to purchase the rights to metro access. This "anti-terrorism" measure could result in the creation of a monopoly for one company (or the state?). (4)

The eighteen warnings issued by the Russian Federal Service for the Enforcement of Media Legislation and the Protection of Cultural Heritage have the potential to have a serious impact on the media. "…we can raise the issue of recalling their licenses after a second similar warning is issued," said Leonid Nadirov, First Deputy Minister of Culture and Mass Media. (5)

A new media bill is being examined by the legislature. The bill builds on four pillars: freedom of media and prohibition of censorship, the founding of newspapers and TV channels, media licensing and registration, and the rights and duties of journalists. Some of the points in contention involve the type of
censorship being prohibited, whether the Internet qualifies as a form of media (thereby falling under the same constraints), and the inclusion of newspaper owners in the legislation. (6)

Government news

The operational details of Putin’s "reforms," initiated as a response to the events at Beslan, continue to emerge. The most recent aspects involve the judiciary and the implications of the elimination of the direct election of governors. Other items include charging under-performing political parties for media election services as well as a new piece of legislation affecting non-profit organizations.

The judicial branch constitutes the latest target of Putin’s reforms. The Supreme Qualification Collegium is a 29 member body that appoints judges to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Arbitration Court. Under current law, the Collegium is the only body with authority to dismiss judges. The Federation Council bill proposes reducing the number of judges in the Collegium to 21, with ten public representatives appointed by the Federation Council, ten judges nominated by the President and confirmed by the Federation Council, and one person serving as the President’s representative. Collegium judges can be fired by the President with the consent of the Collegium under the new bill; authority to fire public representatives would rest with the (now emasculated) Federation Council. (7)

If the bill passes, it will consolidate additional power in the executive branch. The legislature is already in the process of being emasculated; bringing the judicial branch under executive appointment will only diminish further dwindling remainder of intra-governmental checks and balances.

The details of Putin’s "strengthening of the power vertical" in the executive branch became somewhat clearer recently. In addition to the authority to nominate governors for the regions, Putin will have the power to dissolve regional
legislatures that fail to confirm his nominees. (8) That limits further any regional input into the appointment process.

Fourteen political blocs and parties are in debt to the government because of election media services, and it is possible that some of them will be disbanded. The parties that did not pass the requisite 2% threshold in the State Duma election now owe the government for television and radio air time to run campaign materials. (9) Apparently, if lack of popular support fails to dissolve a political party, the Russian government will speed the process.

A bill involving the taxation of non-profit organizations has the potential to affect non-profit funding. Non-profits, in order to make gifts, must be on a special government list. If they are not, the recipient will be taxed 25% of the gift. The law also requires non-profits to have a "guarantee letter" from the federal or local government. (10) This offers considerable opportunities for official corruption. The necessity of procuring a letter from the government also could prohibit non-profits from taking positions that oppose or challenge the government for fear of losing their ability to function effectively. The bill is open for amendments until October 15; it is slated to go into effect a month later.

**The rally phenomena**

There have been several rallies and demonstrations in the last month or so. If one accepts rallies as a form of political expression, it is interesting to review the subjects of the various demonstrations. One protest unsuccessfully demanded the resignation of the president of North Ossetia; (11) a second objected to the reduction of public funding for university education; (12) a third was staged by the government as an "anti-terrorism" rally following Beslan (13) and an October 3 march commemorated the events of 1993 during the siege of the White House by President Yeltsin. (14) Over the course of the same month, President Putin advocated a number of changes that will affect significantly the distribution of
power within the Russian Federation (or, at any rate, formalize his ongoing process of power consolidation).

In pursuing these changes, Putin has solicited the help of the media and the church, in addition to creating a Public Chamber which may or may not prove to be a significant social advisory body. Putin’s overtures to the church were somewhat backhanded. His speech to religious leaders solicited their support in the national cause of anti-terrorism. In a question and answer session, one of the bishops complained about illegal Chinese immigration. Putin serenely suggested that the bishop proselytize the immigrants, suggesting that it would be "a great area of pastoral work." (15)

What is surprising is the lack of serious political outcry over Putin’s reforms, even though some polls suggest that Russians do not favor them. (16) There have been no riots or protests over the new laws. Instead, the current demonstrations concern economic or security issues, and the reliving of glory days. This would suggest that, although Russians may object to the changes, they are more concerned about economic and security matters. Of course, it may also reflect an acceptance of Putin’s consolidation of control and/or apathy because of the public’s inability to reverse these trends. The media have questioned the reforms, but primarily by quoting academics and western governments. (Indeed, it seems almost as though Putin spends more time defending his reforms vis-à-vis the west than his own constituency.) There appears to be little chance that Russians will protest when the measures (and the subsequent curtailment of democratic processes) are implemented.

Aleksandr Veshnyakov, head of the Central Electoral Commission, explains: "If we put the question frankly — do we wish to remain an integrated state capable of protecting civil rights and liberties and ensuring their security? — then, most likely, citizens will agree with the reforms." (17) As long as the population sees
the reforms as helping maintain a more stable, secure society, it is not likely to resist.

Source Notes:

(1) "Papers Vanish in Metro Anti-Terror Drive," Moscow Times, 4 Oct 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(2) "18 warnings issued to Russian media," Interfax, 6 Oct 04 via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL), #8397, 6 Oct 04.
(3) "Russian Duma Committee Turns Down Bill Restricting Media During Hostage Crises," Itar-Tass, 23 Sep 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0923 via World News Connection.
(5) "18 warnings issued to Russian media," Interfax, 6 Oct 04 via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL), #8397, 6 Oct 04.
(6) "Self-censorship: Citizens are expected to learn to restrict their freedom of speech," Novye Izvestia, 7 Oct 04 via JRL #8399, 7 Oct 04.
(8) "Putin equalized governors with salespeople and forwarders," Izvestia, 30 Sep 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(10) "Open season for hunting ‘captain grant,’” Izvestia, 7 Oct 04 via JRL #8399, 7 Oct 04.
(11) "Ossetia Ministers Fired After Angry Protest," Moscow Times, 9 Sep 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
Russian Federation: Armed Forces
By Jeff Kubiak and Kyle Colton

INTERNAL
Another obstacle removed
On 29 September, Army General Nikolai Kormiltsev tendered his resignation as Commander in Chief of Russia’s Ground Forces. Kormiltsev released the reins of Russia’s largest military service and entered a military hospital for examination.

(1) Although no specific reasons were cited for Kormilstev’s departure, several recent developments in the Ministry of Defense, and not medical reasons, are likely to have driven him from his post. The recent realignment within the Defense Ministry stripped the deputy minister title from the Commander of the Ground Forces, kicking that position one level further down the food chain, and reducing access to the defense minister and to the president. Additionally, it is speculated that Kormiltsev had disagreements with the newly appointed Chief of the General Staff, General Baluyevsky. Appointed in 2001 to reform the Ground Troops, Kormiltsev resisted certain General Staff’s recommendations (including
organizing the forces into brigades rather than divisions), but may still have been seen as a Kvashnin ally.

A report in Nezavisimaya gazeta listed three possible candidates to fill the now vacant Ground Forces Commander position: Colonel General Morozov, Ground Forces Chief of General Staff and acting-Commander of the Ground Forces; Army General Valentin Bobryshev, commander of the Leningrad Military District; and Colonel General Vladimir Boldyrev, commander of the Volga-Urals Military District. (3) Morozov is not a "headline grabber" and as ground forces chief of the General Staff, he is intimately familiar with the work that needs to be accomplished immediately within the ground forces. Bobrysev seems to have some political clout and has been mentioned for promotion numerous times over the past several years, but is one year away from mandatory retirement and it is not likely he’ll leave his post in St Petersburg that he has held comfortably for more than 4 years. (4) Boldyrev had previously been seen as someone who could lead reform when he was appointed Commander of the North Caucasus Military District. He was on an upward career path until July 2004 when he was reassigned to Command the Volga-Urals Military District. This was widely interpreted as a demotion for his role in not preventing the bloody surprise attack by Chechen rebels into Ingushetia earlier this year. (5) A fourth candidate recently identified by Interfax-AVN is Col-General Aleksei Maslov, currently the Chief of Staff of the North Caucasus Military District. Maslov was moved to his current position in 2003, shortly after the upwardly-mobile Boldyrev was moved to his post as commander of the that district. Having overseen and managed the transition to an all-professional force in Chechnya, Maslov may have the experience required to complete the transition throughout the ground forces. (6)

Meeting the threat?
No national strategy yet exists that is sufficient to guide the comprehensive restructuring of the Russian armed forces to put them more in line with the current threat environment. Nonetheless, Putin, Ivanov and now Baluyevsky are
driving specific efforts to address some of the gaps between current threats and current capability by beefing up Ministry of Defense forces in the Caucasus. Putin started talking in July of 2004 about Defense Ministry troops reinforcing Interior Ministry forces in anti-terrorism efforts. General Baluyevsky recently repeated this concept in testimony to the Federation Council. On a number of occasions, Ivanov has mentioned the requirement to develop two professional mountainous brigades and have them stationed in the Caucasus. Although the details are sketchy, there is evidence that there has been action to back up these pronouncements. The Finance Ministry has allocated an additional 5 billion rubles to be spent in the Caucasus before the end of the year on "a number of orders to provide special equipment for the interior and defense ministries to fight terrorism," according to the head of the Economic Development Ministry, German Gref. (7) The 2005 budget, currently being discussed by the Duma, includes more than 6 billion rubles for the construction of two new military bases in the Caucasus. (8) Ivanov is still intent on making good on the promise that no conscripted servicemen will serve in Chechnya after 1 January 2005. Conversion of all power-wielding structures to a professional "contract" force is scheduled to be completed by then. (9) But the Russian military has had to expend considerable resources to make this political imperative a reality. The contract unit in Chechnya, the 42d Motorized Division, is still having retention problems despite its personnel getting paid nearly three times the amount offered recruits in other districts. (10)

Additionally, the Interfax-AVN website cited statements by Aleksandr Koval, an assistant to the 58th Army commander, claiming that Russian army troops will conduct a joint exercise with Border Troops in a mountainous region in Ingushetia. According to Koval, this is the first such joint exercise between army units and the border troops. The reported objective of the exercise is to refine joint combat operations and multi-level defense against large enemy forces in mountainous terrain. The threat of "large enemy forces" invading from the south is questionable, but the location and force composition of this exercise is
probably more significant than its stated aim. The exercise is taking place in the mountains of Ingushetia very near the border with Georgia and Chechnya with a force made up of tanks, armored personnel carriers, and infantry. (11) It is very likely that Russia is also using this exercise to send a message to its Georgian neighbors. The sum total of the funding, manning, and training efforts in the Caucasus involving Defense Ministry troops seems to indicate that Putin and his administration expect the Defense Ministry to play an increasing role in Russia’s war on terrorism inside, as well as potentially outside, of its national borders.

**Hollow force**

Despite considerable efforts to build military capability in the Caucasus to meet security needs there, failure to overhaul the Russian military force structure could result in a complete collapse of the armed forces. Sergei Ivanov sounded an alarm during television remarks on 1 October, but instead of blaming the archaic Cold War force structure, he blamed this crisis on the inability of the military to call up enough conscripts to fill its ranks. Ivanov claimed that the military stood on the verge of collapse because an unprecedented number of persons were avoiding the draft due to the poor health of Russian youths, an extraordinary number of deferment categories, and corruption. (12) Only 9.5% of draft-eligible youths will be called up this fall (compared with 30% just 10 years ago), not because that’s all that is needed, but because that is all that is available. According to Vasili Smirnov, chief of the Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate (GOMU) of the general staff, "We have no military draft reserve and we are raking everyone in, leaving nothing behind." (13) In fact, the call up of 176,400 conscripts will leave a shortfall of more than 30,000 in the ranks of Russian military units, leaving many units manned below the 80% level. (14)

The poor quality of the conscripted force presents additional problems. According to a report in Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 54% of the young soldiers fit for the draft are not fit for service in classified units, to include airborne troops, the navy, and missile troops, due to medical deficiencies. One third of the recruits have no
secondary education, 40% were "parasites" before joining the army, and 3% had criminal records. (15) This leaves most conscripts being attended to by specialists instead of commanders and instructors.

In an effort to increase the pool from which to choose its conscripts, Ivanov and the Russian army have taken steps to ease the public’s fear of service in the armed forces, hoping to reduce the number of young men running away from military service. In addition to continuing to advertise that no conscripts will serve in Chechnya starting in January of 2005, the Russian army has developed the procedures to clothe and feed new recruits at the assembly points rather than their units of final destination. This seemingly minor change was designed to relieve public fears resulting from a widely publicized case of recruits freezing to death. (16) Also, the medical service chief, Major General Valeri Kulikov is encouraging young folks not to flee the draft, but rather opt for a shot at medical deferment in place of life as a fugitive. According to Kulikov, nearly half of those dodging the draft wouldn’t be draft eligible due to medical problems and personality disorders. (17)

Obviously frustrated by the mismatch between the troops needed to fill the ranks of the Russian army and the conscripts available, Ivanov is prepping the battlefield for a future confrontation regarding the politically unpopular prospect of doing away with various categories of deferments. Ivanov noted that by 2008, contract servicemen are to number 150,000 and compulsory service will be reduced from two years to one year. "But then one also has to think about cutting down on exemptions, regarding which we are probably world champions. One wishes that the new soldiers are healthy and clever." (18) Apparently Ivanov thinks that political battle is better joined than is the battle to reduce and restructure an overly burdensome military force structure.

Source Notes:
(1) "Baluyevsky’s First Victim; Ground Force Left Without Commander I Chief," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 30 Sep 2004; FBIS-SOV-2004-0930 via World News Connection.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.


Russian troops and Tajik border guards
Russia and Tajikistan appear to be nearing an agreement over the future of Tajikistan's border protection. The deputy commander of Russia's border troops, Lieutenant General Aleksandr Manilov, concluded a trip to Dushanbe on 4 October where he finalized the negotiations over the transfer of border security from Russian to Tajik troops.

In April of this year, Tajik President Rakhmonov announced that Tajikistan would take over control of its own borders and would ask Russian border troops to leave the country. (1) His announcement initially was met with concern in the West due to perceived Tajik security weakness and on-going narcotics smuggling via Tajikistan. In June, President Putin convinced President Rakhmonov to put the power transfer on indefinite hold, pending a complete review and renegotiations.

With the process back on track, the Russian and Tajik delegations have concluded a draft agreement on the details of the hand over of border sections.
The proposed agreement stipulates that Russia's border troops will retain an operational/liaison group in Tajikistan, train Tajik border troop officers, and provide Tajik border troops with modern Russian equipment.

Approximately 11,500 Russian Border Troops, mostly ethnic Tajiks, cover Tajik borders. (2) Russian border troops were phased out from Kyrgyzstan in 1999. In the same year, Russian military advisors left Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty. With the apparently successful elections in Afghanistan and ongoing U.S.-led counterterrorism operations in the region, Tajikistan wants to display to its regional competitors and neighbors that it too can defend its own borders.

While President Rakhmonov seems motivated by national pride and regional competition, President Putin is likely more interested in formalizing a basing agreement with Tajikistan for the 201st Motorized Rifle division. That division has lacked legal status since its "CIS Peacekeeping Mission" was terminated in 1999. During previous negotiations, Tajikistan wanted a significant say regarding the 201st Division's base operations, personnel movements, and its use in various contingencies. It also wanted more significant financial compensation for Russian military use of Tajikistan's land and infrastructure. Rakhmonov's desire for control of his own borders seems to have given Putin a very large bargaining chip and reinvigorated discussions.

**Tajik border concerns**

"I have been serving in the Russian border guards for over 20 years. I do not have any other profession and if the Russian Forces really do leave Badakhshan, my seven children and I will lose our means of subsistence," Ensign Nazar Mavlonazarov, who lives on the Tajik-Afghan border and works with Russian forces stationed along frontier, stated. (3)
Mavlonazarov added "As an experience border guard, I can say with certainty that the Tajik forces do not yet have the necessary experience nor the equipment to guarantee the security of this border."(4)

The plans to withdraw Russian troops from the Pamir section of Tajikistan's frontier with Afghanistan have caused significant concern amongst local residents, many of whom have staged protests in recent weeks to highlight their worries. Large segments of the population living in southeastern Tajikistan rely on jobs created by the presence of Russian troops for their economic survival. Many locals worry that plans for a withdrawal could result in an influx of drugs and other criminal activity from Afghanistan.

Russian-trained Tajik soldiers, who serve in the Border Guard, receive approximately 300 dollars per month. Tajik funded border guards make between 10 to 40 dollars per month. Based on evidence from the Beslan tragedy where terrorists bribed their way through several checkpoints, many locals are concerned that corruption will become wide-spread and allow drugs to flow easily through Tajikistan. Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov downplays these concerns and instead is determined to have Tajiks control the border by the end of this year. "The border is a symbol of the state's independence, it is unheard of for the border of one nation to be protected by border guards from another," he said earlier this year. (5)

**International border concerns**

The United Nations is also concerned about the protection of the Tajik-Afghan border in the event that Russian border guards are pulled out of the area. The U.N. Secretary General's Envoy to Tajikistan, Vladimir Sotirov, told journalists on 20 September, that Tajikistan's national border guard structures will have to spend "considerable funds to attain the level of equipment of Russian border troops." (6) Sotirov believes the international community's assistance to Tajikistan in this matter is of extreme importance. "So this assistance is being
already given and will be continued," he pointed out. "We are all interested in the lessening of the narcotic drug traffic through the Tajikistani-Afghan border to European countries." (7) According to the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) press service, border guards have confiscated over 2.6 tons of narcotics on the Tajik-Afghan border, two-thirds of which consists of heroin, since the beginning of the year. (8)

On 21 September, Sotirov appeared to refine his position. "The decision made by the Tajikistani authorities to strengthen the country's independence through agreements with Russia on the gradual withdrawal of Russian border guards from the Tajik-Afghan border seems right to me," he stated in Dushanbe on Tuesday. (9) This measure "will not leave Tajikistan without the support it needs to ensure security on its southern borders as the global community is keeping an eye on this process. The international community is ready to provide and is providing Tajikistan with assistance," he said. (10)

Russia military and border security
Chief of the General Staff Colonel General Yuri Baluyevsky signed a directive outlining required security measures for Russian military units and civilian facilities located on the territory of CIS states. (11) Since the Beslan tragedy, the Russian Armed Forces have started already to upgrade the antiterrorist security system throughout the former Soviet republics. The use of Russian law enforcement organizations for military unit protection is not allowed in Tajikistan and the 201st division commanders can only count on collaboration with local security agencies. This type of collaboration often does not succeed, because national law enforcement systems in most CIS countries are still being established and hence are not always effective. The Russian Ministry of Defense noted that the creation of a reliable security system in Tajikistan in the near term was unlikely. (12) Local law enforcement agencies in Tajikistan have limited authority and security for the facilities of the 201st Motorized Infantry Division is left to the military leaders. The current garrisons of the 201st are spread out. In
Dushanbe, the buildings housing the officers' families are not even located on the divisional bases.

The Russian Federation's military department admits it is extremely difficult to protect facilities based in the Central Asian states, where extremist religious organizations such as Hizb al-Tahrir, the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, and others are stepping up their activities. (13) If the 201st division could be located at a centralized base, then the new force protection requirements would be much easier to achieve.

**Conclusion**

Since September 11, 2001, the influence of the United States has increased in Central Asia, causing a consequent decline in Russian stature. In the last week, Kyrgyzstan signed military cooperation agreements with the U.S. and France. (14) President Putin may have reached the point where he feels it necessary to counterbalance American influence. While weakening the border security does not seem to be in Russia's interest, the Kremlin has used Tajik national pride on the border issue to negotiate a favorable agreement. The final status of the 201st division likely will resolved in Moscow's favor. It probably will include new basing rights that allow the military to consolidate its position and ease the force protection burden. The military arrangement might be semi-permanent and ensure that the Russian military has a primary role in Central Asia for the foreseeable future. Finally, the international community, fearing the Tajik-Afghan border being exclusively in Tajik hands, likely will pay a significant amount of the future security costs. Russia seems to have reinforced its Central Asia position at almost no cost to itself.

**Source Notes:**

(1) Interfax, Moscow, 9 Jun 04 via Jamestown Eurasia daily monitor, 14 Jun 04.
(2) (www.globalsecurity.org).
NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES: WESTERN REGION

By Elena Selyuk

UKRAINE

Disruption of the presidential elections in Ukraine

There is more and more talk in Ukraine about the possibility of the Ukrainian presidential elections being disrupted. There is rampant speculation as to the specifics of the various plots, but the goal of these "conspirators" seems to be uniform — to prevent the opposition from coming to power.
Version one comes directly from Viktor Yushchenko, who called the disruption of the presidential elections in Ukraine a "working scenario" of the current Ukrainian authorities. (1) This scenario consists of printing fake ballots and distributing them in the regions; mass firing of directors of state printing houses and replacing them with individuals willing to cooperate with the current government; preventing Ukrainian expatriates from voting at 114 voting stations, which have been set up outside of Ukraine’s borders; controlling the voting situation in prisons and closed medical facilities, as well as, of course, continuing the campaign of mass intimidation of state workers (militia, doctors, teachers). If all else fails, and the opposition has a clear lead, then stage two of the working scenario comes into play, where numerous violations are declared to have taken place in different regions, thus negating the election results based on massive fraud. (2)

Yushchenko called on Ukrainian citizens to prevent possible election disruptions: "You are capable of the small feat of being vigilant from morning till night and of being prepared to defend your right to elect those you want." (3)

An alternate version of the election fraud theories adds the element of Russian involvement in the plot to disrupt the elections. Russian political analyst Stanislav Belkovsky expressed an opinion that the idea to cancel the Ukrainian elections was conceived by Viktor Medvedchuk, who is supported strongly by Moscow. (4) Among the reasons for Putin not wanting Yushchenko to be the next president are, obviously, the concern that Ukraine would "drift away" from the Russian sphere of influence. Moscow might full well support the idea of disrupting the elections, which would prolong the regime of the current authorities, but it doesn't seem to have the capability on its own to have any noticeable influence on the outcome of the elections. Russia has no real infrastructure that could help it protect its interests in Ukraine, says Aleksandr Kochetkov, the president of the National Strategy Institute in Moscow. There is no noticeable pro-Russian movement in Ukraine, and no strong pro-Russian political party. There are
neither political lobbyists present in the country, nor large mass media organization with pro-Russian orientation, and there are no means of supporting such organizations financially. In fact, Russia does not even have a clear political strategy towards Ukraine. Political affairs are often settled as a result of direct collaboration of the two presidents — Putin and Kuchma. (5)

Finally, the third version of conspiracy theory holds that Leonid Kuchma is still not out of the picture. While he is not a registered candidate for the presidential race, should the election be disrupted and cancelled, he, as Prime Minister, is the person who retains power. And the longer he holds on to power, the more time he has to conduct political reform, which, could render presidential elections and the new president himself ceremonial attributes of the new and improved parliamentary democracy.

BELARUS
Belarus Democracy Act
The upcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus, as well as the political situation in the country, have failed to evoke indignation from the West for a long time. Lukashenko and his cabinet simply disregard any attempt to sanction him. The most recent attempt to convince Lukashenko to observe at least some norms of democracy seems to have been largely ignored as well. On 4 October, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Belarus Democracy Act. The Act consists of five demands. They are (a) the requirement to release individuals, who have been imprisoned for political and religious convictions, (b) to recall politically motivated accusations against all opposition figures and independent journalists, (c) to explain fully the disappearance of Belarusian opposition figures and journalists, including Viktor Gonchar, Anatoli Krasovskiy, Dmitry Zabadsky, etc., (d) to stop all forms of intimidation against independent mass media outlets, independent professional unions, NGOs and religious organizations, as well as of the political opposition in Belarus and (e) to conduct free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections. (6)
In case of Lukashenko’s noncompliance, the U.S. promised to allocate $ 40 million to the support of the Belarusian opposition, and threatened to make public information about Lukashenko’s personal income and the unlawful Belarusian arms. (7)

Lukashenko’s reaction to the Act was rather harsh. He answered with attacks: "They want democracy in Belarus! They are worried about our elections and our referendum! They forgot that they have more than enough problems of their own… The U.S. has the most outdated election system. They do not have direct presidential elections,…as a result, the president who is in power now received less votes than the one who came in second. Is that normal?" (8) Lukashenko also offered to disclose to Belarusians his income, which is "a hundred thousand times smaller than their [American] president’s, or of any president, for that matter." (9)

Chances are almost non-existent that the current Act will have any influence on Lukashenko, since he is in complete control of official opinion and of the mass media, he is capable of escaping any criticism leveled at him from inside the country. Thus, the current Act serves more as a symbolic gesture showing that the U.S. is not completely indifferent to the situation in Belarus. As for promises to allocate $40 million to the Belarusian opposition, they came too late. With only several days remaining before the elections and with Lukashenko’s tight control of all opposition activities, only a miracle can help the Belarusian opposition.

Meanwhile, only a fraction of those opposition candidates who applied to participate in the elections, was allowed to do so. For example, out of 17 candidates of the opposition block "Young Belarus," only four were permitted to participate in the elections. Among the reasons for denial were "premature beginning of the election campaign" and "blasphemy of the authorities." (10) In the beginning of September, in Grodno, Valeri Levonevsky and Alexandr Vasil’ev
were sentences to two years in prison for "offending the President." Both of them were calling Belarusians out to join the action of protest against the President, who at the time was vacationing at an Austrian ski resort, at public expense. (11) Three more newspapers have been closed recently. "Regional Newspaper" was closed for three months as a result of two warnings, which were issued by the Information Ministry on the same day for violations of the media law: publishing an unregistered TV guide and switching to a weekly publication schedule without prior notification. (12) Two more newspapers, Navinki and Novaya gazeta of Smorgoni, were closed for similar "violations."

It is clear that the elections in Belarus will be neither fair nor free. The opposition has no opportunity to succeed. Feeble Western voices promising to help the Belarusian opposition on the eve of the elections came too late. Very few opposition representatives are included in the electoral committees. As for independent observers, they can only observe the voting process and not the vote counting process! (13) Even if a miniscule number of the opposition candidates manages to get into the lower chamber of the parliament, this will not constitute any threat to the current regime, since, according to the Belarusian constitution, all real power belongs to the President. One cannot help but wonder, why does the unconquerable President bother with any elections at all?

MOLDOVA

Proposed referendum in Transdniestr

There have been numerous demands from the population of Transdniestr about holding a referendum in the unrecognized Dniestr republic on the issue of building a federation with Moldova, since, under the Dniestr constitution, the Dniestr republic is a "sovereign and independent state." A working group, which consists of three deputies from the regional parliament and three executive power representatives is to begin the process of preparing the referendum in the near future. (14)
Armenia

Kocharian breaking out of the box

Robert Kocharian’s Yerevan government is expanding bilateral relations with Iran and Georgia and apparently is considering reopening its border with Turkey. Through these diplomatic efforts, Kocharian hopes to end Armenia’s almost total political isolation in the South Caucasus. Known as the "stepchild of the South Caucasus," due to its weak geo-strategic position, Armenia previously resorted to Russian support against Azerbaijan. Russia’s efforts to counter U.S. influence in oil-rich Azerbaijan has weakened Yerevan's bargaining power.
Robert Kocharian defies Armenia’s interests as securing reliable energy supplies and foreign investment, opening its borders to trade, preventing Azerbaijan from reasserting sovereignty over Nagorna-Karabakh, and forging closer military and economic relations with the West. To pursue its perceived interests, Yerevan had opted for a foreign policy of, as phrased by Armenia expert Richard Hovannisian, "complementarity," (1) which involves cultivating friendly relations with the world and the three major regional powers: Iran, the U.S. and Russia. The aim of the "complementarity" policy is to place Armenia into a network of associations with other states based on convergent interests. Yerevan’s policy may be compared to Tbilisi’s pro-Western orientation and with Baku’s balancing act between the U.S. and Russia. Additionally, Armenia is hamstrung by its "complementarity" policy since it cannot support NATO unequivocally. The Western alliance includes Turkey, favors Azerbaijan and has a primary interest in the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. Yerevan does not have the resources to pursue a balance of power strategy by playing off the U.S. and Russia against each other, as Baku, with its Caspian oil reserves, attempts to do. Since Yerevan lacks the resources to execute the "complementarity" policy, it has become a façade for almost total dependence on Russia. Kocharian understands Armenia’s inherent weakness and for that reason, his government is trying to establish better relations with Georgia and Turkey.

Armenian-Georgian bilateral relations have developed from Kocharian’s ambivalent acceptance in December 2003 of Tbilisi’s Rose Revolution to a full acceptance of Saakashvili’s government in May 2004. In July 2004, the Armenian and Georgian Foreign Ministers met to discuss European integration, economic and strategic cooperation, and further political relations. (2) Their talks provided the catalyst for further military, diplomatic and economic cooperative measures between Tbilisi and Yerevan. At present, the Georgian and Armenian Justice Ministries and Ombudsmen share information and are involved in joint operations as is evidenced by the 4 October apprehension of a smuggling ring in
Armenia by the Georgian and Armenian border police. (3) Diplomats are also participating in an exchange from 6 October-29 October in Yerevan and Tbilisi program to increase cross-cultural awareness. (4) On the economic side, the Armenian-Georgian Association for Business Cooperation was created on 5 October in Tbilisi and will meet every 3 months to discuss further microeconomic integration between the two countries. (5) Furthermore, Georgia is trying to establish smooth relations with Armenia as indicated by Saakashvili announcement that he passed no judgment on the Yerevan government for the ongoing conflict in Nagorna-Karabakh.

While Armenian-Georgian relations are progressing, Yerevan has drawn still closer to Tehran. In September, the two governments signed a preliminary agreement to construct a pipeline that would carry natural gas from Iran to Armenia, with substantial funding from Tehran. The pipeline would ease Armenia’s dependence on Russia but will not alter the country’s fundamental strategic position. Moscow, seeking to keep Yerevan under its hegemony, has demanded assurances that the Iranian pipeline will not be extended through Georgia and under the Black Sea to Ukraine, bypassing Russia and depriving it of a market for its gas.

Kocharian’s government has also taken cautious steps toward approaching Ankara to resolve their long-standing dispute over the Armenian genocide by the "Ottoman" Turks. Armenian Defense Minister Sarkisian met with his counterpart on 30 September in Ankara, while Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian has been in communication with his Turkish counterpart since mid August. (6) Although it is in the economic and strategic interest of Armenia to open its border with Turkey, nationalistic ideology continues to impede that goal. As is becoming evident however, Armenian political parties may be using the genocide issue to cover up weaknesses in Armenia’s economy. The strongest political opponent to the unconditional opening of the border is the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, a junior partner in the ruling coalition. Ashot Yeghiazarian, the party’s chairman,
stated at a round-table discussion for politicians and economists on 29 September, that establishing cross-border relations with Turkey would cause a flood of cheap Turkish goods into the Armenian market, which would weaken local manufacturers. (7) Another impediment to Yerevan establishing independent, bilateral relations with Ankara is Moscow's role as an intermediary in any concerted effort to improve Yerevan-Ankara relations; Russia reportedly is playing this role in discussions on restoring rail links between Armenia and Turkey.

Yerevan is restricted by its dependence on Moscow from moving too far toward an independent foreign policy. The best-case scenario for Yerevan would be an agreement by Moscow and the United States to guarantee the security of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, and treat them each as independent actors within a single region. The likelihood that Russia would agree is not great.

**Georgia**

**Don’t count your presidents before they hatch…**

Although the outcome of the chaotic 3 October "presidential election" in Georgia’s separatist region of Abkhazia is still uncertain, one major loser is obvious: Moscow. Russia’s heavy-handed involvement in the campaign and its open endorsement of Prime Minister Raul Khajimba in the first contested ballot in Abkhazia instead have benefited the opposition candidate Sergei Bagapsh.

Moscow pursued its objective of securing Abkhazian political continuity and installing its favorite, Raul Khajimba, by endorsing a range of artificial public relations events. These PR measures included Russian President Vladimir Putin meeting with Khajimba in Sochi on 30 August to discuss the "future of Abkhazia," covering Abkhazia with photos of Khajimba and Putin together, and running an advertising campaign on controlled TV channels. (8) Throughout September, Russian politicians visited Abkhazia and campaigned on Khajimba’s behalf. At first no one objected to Moscow’s intervention, until Russian politicians used
Victory Day celebrations, the anniversary of the 1992-93 war, as a forum for their support of Khajimba. (9) Moscow's public relations blunder radically changed public opinion towards Khajimba. Additionally, Russian nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky damaged Moscow's image further when he publicly stated that not voting for Khajimba will guarantee a closure of the Abkhaz-Russian border and an economic blockade. (10) Ironically, Abkhazia would have voted for Khajimba without Zhirinovsky's threats or Russian electoral machinations, but the Kremlin's interference has caused political confusion, increased tensions and resentment towards Moscow.

On 4 October, a website, claiming to be the Central Electoral Commission's, declared Khajimba winner of the 3 October presidential election. According to the website, Khajimba received 52.8% of the vote, while runner-up Sergei Bagapsh received 33.8%. The website even posted a graph displaying the distribution of the votes. (11) However, later that day the graph was removed and the CEC denied it even had a website, adding that all earlier reports released through the newswires regarding preliminary results were not valid. After closing the erroneous website, the CEC then declined to publish any results; the opposition calculated that Bagapsh garnered 51% of the vote and Khajimba had 38% of the vote. (12) The opposition’s announcement led Khajimba to organize a rally in Sokhumi on 5 October at which he declared that the election had been marred by widespread irregularities, especially in the Gali district, an area populated by primarily ethnic Georgians. Khajimba added he wanted the first round of the election annulled, and all votes recast. The alleged irregularities included an electrical failure in some of the polling stations, and the distribution of documents in Georgian, which contradicts local law. Bagapsh and his supporters, who appear to have done well in the Gali district, rejected Khajimba's accusations. (13)

On 6 October, Sergei Smyr, head of the CEC, announced a proposal for a recast of the vote, only in the Gali region, on 17 October. (14) Georgian officials are
worried that the decisive role this district is about to play in the Abkhazian elections may trigger further violence against Georgians there. Georgian Minister for Conflict Resolution Goga Khaindrava stated on 6 October that he hopes the Sokhumi authorities safeguard the rights and safety of its Gali residents, while Saakashvili announced that any violence towards Gali Georgians would only further validate the corrupt nature of the Sokhumi government. (15)

The outcome of the elections confirms the pessimistic forecasts expressed shortly before the vote. Georgian authorities and the international community unanimously dismissed the presidential race as illegal. Nevertheless, in a statement issued on 4 October, the Russian Foreign Ministry described the presidential elections in Abkhazia as "calm" and "democratic" while conveying hope that the Abkhaz "elections" would encourage both the Georgian and Abkhaz sides to continue talks to resolve the ongoing separatist conflict. (16) Russia’s pushy approach has almost assured the victory of a candidate who is currently beyond Moscow’s influence. Ironically, the difference between the two leading candidates, Khajimba and Bagapsh, may not be that significant. Even though Khajimba voices Moscow’s interests while Bagapsh pretends to be more independent, the latter will inevitably seek a common ground with Moscow. Moscow’s tactless and brazen approach in the political process in Abkhazia, may have stimulated a discontent with Russia that will have an effect, if not a particularly strong one, on Russian Abkhaz, and possibly Russian-Georgian relations.

**Georgia and Chechnya: PACE Session**

The Russian delegation to the 4-8 October session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) clashed with European and Georgian officials over its policies vis-à-vis Chechnya and the South Caucasus.

While the Russian draft resolution on terrorism, submitted by Duma Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Konstantin Kosachev, was met with resistance
by representative from the E.U., the newly-inaugurated Chechen leader Alu Alkhanov battled doubts regarding his legitimacy. The pro-Moscow Chechen president criticized PACE for its position on the political situation in Chechnya, stating PACE gave more credence to Maskhadov’s government than to Alkhanov’s administration. (17) Earlier that day, PACE adopted a resolution criticizing the August presidential elections in Chechnya for deviations from democratic norms. Deputies also rejected a proposed Russian amendment recognizing Alkhanov’s legitimacy. (18) Alkhanov, who was sworn in as head of the pro-Moscow government in Grozny on 5 October, denounced the PACE’s decision as "robbing the Chechen people" of their inherent right and ability to elect a leader. (19)

Russian representatives also battled the Georgian delegation in a public debate as the latter pushed forward its vision of Russia as an inhibiting factor in the economic and political development of the South Caucasus. MP Giga Bokeria accused the Kremlin of double standards when dealing with its internal, i.e. Chechnya, and external, in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, problems. (20) In response, the Russian delegation accused the Georgian delegation of seeking international support and "preparing public opinion" for a possible military resolution to Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts. (21) The debates ran over an hour but they were not meant to deliver specific resolutions; the intention was to draw more international attention towards the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Source Notes:

(2) Arminfo, 24 Jul 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(3) Noyan Tapan website, 4 Oct 04 via (www.nt.am/eng/index/html).
(4) Rustavi-2 TV, 7 Oct 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
Newly Independent States: Central Asia
Kazakhstan

Election fallout continues

Last month, on 19 September, the Republic of Kazakhstan held its second Parliamentary elections since independence. During the weeks and months prior to the polls, it was evident that an attempt was being made to present a democratic image at home and abroad. Yet the run-up to the election was marred by serious political machinations, which seemed to be designed with a dual purpose. Firstly, the aim was to ensure a significant victory for President Nursultan Nazarbaev’s Otan party. Secondly, it seemed clear that the elections were designed to provide a clear path for the succession of Dariga Nazarbaeva, the President’s oldest daughter. (1)

The final election results, as presented on 7 October, vindicated these suspicions. Otan obtained an overwhelming 60.61% of votes, while Nazarbaeva’s Asar Party achieved 11.38% in the polls. (2) In terms of total seats obtained, this meant that Asar won three seats in the Majlis (lower house), making it the second largest pro-Presidential party in the system. (3)

But if the Nazarbaev family achieved its personal goals in these elections, it failed in the attempt to project a democratic image. The polls were not only criticized by the OSCE, which found that the election "fell short of OSCE and Council of Europe standards for democratic elections," and that there had been a "lack of transparency" in the process," (4) but also by Kazakhstan’s opposition groups, which indicated that they might not accept the results. (5)

After filing a law suit with the Kazakh Supreme Court accusing the Central Election Commission of "flagrant violations of constitutional rights of citizens," (6) Ak Zhol announced that it planned, (along with Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan and the Communist Party), to organize a nationwide protest against the
elections. (7) According to reports in Eurasianet, Kazakhstan's opposition figures stated that they hoped the protests might result in a "rose revolution," similar to the one in Georgia that overthrew Eduard Shevardnadze as President. (8) At the same time, the opposition announced that a protest might be halted, if Nazarbaev's government made moves to address the opposition parties' complaints vis-à-vis the election. (9)

President Nazarbaev's reaction to the ultimatum was to state that the election had been the result of "painstaking work," while accusing the opposition parties of "straining the political situation," and of "undermining the country's international image." (10) In the almost two-weeks since the call to protest was made, there has been few reports of action by the opposition, and no protests have been recorded, by any media outlets.

Meanwhile, President Nazarbaev has proceeded with his governmental 'restructuring.' A new Ministry, responsible for Emergency Situations has been formed. It will be headed by Mukhambet Kopeev, until now Deputy Chairman of the Majlis. (11) At the same time, a Presidential Decree merged the Ministries of Culture and Information (formerly headed by Altynbek Sarsenbayev), and abolished several other government agencies, including customs control, demography, and state procuring. All of the aforementioned functions are to be assigned to other Ministries. (12)

The 'restructuring' that is occurring appears more threatening when it is viewed in conjunction with another post-election development, namely a move to institute President Nazarbaev's Otan party as the "institutionalized" ruling party. (13) According to Yermukhamet Yertysbayev, aide to Nazarbaev, this is possible because the party obtained such a large segment of the vote. Yertysbayev insisted that such a move would not lead to the creation of a one-party state since constitutional change would be required. This was impossible, he added, because "political pluralism has taken too deep root in our country." (14)
These statements must be viewed with skepticism: the ‘restructuring’ which is taking place shows signs of being little more than a move to consolidate power into fewer hands. At the same time, the seeming lack of demonstrations in Kazakhstan — as well as the possible institutionalization of Otan — suggest a move that Yertsybayev denies: toward a one party state.

Kygzyzstan’s foreign relations game

In 2003, Global Scholarly Publications, a New York publisher, released an English translation of Kyrgyzstan’s new foreign policy doctrine. Written by President Askar Akaev, the document, entitled Diplomacy of the Silk Road (A Foreign Policy Doctrine), posits a "revival of the Great Silk Road," with Kyrgyzstan at its center. (15) Akaev notes in the polemic that Kyrgyzstan "in view of its geographical location" has a need and "favorable opportunity for simultaneously developing fruitful relations between Kyrgyzstan and neighboring countries, Kyrgyzstan and Europe, and Kyrgyzstan and East and South-East Asia." (16) Akaev’s intimation is that Kyrgyzstan can and must serve as a bridge for "friendship and cooperation" (as well as its own benefit) between the countries in the region.

In recent weeks, there has been a spate of activity with regards to Kyrgyz foreign policy, which indicates that Akaev is now actively planning to implement the new Silk Road Strategy: Kyrgyzstan has held—or is planning—high level talks with Iran, the United States, Germany, France and Britain.

On 29 September, while speaking at Harvard University, Akaev stated that security in Central Asia cannot be achieved without Russian influence and help. (17) Days later, on 6 October, Lieutenant General Yevgenii Yurev, visiting elements of his command at Kant airbase in Kyrgyzstan, announced that an agreement had been reached between Moscow and Bishkek to raise Russian troop levels in Kyrgyzstan to 1000 by the end of 2004. (18) At the same time,
Kyrgyzstan has sought actively to increase its cooperation with the United States in the War on Terrorism.

On 2 October, a series of talks took place between senior U.S. and Kyrgyz officials regarding Kyrgyz-U.S. military cooperation. According to Kabar news agency, agreement has been reached, extending military cooperation for another five years (2005-2010). (19) Under the plans, U.S. Special Forces A-Teams will provide assistance in the creation of Kyrgyz Special Forces units, the U.S. will provide funding for the creation of an anti-terrorist center, and will aid in enhancing Kyrgyzstan’s air mobility capabilities. (20)

Kyrgyzstan’s expansion of military cooperation agreements has not stopped with Russia and the U.S. Britain has stepped up its commitment to provide language training to the Kyrgyz military, while France recently signed its own cooperation agreement with the Central Asian republic. Under the terms of this agreement, French Special Forces will undergo some mountain training in Kyrgyzstan, and there will be annual officer exchanges between the two countries. (21)

On the non-military front, Kyrgyzstan has increased up its cooperation with Iran. Between 28-29 September, Iranian First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref traveled to Kyrgyzstan. During the course of his visit Aref met with President Akaev, Prime Minister Nikolai Tanayev, as well as People’s Assembly speaker Altay Borubayev. (22) As a result of these talks, the Iranian government has agreed to increase significantly its investment and trade levels with Bishkek: a $50 million dollar loan for Kyrgyzstan was negotiated, and trade levels between the two nations are to be increased to $250 million by the end of this year. (23)

Based on these developments, it would seem that President Akaev’s plan for Kyrgyzstan to be a focal point for cooperation and trade in Central Asia is succeeding. But, in fact, Akaev is playing a dangerous game. Kyrgyzstan’s close relationship with Iran could become a source of tension, should the U.S. decide
to focus more seriously on that country's transgressions. At the same time, to hope conflict does not develop in a region which (due to its natural resources) has great geo-strategic importance to multiple powers seems to represent an extremely naÃ¯ve and short-term viewpoint.

Source Notes:

(1) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review Volume IX Number 13 (15 Sep 04).
(2) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review Volume IX Number 14 (15 Sep 04).
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Eurasia Insight, 27 Sep 04, via (www.eurasianet.org).
(8) Ibid.
(9) Ibid.
(12) Ibid.
(14) Ibid.
(16) Ibid.
(17) Kyrgyz Info News, 5 Oct 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(19) Khabar News Agency, 5 Oct 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(20) Ibid.

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