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Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

Structural fallacies

The Russian presidential elections have reached their seemingly inevitable conclusion, i.e. Putin won a landslide election, which was, well, unattractive as democratic elections go. Various governments, including the U.S. via Colin Powell’s and Ambassador Vershbow’s critiques, worried publicly about Russia’s anti-democratic electoral processes and authoritarian slide.

With the presidential campaign finished however, the outline of the next step in the process gradually becomes clearer: constitutional reform. The surprise thus far is whence, and why, the call for constitutional change. First out of the gate in this race for reform was a representative of the fettered media, an ink-stained wretch who, having observed the absurdities of the campaign (Zhirinovsky’s bodyguard as a candidate?), exhorted his readers to vote anyway and supported Putin’s presidency for stability’s sake, then turned his eye to the "ugly" electoral procedures and found himself face-to-face with the "structural fallacies of our political system." (1)

Rather than rail about Putin’s "authoritarianism," the author, Aleksandr Tsipko, focuses on the need for choice in a democratic system. Russia "lacks a political system as a set of rules or tough criteria for promotion and personnel selection." (2) Monthly polls may list the "Top 100" most influential figures in Russian political life, but on what is that power rating based, if an obscure KGB officer can be plucked from St. Petersburg to become the successor to the first Russian President? Or if a perpetual second or third banana gets tapped to lead the government in a new era of reform?
Where are the legislative and gubernatorial leaders who demonstrate the potential and willingness to do the work necessary for a genuine opposition, absent the power of a protest vote? Previous Russian elections brought "alternatives" to the leading contender, but those alternatives represented a protest over policies or personal foibles of the leader. Now however, "the energy of protest has been exhausted." (3) Absent the demand for or supply of a true alternative, absent the protest of true dissatisfaction, the electorate accepts stability and security as ends unto themselves. The system is not required to produce viable alternative leaders, and therefore produces no qualifying standards by which to judge those who step onto the political stage. Glazyev is Kharitonov is Zhirinovsky is his bodyguard.

The power of personnel is still visible in patronage chains. Everyone who is anyone has one. Putin’s seems to be drawn primarily from the Siloviki, and thus his regime is characterized by the harder edge of their secretive, often thuggish ways, which we find easy to attack for the real and potential abuses of civil rights and individual freedoms. Travel back up that patronage chain that brought him to power however and you find some of the leading lights of Russia’s democratic awakening — his vaunted mentor Anatoli Sobchak, for example, or the man so welcomed in the West, Anatoli Chubais. Putin appears as the link between the so-called democratic reformers and the old KGB. But then again, there were always those who believed the KGB was at the forefront of the Soviet reform movement.

Putin, whoever he was, is President because of the capricious whims of the ruling elite of the Yel’tsin era, not because of his well-developed plans for national education reform or for his plan to rescue the ruble. Capricious may be a bit unfair. It was not fanciful that Putin was selected; he had a job to do. With the life and treasure of most of the Yel’tsin "Family" now protected, what will he do next?
Putin’s decision to toss his government just before the election is more than arrogance; it is the recognition that his policies weren’t the real issue in the campaign, which may embolden him to become something else entirely. According to Tsipko, Putin is eager to finish the work of Gaidar and dismantle the "social sphere inherited from the Soviet Union." (4) What label will we find for him if he finally succeeds in an equitable distribution of land rights? Or closes the coal mines? Or stabilizes the ruble? How will those who ignored policy for strength and stability react? Perhaps more importantly, will Tsipko still be around to write about it?

Source Notes:

(1) "Something should be done about the constitution," Aleksandr Tsipko in Komsomolskaya pravda, 18 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Ibid.

Russian Federation: Security Services
By Fabian Adami

New details emerge in Yanderbiyev assassination
On 18 February, five days after the murder of former Chechen President Zelimkhan Yanderbiyev, Qatari authorities arrested three Russians on suspicion of having carried out the killing. (1) One of the three was released because he held a diplomatic passport, but the remaining two men, who were carrying Secret Service passports, remain in custody in Qatar.
On February, two Qatari nationals, Ibat Akhmedov and Naser Ibragim Midahi were arrested at Moscow’s Sheremetevo airport. The pair was apparently traveling as part of the Qatari wrestling team, en route to a tournament in Serbia. (2) According to the explanation given by the initial arresting authority—the customs service—Akhmedov was carrying $7200 in undeclared currency. But shortly after their initial arrest, the FSB took custody of the men, claiming that they fit the description of the men believed to have carried out the Moscow Metro bombing on February 6. The detainees, so the FSB claimed, were to take part in a police line-up. (3) Since then, Akhmedov and Midahi have been held without access to lawyers at the notorious Lefortovo Prison. According to an FSB spokesman, they have been charged with "offences that carry lengthy prison terms if they are found guilty." He added that Qatari embassy officials had been permitted to visit the two men to ascertain the "conditions of their detention and their health." (4)

At first glance, the arrest of the two wrestlers looks remarkably like quid pro quo action, reminiscent of cold-war exchanges between rival powers. But interestingly, as yet the Russian government has given no public indication that the two men are Qatari intelligence agents. They are accused simply of terrorist activities. This is in stark contrast to events in Qatar since the arrest of the two Russian agents.

According to a recent article in The Washington Post, there is much more to this story than meets the eye. Apparently, Putin’s government had been negotiating for some time with the Qatari government for the extradition of Yanderbiyev. The Qatari government’s response to Russia’s request, was that if evidence of Yanderbiyev’s connection to Chechen terror groups could be shown, he would be arrested and tried in Qatari courts. According to The Washington Post, these terms were accepted by Russia a week before Yanderbiyev was assassinated. (5)
Qatari security services were able to track the alleged killers quickly, only through their "sloppy tradecraft" (6): witnesses at Yanderbiyev’s mosque recalled seeing a van parked near his SUV. The van was traced to a rental agency, where Qatari officers were able to view security camera footage in order to identify the leasers. The address provided for the men by the rental agency was "a villa that had been rented recently by a Russian diplomat, but that didn’t have diplomatic status." The Post’s story corrects one important detail: the men were arrested at the villa, not, as previously believed, in Dubai en route back to Russia. (7)

A further development sure to be causing deep concern in Moscow, is the fact that the Qatari authorities claim the two men to have confessed to everything, including their status as Secret Service officers. Both are apparently members of GRU (8), and are known to authorities by their activities in Chechnya "where they orchestrated special operations against field commanders." (9) This is the version presented by Usman Ferzauli, Deputy Foreign Minister of Ichkeria. Moreover, the men are said to have revealed the names of the senior officers from whom the assassination orders came. (10)

Last Friday, Kommersant Daily published a story, quickly denied by the FSB, alleging that an "unnamed FSB source" had suggested that a forcible rescue of the two agents might be mounted. (11)

The same Kommersant story claimed that the Qatari detainees had been handed over by the FSB to the Foreign Ministry, so that negotiations could begin for an exchange between Qatar and Russia. Agence-France Presse and ITAR-TASS carried the same news. But the FSB spokesman also denied these reports, stating that "they are not being held in any foreign ministry retreat." (12)

Then on 24 March, the FSB released the two Qataris from Lefortovo prison because of the "absence of any indication" that they were involved in criminal activities. (13) The two men were flown home the same day. Why did the FSB
refuse to hand over the prisoners to the Foreign Ministry, so that negotiations for exchange could take place? It is possible that the combination of a new administration at the Foreign Ministry and this incident provided the FSB with the ideal opportunity to attempt to extend its influence into the realm of Foreign Affairs. The FSB's actions in this incident have scuttled the Foreign Ministry's diplomatic efforts, making it look weak and ineffective, and have resulted in two Russian agents being left at the mercy of the Qatari courts.

Source Notes:

(1) See NIS Observed: An Analytical Review, Volume IX Number 4, 5 Mar 04
(2) WPS Russian Political Monitor, 19 Mar 04, via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(3) Ibid.
(4) BBC Monitoring, 19 March 2004, ITAR-TASS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(6) Ibid.
(7) Ibid.
(8) WPS Russian Political Monitor, 19 Mar 04, via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(9) BBC Monitoring, 19 Mar 04, ITAR-TASS via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(10) WPS Russian Political Monitor, 19 Mar 04, via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(11) Agence-France-Presse, 19 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(12) Ibid.
(13) Agence-France-Presse, 24 Mar 04 via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
Kremlin outsourcing in a crisis: Luzhkov goes to Batumi

Throughout the most recent crisis between Adjaria and Tbilisi, which appears to have been resolved for the time being, Moscow pledged its neutrality and urged a peaceful solution. Russian neutrality, of course, did not mean the Kremlin would remain uninvolved, but its involvement was not led by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)—perhaps a prudent move on Moscow’s part, as had it done so, it could have been seen by Tbilisi, and perhaps internationally, as heavy-handed interference. Thus, Moscow was represented, albeit only semi-officially, by Moscow’s Mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

As tensions mounted between Batumi and Tbilisi, Luzhkov reportedly took it upon himself to travel to Adjaria to meet with the autonomous region’s leader, Aslan Abashidze. Later he said this was a responsibility he could not ignore given his status as an honorary citizen of Georgia, Adjaria, Batumi and Tbilisi. (1) The support Moscow gave to his presence, however, might indicate that Lushkov was representing more than just his own personal interests. A spokesman for the Russian MFA said that Luzhkov had not coordinated his trip with the ministry, but as long as he was there urged Georgian officials to use his presence to "achieve a peaceful outcome to the situation." (2) On the day of Luzhkov’s arrival, the new secretary of the Russian Security Council, Igor Ivanov, spoke with Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili by phone and requested he permit Luzhkov’s presence. Luzhkov was, indeed, subsequently allowed into Adjaria where he met with Abashidze for several hours.

Luzhkov is no stranger to international affairs, nor should he be as mayor of the one of the world’s largest city. Other examples of his international endeavors as mayor include visits with leaders of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Lithuania (to name but a few), demands for investigation of mafia corruption in United States banks, and even speaking out against NATO enlargement. But
Luzhkov often represents more than just the citizens of Moscow. In October 2003, he was selected to co-chair the joint Japanese-Russian so-called Council of Sages as an official representative of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The council, designed as a group of elder statesmen from both sides, has the mission to discuss the sensitive outstanding issues between the two countries. Since the announcement of the council’s establishment last year, however, there have been no reports of any council activities or meetings.

Putin’s use of Luzhkov, his one time rival for the presidency, as an envoy is not unique. Luzhkov’s one-time political partner, Yevgeni M. Primakov has also served President Putin in that role on several occasions. Primakov, however, would probably have been a poor choice to represent Moscow’s interests in this most recent Georgian case, for as the President of the Russian Federation Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he is too tightly tied to the Kremlin and the MFA. Nor would Primakov, a well-known advocate of reintegration of the Commonwealth of Independent States, have been warmly welcomed by Tblisi. Thus, Luzhkov’s seemingly semi-private participation in the Georgia-Adjaria crisis seems to have been just the right dosage of Russian representation to achieve the desired solution. In an interview following the crisis, he acknowledged the synchronization of his efforts with the position of the Kremlin: "I treat my efforts quite reservedly, as the position of the country’s leadership played a great role in the issue with which I acted in harmony. (...) [F]or the first time without interfering in this very difficult situation Russia managed to subtly and diplomatically exert influence, so that this conflict would not grow into shooting and bloodshed". (3)

The success of this unofficial envoy mission featuring Luzhkov, whom President Putin has since praised for his work in Adjaria, may mean that the Moscow mayor could be making more regular appearances on the Kremlin’s behalf wherever a crisis requires reserved but definite Russian involvement.

**Personnel changes at Smolenskaya Square**
The selection of Mikhail Fradkov as Russian Prime Minister means changes throughout the government. While President Vladimir Putin may have selected Fradkov as the new premier based on the sum of his qualities, skills and experiences, Fradkov’s most recent service at the European Union (E.U.) as Russia’s representative will no doubt be to Moscow’s advantage as it tries to sort out the unresolved issues between itself and the E.U., prior to the Union’s approaching enlargement. Reportedly, Fradkov has already used his E.U.-related resourcefulness to settle the issue of the post-enlargement quota on Russian steel exports to the E.U. in Moscow’s favor. (4)

The installment of the newly-identified members of Fradkov’s cabinet also means changes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The former foreign minister, Igor Ivanov, has been appointed Secretary of the Russian Federation Security Council. As this position’s responsibilities and authority are historically ill-defined and based on the personality of its leader and his support from the president, it is difficult to gauge what influence Ivanov will command on the country’s security and foreign policies. A Rossiskaya gazeta article would only predict: "The Security Council will probably concentrate on analytical work on national security issues, and this could include any area of activity…" — quite a revelation! (5) Based on his overall work at the MFA though, it is unlikely that Ivanov will wield significant influence from his new post. While some supporters of Ivanov compliment him for trying to give some definition to Russian foreign policy during his five years as foreign minister, he did not always play the leading role in Russian foreign affairs. The foreign policy spotlight was sometimes stolen by other figures, such as elder statesman Yevgeni Primakov and, more recently, Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov.

On his way out of the MFA, however, Ivanov reportedly proposed his successor, Sergei V. Lavrov. Lavrov is a career diplomat with experience in the Soviet and Russian MFA who was reportedly one of the leading candidates to succeed Primakov as foreign minister in 1998. (6) Since 1972 he has served in leadership
positions in its Department of International Economic Organizations and on the interdepartmental commission on coordinating Russia's participation in peacekeeping operations, as a deputy minister of foreign affairs, and most recently as the Russian permanent representative to the United Nations (U.N.) and also as the Russian representative to U.N. Security Council.

As with Fradkov’s E.U. expertise, Lavrov’s nine years of U.N. duty will certainly be an advantage as Moscow continues to press for reform of the Security Council. So far there is no indication that he intends any radical changes as his public statements more or less reflect the party line: "Russia will elect partners based on its national interests (...) The concept of Russia's foreign policy is determined by President Vladimir Putin and his policy should be pursued (...) This is a multi-vector policy and its major goal is to preserve Russia's territorial integrity and security (...) [and it should] help improve the social and economic state of citizens." (7) Moreover, his more specific comments suggest an aim to maintain continuity in the country’s foreign policy, particularly regarding the reintegration of the Commonwealth of Independent States, cooperation with NATO and the role of the U.N. (8)

So far, only one other personnel change has been reported at the MFA. President Putin has appointed Aleksandr P. Losyukov Russian Ambassador to Japan. Losyukov has served as a deputy foreign minister during Primakov’s tenure as foreign minister, and since 2000 he has been, more specifically, responsible for relations with Asian countries. Given his record, Ambassador Losyukov can be expected to continue the task of strengthening ties with Tokyo while simultaneously avoiding a commitment on the resolution of the peace treaty and Kurile Island issues. No successor has yet been named for Losyukov’s Asian affairs responsibilities.

Russia stands by France against U.S. Greater Middle East Initiative
It is not unusual for Moscow to complain about what it perceives as U.S. interference in a "Russian zone of interest." Now, Moscow is standing by France against similar "interference" in a "French zone of interest." In early March, Russian Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov and then Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov met with their respective French counterparts and French President Jacques Chirac in Paris. They discussed, among other things, the so-called U.S. Greater Middle East Initiative, which is aimed at promoting democracy and economic reform in the Middle East.

Although Igor Ivanov stated that Moscow was considering the U.S. proposals for an international conference on the Middle East, a Russian defense ministry official indicated that both Russia and France object to U.S. interference in the so-called Mahgreb region, that is: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, as this is historically a "French zone of interest." (9)

In supporting France against this U.S. initiative, which Washington has apparently tabled for the time being due to lack of support, particularly from the countries of the Greater Middle East themselves, Moscow will no doubt look forward to future French backing in countering U.S. moves in the parts of the Greater Middle East that comprise or approach the countries the Kremlin might consider "Russian zones of interest."

Source Notes:

(1) CENTRE TV, 20 Mar 04 via ITAR-TASS, 20 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(2) RTR TV, 16 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(3) CENTRE TV, 20 Mar 04 via ITAR-TASS, 20 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via ISI Emerging Markets Database.
(4) ROSSISKAYA GAZETA, 6 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0306 via World News Connection, 8 Mar 04.
Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch
By Kate Martin

ELECTIONS
Who’s counting?
While the outcome of the 14 March presidential elections was no surprise, the actual numbers of voters showing up certainly was: There was a surprising rise in eligible voters for the parliamentary elections in December, (1) and now that rise suddenly has disappeared. Indeed, roughly 900,000 appear to be missing, when totals of voters from December are compared with this month’s numbers for the presidential election.

Some analysts have attributed the drop in the rolls to a cynical manipulation to improve vote counts. Nikolai Petrov, an analyst at the Carnegie Center in Moscow, claims that it "was a statistical trick consciously meant to raise turnout by lowering the number of voters.... The scale is in fact bigger than 900,000," he said. According to Petrov, 1.5 million voters were removed from the list, and 600,000 were reinstated when they showed up to vote. Lilia Shibanova, the head of an association of voters’ rights NGOs, noted that observers in 26 regions documented instances of voters having their names cut from the registers. Such
cases were documented in Samara, Stavropol, Irkutsk and Krasnodar, she said. In Samara, "we have information about an instruction from the administration of the industrial district... that the election committees themselves should cut and 'clean up' the lists of voters," Shibanova's association reported. (2)

Indeed, the turnout was the only part of the election that hadn’t been foreseen. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) had criticized the manner in which state administrative resources and state-run media had handled the December 2003 parliamentary elections, and the run-up to the presidential elections. The post-election report reiterated its concern for the development of the democratic process in Russia, noting — in addition to the aforementioned official abuses — pervasive instances of "open voting" at polling stations.

The OSCE evaluation was not a rarity. A monitoring center set up by (losing) candidates Irina Khakamada, Sergei Glazyev and Nikolai Kharitonov reported that patients in at least one psychiatric clinic received ballots already marked for Putin. Moreover, a worker at the monitoring center showed a video, reportedly filmed with a hidden camera, showing a teacher directing her students’ parents as to how to vote. "I ask, even insist, that you vote at the polling station here at the school," the teacher said on the video. "And logically, your children's grades will depend on how actively you vote. And if you vote for Putin, we will get money from the district administration for computers. Otherwise, we will get nothing. Believe me, this kind of chance comes but rarely." (3)

Putin’s amazing popularity, with over 71 percent of the national vote, has been explained in a number of ways. The main motivation appearing in the media is pragmatism: Since Putin’s overwhelming victory over his challengers was expected, many groups voted in order to show their support, and avoid any administrative retribution.
Preliminary results show unbelievable levels of support in several republics: In Kabardino-Balkaria, 96.49 percent of voters reportedly selected Putin; in Chechnya, an astonishing 92.3 percent of votes were counted as supporting the president; Bashkortostan reportedly brought in 91.84 percent, Ingushetia, 98.2 percent; Mordovia, 91.35 percent; North Ossetia, 91.2 percent; and Chukotka, 87.24 percent. However, such numbers should be taken with a grain of salt. Some voting station workers in Chechnya said they were ordered to stuff ballot boxes, and many election violations were reported in Bashkortostan. (4)

Certainly, the more politically aware regional leaders were quick to note their region’s overwhelming support of the president during voting, clearly remaining hopeful that the administration would shower its favors on regions that did their bit, regardless of the tenor of their earlier relations. Vladimir Yegorov, Governor of the Kaliningrad Region, said that "We have always felt the support of Vladimir Putin, and we are sure to feel it in the future." "Residents of the Urals area said an emphatic Yes to the president's course towards the revival of a strong state, the establishment of order in the country, the steady development of the economy, the democratic principles and the multi-party system," said Eduard Rossel, governor of the Sverdlovsk Region and a frequent irritant to the Kremlin due to his region’s independent, often anti-federal, attitude. Ivan Malakhov, Governor of the Sakhalin Region, saw Putin's re-election as guaranteeing continuation of the policy aimed at the development of offshore oil and gas deposits of the Sakhalin Island. (5)

Putin’s recorded level of support was strong even in the few instances in which a challenger did well. The president received 75.6 percent of the vote in the Southern Federal District (which includes Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria and Ingushetia), 74.7 percent in the Northwest Federal District (which includes his hometown, St. Petersburg), 74 percent in the Volga Federal District, and 73.6 in the Urals Federal District. He received 67.4 percent in the Central Federal District (which includes Moscow), 64.7 in the Far East Federal District, 66.1 percent in
the Siberian Federal District, and 54.8 percent in the Belgograd District. The second-place finisher, Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) representative Nikolai Kharitonov, received 13.7 percent of the national vote, doing best in regions that traditionally support the KPRF. He gained more than 80 percent in his native Ust-Tarsk district (part of the Novosibirsk region) and 52 percent in the Mashkovskt district (also in Novosibirsk); he garnered 21.52 percent in Chuvashia and 24.57 in Orenburg. Other challengers couldn’t even claim a nominal success: Sergei Glazyev received 4.1 percent of the vote, Irina Khakamada, 3.9 percent, Oleg Malyshkin of the Liberal Democratic Party, 2 percent, and Federation Council Speaker Sergei Mironov, .0.8 percent. "Against all" surpassed Malyshkin and Mironov, with 3.5 percent of the votes. (6)

Loud declarations of support apparently are required; the administration has proven to be not averse to handing out punishment. For example, after Konstantin Titov, the regional Governor of Samara ran against Putin in 2000, federal authorities closed a regional military headquarters there and relocated the offices of the local presidential representative, bringing a loss of money and face to the region. (7)

Of course, the presidential election was not the only contest being fought on 14 March. Some by-elections and gubernatorial elections also were held. In Ulyanovsk, two of the three vacant State Duma seats were filled; however, the third remains open, due to the electoral success of "Against All." This is the second time the "Against All" option won a substantial number of votes for parliamentary seating in the past three months. (8)

Four of the ten gubernatorial elections also require further polling, as winners were not determined in the first round of voting. The incumbent governors of Koryakia autonomous district and the Altai region, Vladimir Loginov and Alexander Surikov, respectively, led in the voting, but did not receive sufficient support to avoid a runoff situation. Runoff elections also will be held in
Arkhangelsk (Governor Anatoli Yefremov came in second) and Ryazan (where Governor Vyacheslav Lyubimov came in third, and so won’t even be participating in the second round of voting). Six governors were re-elected: Ravil Geniatulin (Chita), Anatoli Artamonov (Kaluga), Aleksandr Tkachyov (Krasnodar), Yuri Yevdokimov (Murmansk), Aleksandr Volkov (Udmurtia) and Vladimir Kulakov (Voronezh). (9)

In regional Duma elections, "Against All" continued to do well against other candidates in Sverdlovsk. While the United Russia party obtained a majority of the seats with 35 percent of the vote, "Against All" came in second with 13 percent. (10) Elsewhere, United Russia continued its victorious run, obtaining a constitutional majority in the Tatarstan State Council elections. (11)

**POLITICAL PARTIES**

*Finding a flagpole to rally 'round*

Still reeling from the December 2003 election and United Russia’s massive vote count, Russia’s other political parties continue to try to pick up the pieces and form a coherent whole. A few of those parties have sought that coherent whole by throwing out some pieces altogether.

Certainly the messiest political divorce involved the Rodina (Motherland) bloc, particularly the split between its two founders, Dmitri Rogozin and Sergei Glazyev. As discussed earlier, (12) the Rogozin-Glazyev dispute that had brewed for months came to a head with Glazyev’s (failed) attempt to name a new party Rodina and (failed) run for the presidency. It hasn’t been a good couple of months for the politician. In February, a special congress of the Party of Russian Regions expelled him from the party’s ranks. (13) And the Rodina faction held meetings without him. Indeed, according to Rogozin, Glazyev’s future with the faction would be discussed with him at a later date. (14) Meanwhile, Rogozin has plans for Rodina’s future. Speaking in Berlin last week, Rogozin said the party will adopt a social-democratic program during its June 2004 congress. (15)
Another political bloc that is bursting at its seams is the left-wing coalition of forces known as the Russian People’s Patriotic Union, due to the on-again, off-again, on-again power struggle between KPRF leader Gennadi Zyuganov and Gennadi Semigin, a KPRF member and chairman of the executive committee of the Patriotic Union. While Zyuganov’s crowd remains the party with the most power (though everything is relative after the dismal parliamentary election showing), Semigin reportedly is attempting to consolidate the parties and movements in the Union that are not under Zyuganov’s control, thereby splitting an already fractured left wing. Last week, he succeeded in that venture, as more than 1,000 delegates — including some members of the KPRF — rallied to mark the creation of a new "patriotic" coalition preparing for the 2007 parliamentary elections. "The results of the presidential election are a serious failure for the Communist Party. The party badly needs modernization, a new program and new leaders," Semigin said. (16)

A congress of the KPRF Central Committee is scheduled to meet at the end of the month to deal with the schism. At that point, the KPRF has three choices: kick Semigin out of the party, wrest control of the Union’s executive committee from him, or withdraw from the Union altogether. (17) The option chosen will provide indication of how powerful the KPRF, and Zyuganov, remain.

Meanwhile, the Union of Right-Wing Forces (SPS) is grooming itself to be a supporter of the president, despite years of opposition to the government. According to a statement by the party’s political council, Putin now is advantageously placed to carry out the "liberal reforms" he already has launched. Two of SPS' former chairmen, Boris Nemtsov and Anatoli Chubais, participated as members in the meeting that issued the statement. Khakamada, on the other hand, does not appear willing to compromise to the extent of her fellow former leaders, she has announced plans to create her own party. (18)
Such splits are inevitable in the development of political parties. Other splits are not. In a particularly gruesome extension of politics, Mikhail Kodanev, leader of a faction of Liberal Russia that supported exiled oligarch Boris Berezovsky, was convicted of organizing the April 2003 assassination of MP Sergei Yushenkov, the leader of the registered faction of Liberal Russia that had ousted the Berezovsky group. A Moscow court ruled that Kodanev and his associates plotted the murder in order to win control over the party. Boris Berezovsky protested Kodanev’s innocence and claimed that his supporter had no motive for the killing. (19) In addition to Kodanev, Kodanev’s aide, Aleksandr Vinnik, and two other defendants were found guilty; another two defendants were acquitted. Yushenkov’s widow, Valentine Yushenkova, expressed her faith in the jury’s decision. (20)

MEDIA

New government creates oversight agency
The ripples from the pre-election change of government continue to be visible, and at least one portion of the media is happy about it. The Media Ministry, led by Mikhail Lesin, has been superceded by the newly-formed Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications, headed by Lesin’s former deputy, Mikhail Seslavinsky. Lesin, who served as minister since the post was created in 1999, purportedly turned down an offer to head the new agency, which, despite its grand title, is expected to have less power than the ministry. (21)

Seslavinsky’s ascendance is good news, according to Radio Liberty analyst Anna Kachkayeva. He "is an experienced and intelligent man who knows everyone in the industry," she said. Seslavinsky headed the Federal Television and Radio Broadcasting Service at the end of the 1990s until the service was abolished. He subsequently became first deputy head of the Media Ministry. He is believed to be responsible for creating a transparent system for the issuing of television broadcast licenses. (22)
As to the purpose of the new agency, Seslavinsky explained that it "should not and cannot be a supervisory body. Its main task is to ensure a free and full-fledged development of all the media and the real implementation of the constitutional principle of the freedom of speech." (23)

Source Notes:

(1) The NIS Observed, 3 Mar 04.
(2) Moscow Times, 19 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(3) Moscow Times, 16 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(4) Moscow Times, 16 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(6) Moscow Times, 16 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(7) Financial Times, 10 Mar 04 via Johnson’s Russia List #8107, 10 Mar 04.
(8) Ekho Moskvy, 0445 GMT, 15 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(9) Kommersant, No. 46, RusData Dialine, 16 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(10) Channel 4 TV, 1530 GMT, 15 Mar 04, BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
(12) The NIS Observed, 3 Mar 04.
(14) ITAR-TASS, 1442 GMT, 16 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(15) TASS, 17 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(18) TASS, 18 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(19) Agence France Presse, 19 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(20) IPR Strategic Business Information, 21 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(22) Moscow Times, 18 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(23) ITAR-TASS, 1111 GMT, 19 Mar 04, BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
Final Reflections on Exercise "Security 2004"

As discussed previously in the NIS Observed, Russia held what President Putin described as the largest military exercises "in twenty years" last month. (1) Most of the exercise went according to plan, but the Northern Fleet suffered two major failures on 17 and 18 Feb 04. On the 17th, the Russian Navy’s newest nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine, the Project 667BDRM (Delta IV) class boat Novomoskovsk failed to launch 2 RSM-54 "Sineva" (SS-N-23) sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). Then on 18 Feb, the Karelia, sister ship to the Novomoskovsk, fired an RSM-54 that veered off-course 98 seconds after launch and was destroyed by its internal self-destruct mechanism. (2)

In the pre-glasnost days, of course, the Russia public would never have found out about the mishaps and the lack of preparedness they revealed. Even now, the political and military leaders instinctively try to cover up problems that might reflect poorly on them, rather than try to examine the problems and work to fix them in the light of day. Certainly, Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov, of Kursk infamy, yielded to what commentator Alexander Golts called, "the instinctive temptation of lying" even when it put Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov in an awkward position. (3) After a flurry of confusion, Kuroyedov told the press that the Novomoskovsk launches were "simulations," never actually designed to fire a missile. The media scoffed, because all the pre-exercise publicity had indicated the launches were to be real. And Putin, no doubt concerned about both his re-election campaign and the growing, but still fragile prestige he has worked so hard to gain for the military, said nothing about the 17 Feb failures even though he was present at the launch attempts. Further, on 18 Feb, rather than mention the loss of the Karelia’s missile, he instead chose
to divert attention during a press conference on national TV by announcing that
Russia had just tested the first multiple independently re-targetable maneuvering
reentry vehicles (Mares) in the world. (4) In fact, while the launch failure stories
were carried in most newspapers, under pressure from the Kremlin both major
state-run national channels failed to mention them at all. And when independent
analyst Pavel Felgenhauer was interviewed on two other channels, both he and
the anchors were very worried about the consequences of mentioning the
mishaps on the air. (5) The General Staff, even after it admitted that the Karelia’s
missile had blown up, passed the buck to Admiral Kuroyedov on the question of
what happened on the Novomoskovsk.

But this poor job of a cover up didn’t last long. Immediately following the
exercise, a technical committee was set up to check into the destruction of the
Karelia’s RSM-54. (6) And on 1 Mar 04, President Putin, perhaps not wanting to
appear a fool again, as he did in the days after the loss of the Kursk, publicly
demanded the Defense Ministry and the military immediately investigate both
failures and, after finding and fixing the problem(s), conduct a repeat of the test
launches in the near future. (7)

An intergovernmental commission, with representatives from the Defense
Ministry, the Russian Shipbuilding Agency (for technical knowledge of the
submarine) and the Russian Aeronautical and Space Agency (for technical
knowledge of the SLBM), was dispatched to the Northern Fleet under the
leadership of Colonel-General Aleksandr Rukshin, Deputy Chief of the General
Staff and Chief of the Central Operations Department (roughly the equivalent of
the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff J-3). (8)

General Rukshin’s commission looked at four possible reasons for the
Novomoskovsk’s problem: 1) loss of signal from the Cyclon-B satellite navigation
system, 2) a technical malfunction of the Shlyuz system (ADK-3M) of the Tobol-
M navigation system, 3) an inoperative launch system or 4) a malfunction aboard
the RSM-54 itself. Before leaving Moscow, the committee quickly ruled out the first possibility, after verifying the satellites had been working properly. After they arrived at Northern Fleet headquarters and reviewed the logs and data stored in the various computer systems, they determined that the Shlyuz system (part of the navigation system onboard the submarine that fed updated coordinates to the missile guidance set) had failed three and a half minutes before launch. As soon as the submarine’s Omnibus-BDRM launch control computer recognized that the missile was no longer getting the most recent updates of the submarine’s position, it automatically prevented the launch. (9) As noted in the previous NIS Observed, both Izvestiya and Kommersant reported that the submarine’s commander had discovered a failure of the weapon control system during pre-launch actions and they both pointed out that this was the first launch attempt in many years without a technical expert from the missile design bureau on board. (10) But, based on the reported results of the commission, it appears that the crew was not at fault, although a design engineer aboard may have been able to resolve the problem and allow the exercise to continue. But if that had happened, of course it would not have given a true combat simulation.

While I am not an expert on Russian submarine targeting and launch systems, my years of experience as an ICBM launch officer lead me to believe that this is not as bad a problem as it seems, for two reasons. One, because this was a test launch and not an Emergency War Orders launch, the rules of safety probably were set up so that the missile had to have the submarine’s most current position with 30 seconds or a minute of launch, so it could make a safe and exact flight to the target. An ICBM or SLBM, once brought on line, always tracks where it is using its own internal gyroscopes, but can be off by a small margin without an update from external sources. In a wartime launch, the type of target determines if an outside update is required or if the small error won’t matter (i.e. if the target is not hardened). But in peacetime launches, range safety officers always want the outside update, to ensure the test shot doesn’t stray and hit somewhere you really don’t want it to. The second reason I think this is less of a problem than
some made it out to be is that in wartime, the crew would have overridden the automatic mode (with its built in safety feature) and, launched the missile in any case (assuming it wasn’t a hard target).

The commission then looked at the second, more spectacular failure, the self-destruction of the RSM-54 after its launch from the Karelia on 18 February. In this case, two possible malfunctions were examined: 1) incorrect targeting of the sortie (either by crew error or a malfunction in the Tobol-M navigational system) or 2) a hardware or software problem with the missile guidance set itself. The reason they focused in on these areas is because they had earlier determined that the missile self-destructed when it calculated that it was flying outside the allowable flight path. In other words, the rocket motors worked fine, but the missile was going somewhere it wasn’t supposed to be going. Again, the committee reviewed the logs, computer dumps from the shipboard computers and the telemetry data from the missile (for, as with all test shots, the warhead was replaced with telemetry gathering sensors). In this case, they determined that the flight control software of the missile guidance set (created by the Yekaterinburg Scientific and Industrial Enterprise of Automatic Systems) had a bug that allowed it to stray off course. (11) No further details have been released about exactly what the bug did, but apparently the problem could either be worked around with procedures or actually resolved with a new software load. In light of the short time before the re-test, I believe procedural workarounds were put in place, since it seems likely that the Russians, like the U.S., very carefully tests any changes to the missile flight control program for nuclear missiles and that would take months.

General Rukshin’s group also examined the structure and operation control of the exercise, perhaps making for uncomfortable times for Admiral Sergei Simonenko, the Northern Fleet Chief of Staff and the acting fleet commander, Admiral Suchkov having been removed in Sept 2003 after the loss of the K-159 submarine, and nine lives, en route to the scrap yard. So far nothing has been
released concerning either the exercise procedures or the job status of the Admiral. (12)

After the commission finished its work in Severomorsk, it returned to Moscow and briefed Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov (and possibly President Putin) on its findings and corrective actions. Ivanov then dispatched Admiral Kuroyedov up north to supervise a repeat of the exercise. In a period of several hours on 17 March 04, the Novomoskovsk successfully launched two RSM-54 missiles from launch depth that impacted their intended targets on the Kura Firing Range on the Kamchatka peninsula. (13)

The successful live-fire may have resolved the technical problems and revived the spirits of Putin and Ivanov (to say nothing of the entire Navy chain of command) but the whole episode has raised several questions among Russian military experts. Both retired Admiral Eduard Baltin, former commander of a missile submarine division and of the Black Sea Fleet, and Major-General Vladimir Dvorkin, currently a research fellow at the Russian Academy of Science, agree that the episode shows that the Navy has cultural and training problems. They agree that Russian military leaders, especially Navy brass, have lied and covered up problems rather than simply acknowledging them and moving out to fix them. Both observers agree that this is a cultural and integrity issue that must be fixed. Both also see a chain of command that hasn’t been attentive enough to the sailor’s training needs even though they don’t go to sea as often as is required. Finally, Dvorkin sees this whole sorry mess as "an additional signal that it’s time to unite Russia’s nuclear triad, creating strategic deterrence forces under a united command. Such a structure would ensure uniform requirements for levels of combat training, systems of use, reliability of armaments and military hardware, and nuclear safety." In another case of the top brass resisting military reform at every chance, Dvorkin states that, "...well-founded plans for such changes have long been available, but the General Staff has concentrated all operational and administrative functions in its own hands, stubbornly refusing to
delegate authority down the chain of command. There are no other reasons..." why the plan shouldn’t be implemented he said. (14)

The continued ignoble conduct of the senior military officers is a shame on them and stains the honor of their service and the entire officer corps. And a joint command of nuclear forces has proven to be a success in the U.S. military, since the standing up of U.S. Strategic Command in 1992.

One final note: in the post-exercise news conference, Colonel-General Baluyevsky, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff, proudly said that two of the new "permanent readiness" units were redeployed across Russia via rail and then completed live-fire tactical exercises. While this is highly encouraging, it’s interesting to note that, unlike the U.S., which sends a brigade at a time to both the National Training Center at Fort Irwin and the Joint Training Center at Fort Polk, in this case the deployed unit was a motor rifle company. (15) Russia is making progress, no doubt, but lack of funds and poor unit readiness are still hindering training significantly.

Source Notes:

(1) ITAR-TASS, 1346 GMT 18 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0218 via World News Connection.
(3) Pravda.Russia, 3 Mar 04, via Johnson’s Russia List (JRL) #8098, 3 Mar 04.
(4) ROSBALT, 19 Feb 04, via JRL #8075, 20 Feb 04; ROSSIYSKAYA GAZETA, 20 Feb 04, FBIS-SOV-2004-0220 via World News Connection.
The thoughts and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Dept. of Defense or the United States government.

NAVY

All's well that ends well? The Navy in the nuclear triad

Cognizant of the pre-election dismissal of the nation’s entire cabinet and with fresh memories of last month’s failure to execute three submarine launched missiles, job security and competency were at issue when the Northern Fleet conducted its latest round of launches this week. Like a round from CBS's The
Apprentice and facing the likelihood of being summoned to President Putin’s boardroom to account for their failures, Navy Commander-In-Chief Kuroyedov and Northern Fleet Commander, Admiral Simonenko came through - or did they?

Consistent with Russia’s history and mastery of the art of deception, the launches conducted by the submarine Novomoskovsk were conducted several hours later than planned. At question is why the Novomoskovsk was unable to launch at the predetermined launch time. Did “technical" problems delay the launch as was alleged during the failed launches in February or was it another "simulated" launch that was only a precursor to the eventual launch some four hours later? The answers may illuminate even more issues both within the leadership and the combat readiness of the Navy to fulfill its ever increasing role within Russia’s nuclear triad.

The nuclear-powered submarine, Novomoskovsk, successfully executed an operational test firing of two RSM-54 long-range missiles from the Barents Sea to a landing site some 4000-plus miles to the east in the Kamchatka peninsula. Interfax news agency quoted Navy spokesman Igor Dygalo as saying after the first of the two launches that "the head of the rocket reached the range at the appointed time."(1) All accounts point to a successful conclusion for the second missile firing as well.

The importance of these missile tests can not be understated. Last month’s failures, personally witnessed by President Putin during his visit to the Northern Fleet in advance of the election, prompted President Putin to issue a clear edict to the military to "stage a fresh attempt to put the matter right."(2) With naval commander Vladimir Kuroyedov embarked on a nearby ship to oversee events, the successful launches were a welcome sign. Naval obligations as they are to Russia’s nuclear triad, the launches were imperative to assuring the efficacy of the Navy’s ability to uphold its share of the nuclear panoply. This comes at a time when Russia has begun to flex its strategic/military might vis-à-vis the growing
NATO and United States presence in its "near abroad" within the Commonwealth of Independent States and in concert with Russia's mounting chagrin over continued development of the United States' missile defense system.

In a recent interview with the Voyenno-promyshlenny kuryer (Military-Industrial Courier) weekly, Navy Commander-in-Chief Fleet Admiral Vladimir Kuroyedov avowed that "the naval component in the Russian strategic forces may exceed 50 percent [and] this component has the top priority in Russia's strategic nuclear triad."(3) Shouldered by an antiquated submarine force, Russia's nuclear triad will be burnished by a fourth-generation submarine, currently under production. The first of the class, Yuri Dolgoruki, will help bridge the technological chasm dividing the strategic missile submarine capabilities of Russia and the United States.

Yet, with the pronouncements that the Navy will assume a greater role in the nuclear triad and the appearance of successful launches, the story does not end there. The Russian daily, Moskovskiy komsomolets has reported that the successful launches of 17 March were preceded by another launch failure; Olga Bozhyeva's article, relying on naval sources, accuses the Navy of suppressing official information and the accounts of the launches, as well as the reasons for not conducting the launches on time during a pre-arranged launch window for which it had notified the international community.

Bozhyeva alleges that the Novomoskovsk was unable to launch the missile at the predetermined time of 1100 local leaving the Navy scrambling to rationalize the delays. She surmises that "officially it was stated that the launch had been postponed until 1500 hours. The fleet command imposed a strict ban on the release by its personnel of any information about the reasons for the postponement, and presented a choice of two official versions:
1) they had not had time to warn the Americans about the missile launches; and 
2) the 1100-hour setback should be considered a "simulated electronic" dress 
    rehearsal." (4) 

In addition, Bozhyeva opines that a conspiracy might be at work if technical, 
human or simulation errors can't be verifiably proven. She claims that "from the 
very outset it was not in the interests of certain senior representatives of the 
Navy Main Staff for the launches of the RSM-54 to be successful. It so happens 
that they have major "commercial" interests in missile construction, where a 
desperate struggle is under way for money from the defense orders." (5) The 
crux of the assertion is that the Navy knowingly used a missile that had a history 
of documented technical problems. While this seems the least plausible reason 
for the miscues of February, it remains to be seen whether or not the technical 
faults (known or unknown) were central to the failures. 

All in all, the Navy's compass must be off because it's implausible that notification 
of the Americans or another "simulated electronic" exercise precluded the actual 
launch. The competency of the Navy was vested in the launches of 17 March. It's 
become increasingly clear that whatever the reason for the launches not 
occurring as scheduled, the Navy couldn't, in a simulated and operational test 
environment, fulfill its obligations to launch on time. This fact alone has dire 
ramifications to Russia's nuclear deterrence. Yet, Russia continues to develop 
"new strategic offensive weapons that will essentially render useless any missile 
defense systems" (6) according to General Baluyevsky, First Deputy Chief of 
Russian General Staff. 

Source Notes: 

(1) INTERFAX, 17 Mar 04 via JRL #8124, 18 March 2004. 
(2) INTERFAX, 17 Mar 04 via JRL #8124 18 March 2004. 
(3) ITAR-TASS, 18 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis database.
Ukraine

Attack on the media

Many argue that the Russian president was reelected by such a substantial margin because of his control of the Russian media. Other presidential candidates had very limited media time to "state their cases." Will the same happen in Ukraine? The chances of Kuchma being reelected (or even running) are small. Nonetheless, the media has already suffered a serious blow from the current authorities, whose ultimate goal is to leave some version of the present government in power after the current leaders leave the scene.

Recently, a number of independent newspapers and radio stations have been shut down: Radio Liberty was removed from the air; Roks and Kontinent radio stations, which rebroadcast Radio Liberty, BBC, Deutsche Welle and Public radio, were eliminated; an opposition newspaper Silski Visti was closed. Presently, there are attempts to shut down the last opposition newspaper Ostrov (Donetsk region) and to deprive Channel 5, the only independent TV channel, of its license. (1) There also have been numerous attacks on Ukrainian journalists, allegedly, on the authorities' orders. Heorhiy Chechyk's death is the latest mystery. Chechyk was the director of YUTA television and radio company in Poltava. He was killed in a car accident right before talks began on the right to broadcast Radio Liberty. Heorhiy Gondaze and Ihor Oleksandrov are other alleged victims of Kuchma's regime. (2)
The crude attacks on media in the past month have triggered harsh reactions from journalists and political circles in Ukraine and abroad. An appeal in support of the independent press signed by approximately two million people from all regions of Ukraine has been turned over to the Constitutional Court. In addition, nearly 3,000 opposition supporters gathered in Kiev on Tuesday, March 9, 2004 in protest against the threat to independent mass media. (3) Yushchenko, Tymoshenko and the Socialist Party adopted a resolution, which said: "Today, in independent Ukraine, the authorities are persecuting freedom of speech even more crudely than the tsarist secret police…The authorities feel fear and weakness when people stop being dependent on their manipulations and start taking their own balanced decisions." (4)

Such an attack on media is undoubtedly timed to influence the October 2004 presidential elections. The authorities are attempting to silence as many opposition voices as possible, as quickly as possible, with the ultimate goal of leaving some form of the current administration in power. There is a good chance that their efforts will be successful. In a county where neither the opposition nor the authorities enjoy overwhelming popularity, the victory is likely to go to those whose voice is heard the most.

BELARUS
Nationalization?
Recently, the President Alyaksandr Lukashenko signed an edict that would allow the government to interfere in the decision-making of privatized companies if these companies face an "unfavorable economic situation," calling it "the golden share" clause. (7) In particular, should the government decide that the formerly state-owned enterprises are not doing their job (e.g. not paying wages to its employees or producing an unsatisfactory balance sheet), the government now has a right to alter a company's policy. Lukashenko also stated that "the government can interfere to protect employees' rights or the nation's economic interests and security." (8)
This edict is yet another blow to almost nonexistent freedom of enterprise in Belarus. Interfering with activities of private enterprises will mean hampering any rudiments of a market economy that might exist in Belarus. "Protecting employees" will mean limiting the employers in their ability to restructure their companies, which often involves letting the employees go and acquiring new technologies for the freed up resources. The practice is non sustainable in the long run. And if Lukashenko is sincere in his desire to "protect nation's [long run] economic interests and [economic] security, "he should allow the Belarussians to engage in free enterprise and provide them with adequate conditions to do so. It is not likely to happen, however, as sustaining a socialist way of running the economy and avoiding the struggles of transition is the only thing that keeps Lukashenko in power. And he is not about to give it up.

**BRSM members switch sides.**

Over 100 Belarussian students, previously enrolled in a youth organization BRSM, which supports President Lukashenko, have switched over to an illegal opposition youth movement Zubr, setting a precedent in Belarus. The students stated that they have closed the chapter of the pro-governmental organization in their institute in Baranovichy. (5) The authorities reacted immediately when the new members showed up at the university the next day wearing Zubr badges and distributing the newspaper Resistance among the students. The police detained around 20 new Zubr members, accusing them of illegal activities and changing them with violating Article 167-10 of the Code of Administrative Offences. An activist of Zubr Sergei Polishchuk was beaten by the police and questioned about the financial sources of the organization, locations of the newsletter printing facilities, and the names of Zubr leaders' in Barabovichy. (6)

**MOLDOVA**

A report published by the Federation of European Employers, an independent organization created in 1989 on the initiative of the European Commission, states
that Moldova has the lowest wages in Europe. To use the absolute numbers: one hour of labor in Denmark (which has the highest average salary in Europe) costs an employer on average 27.89 Euro, when in Moldova it costs him/her 0.32 Euro. Moldovan salary is only 1.14% of the Danish one. (9) The statistics do not come as a surprise given that Moldova is the poorest European country.

**Happy anniversary!?**

The month of March 2004 has marked the 12th anniversary of the Dniester war. Trans-Dniester was formally an autonomous area within Ukraine before 1940 when the Soviet Union combined it with Bessarabia to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. This area is mainly inhabited by Russian and Ukrainian speakers. (10)

As the predominantly Slavic population of Trans-Dniester became increasingly worried about Moldova's closer ties with Romania, Trans-Dniester declared its independence from Moldova in September 1990. Fighting broke out in March 1992, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with hundreds dying before Russian "peacekeepers" were introduced in mid-1992. (11) Trans-Dniester is not recognized as a state by any country in the world and it has been plagued by lawlessness and corruption for more than a decade.

The Trans-Dniester conflict directly contributes to the devastated economic situation in Moldova - the poorest country in Europe, where 80% of the population live below the poverty line. The conflict keeps away many potential foreign investors, whose capital could have substantially speeded up Moldova's transition to a functioning market economy.

Russian troops are still stationed in the region despite Moscow's pledge to withdraw its soldiers from Trans-Dniester by 2002, a deadline that was extended to 2003 with the agreement of the OSCE pan-European security body, but also
has not been honored. (12) In November of 2003, President Voronin rejected the Russian project, which proposed an asymmetric federalization of Moldova.

Europe and the United States clearly want complete elimination of Russia's military presence in the region. "The United States needs a clear Black Sea region," says Viktor Martynov, a prominent Tiraspol political scientist, "What does it need a military base near the Romanian Konstanza for? If enforcement of democracy on the world continues at Iraqi rate, then some filtration camps will certainly be required, and Moldova may become one. Russia is only an obstacle." (13)

Russia, on the other hand, is determined to keep its presence in the region. It will be very hard to convince Moscow to leave when Moldova's neighbor, Romania, is due to join NATO this year and Ukraine has also expressed interest in becoming a member.

With no compromise in sight, the conflict has the potential to last for decades – celebrating its 20th anniversary could be a sad reality.

Source Notes:

(1) Glavred, 9 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(2) UNIAN news agency, 12 March 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(3) ITAR-TASS News Agency, 9 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(4) Glavred, 9 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(5) AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 3 Mar 04 via Lexis-Nexis.
(7) BELAPAN NEWS AGENCY, 2 Mar 04; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(8) Ibid.
Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Ariela Shapiro

Azerbaijan

Ilham Aliyev is trying to expand and diversify Azerbaijan’s energy sector by solidifying bilateral and trilateral relations with Azerbaijan’s neighbors. On 2 March, Aliyev concluded a two-day visit to Kazakhstan in which the Azerbaijani leader had extensive discussions with top Kazakhstani officials, including President Nursultan Nazarbaev and Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov. (1) The meetings yielded a variety of cooperation agreements covering agriculture, aviation, defense, energy transport, trade and cultural exchanges, with energy cooperation dominating the Azeri agenda. (2) The Kazakh government, hesitant to annoy Moscow, nonetheless signaled commitment to the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Aliyev gushed that Kazakh participation in the BTC project would meet both Kazakh and Azeri interest while bolstering regional security (3). While hailing the pipeline’s potential, Kazakhstani leaders remain reluctant to commit themselves fully to the project.

Following the Azeri-Kazakh meeting, Baku hosted, on 16-17 March, the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the five Caspian littoral states (Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) for the 13th round of the Caspian Working
Group. (4) The 16-17 March Meeting marked the resumption of Caspian Talks, which were suspended two years earlier by Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan over delineating their respective sectors of the Caspian. However, the Group did not accomplish much in resolving recurrent disputes and has many remaining obstacles to hurdle, as indicated by Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mehdi Safari’s denouncing of the bilateral and trilateral agreements signed between Russia and Azerbaijan; between Russia and Kazakhstan and those among the three states delineating their respective sectors of the Caspian (5). Additionally, Safari restated Iran's continued demands that the Caspian be demilitarized and divided into five equal parts, which would give Iran 20.4% (6).

Georgia
In 18 March, Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili announced an end to the economic blockage of Adjarian, which had been imposed since 14 March. This announcement came on the heels of direct negotiations between Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili and Adjarian leader Aslan Abashidze. The decision to isolate Adjarian economically followed an incident on 14 March, in which Adjarian border guards prevented Saakashvili's motorcade from entering the region (7). In return for the lifting of the economic blockage, Abashidze acknowledged Tbilisi’s right to "impose control over customs, the port and all strategic offices," while promising to hold competitive elections in the 28 March parliamentary race. (8) In addition, Saakashvili will hold Abashidze responsible for disarming bands of recently-mobilized Adjarian citizens (9). A potential source of future tension between Tbilisi and Batumi will be Abashidze’s follow-through on allowing free March elections. However, pressure on Abashidze to hold a fair election is not coming solely from Tbilisi. Before the announced ending of the economic barrier, Council of Europe Secretary-General Walter Schwimmer telephoned Abashidze, urging the Adjarian leader to provide for an open campaign environment (10).
The United States and Russia were also involved in seeking a peaceful resolution to the tensions between Tbilisi and Batumi, establishing a pattern of West-East behavior via the South Caucasus. On 15 March, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov arrived in Batumi with the personal endorsement of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in an offer to mediate the conflict. (11) The offer of mediation coincided with a meeting between Nino Burjanadze and Russian Ambassador Vladimir Chkhikvishvili and the resulting announcement that Russia would not interfere in Georgia’s domestic affairs and would maintain neutrality. (12) The indicated interest of the Russian government in Tbilisi-Batumi relations was matched by those of the United States. On 16 March, Ambassador Miles met with Saakashvili and Zhvania in Poti. (13) Ambassador Miles’ statements paralleled Chkhikvishvili’s in that the United States regarded Tbilisi-Batumi relations as internal matters, and would mediate to ease tensions between Saakashvili and Abashidze. (14) Miles’ statements follow those made three months prior by the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Lynn Pascoe, during a visit to Georgia, in which Pascoe stated that Adjaria was an internal matter for Georgia. (15)

The Russian and American strategies and interests displayed during the recent tensions in Georgia are similar to those employed during the overthrow of Shevardnadze. The Russian and American behavior indicates the future pattern of Russian-American conduct in dealing with Southern Caucasus hot spots, as well as the joint Russian-American interest to maintain a status quo in the South Caucasus.

**Chechnya**

Pro-Moscow Chechen Administration head Ahmed Kadyrov has appointed Sergei Abramov, from the Auditing Chamber, to replace Anatoli Popov as Prime Minister of Chechnya (16). Abramov’s appointment and the replacement of General Kazantsev, former Presidential Envoy for the Southern federal district, with Vladimir Yakovlev, a former Putin aide, (17) indicate Putin’s efforts to
centralize power and strengthen control over Chechnya. Popov was the head of federal state enterprise "Directorate for Construction and Restoration Works in Chechnya," which had been included in the State Construction Committee, and participated in the distribution of contracts for construction and restoration of different objects before his appointment as Chechen Prime Minister. (18) Popov was to supervise and allocate the financial flow from Moscow to Chechnya, but, as a 17 March Nezavisimaya gazeta highlights, Popov, contrary to Putin’s intentions, became too dependent on Kadyrov and didn't participate in housing affairs. (19) Popov’s dismissal has been expected since his 27 September poisoning incident and consequent treatment in Moscow’s Central Clinical Hospital. (20) During his protracted stay in Moscow, Popov was absent from some several meetings of the Auditing Chamber in October and November 2003, when the debate and subsequent allocations concerning the financing of Chechen housing projects were discussed. (21) Kadyrov has used Popov’s dismissal as an occasion to assign the former Chechen Prime Minister blame for the massive misallocation of housing funds and irregularities in Chechnya’s finances. (22) Questions, arise over Kadyrov’s allegations given that, in Popov’s absence, Kadyrov appointed Eli Isayev, finance minister of Chechnya and a close Kadyrov aide and dependent, to be acting Premier, and since Popov’s absence Isayev has been in control of the government (23). As per the Kremlin, Putin was worried that an Isayev-Kadyrov team would grow too independent and therefore forced the appointment of Sergei Abramov as Prime Minster. Sergei Abramov in linked to Moscow, as demonstrated by his previous jobs as chairman of Russia’s Auditing Chamber in Chechnya since 2003 and as Chechen Finance Minister from 2001- 2003. (24) He likely poses little threat relative to either Popov and Isayev.

Source Notes:

(1) Itar-Tass Moscow, 11 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Khabar TV, Almaty, 7 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis 8 Mar.
(4) Financial Times, 16 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(5) Interfax, Moscow, 17 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(6) Gazeta.ru, Mar 18; Russia Oil and Gas Report; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis 19 Mar.
(7) Moscow Times, 16 Mar 2004, pg. 11.
(8) Rustavi-2, Tbilisi; BBC Monitoring; 18 Mar via Lexis-Nexis 19 Mar.
(9) Ibid; http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav031804.shtml
(10) Itar-Tass, Moscow, Mar 17 BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(12) Financial Times, Mar 16; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis
(13) Kommersant, 16 Mar; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
(15) Imedi TV, Tbilisi; Financial Times; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis, 13 Jan.
(16) Vremya Novostei, Mar 16; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
(17) Financial Times, 12 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(18) Interfax, Moscow, 19 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(19) Nezavisimaya gazeta, Mar 17; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
(20) Interfax Sep 27, via Financial Times, via BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis Sep 29.
(21) Nezavisimaya Gazeta, Mar 17; What the Papers Say via Lexis-Nexis.
(22) Interfax Moscow, 19 Mar; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
(23) Itar-Tass Moscow, 28 Jan via Lexis-Nexis, 29 Jan.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia
By David Montgomery

Border control in Tajikistan
Russian troops have maintained a presence along the Afghan-Tajik border since the late 19th century. On March 17, however, Lieutenant General Abdurahmon Azimov, head of the Tajik Border Committee, made a statement that Tajikistan was prepared to assume control of a 600 kilometer section of the eastern Pamir Afghan-Tajik border. This increased responsibility for the Tajik military does not mean that Russian forces will cease playing a role in monitoring the borders. On the contrary, Azimov made it clear that "the Russian presence may be represented by the institution of military advisers at all frontier posts and commandants’ offices… [and the number of advisers] may be quite large." (1) Close cooperation continues between the two militaries — with both Russian and Tajik forces recently collaborating in counterterrorism exercises (2) — while the focus has been towards shifting responsibility for border control to the Tajiks and at the same time trying set up a Russian base in the country.

The most recent round of talks between Russian and Tajik officials about establishing a Russian military base in Tajikistan, however, has once again ended in failure. (3) In 1999, the presidents of Russia and Tajikistan agreed to the establishment of a Russian military base in Tajikistan, but they have regularly failed to reach consensus. (4) And while both sides say that they are close to an agreement, key points remain to be resolved.

One reason is that Tajikistan is playing U.S. interests in the region of Russia’s desire to increase its hegemonic presence. The recent extradition of former Tajik Interior Minister Yoqub Salimov can be seen as an attempt by Russia to garner favor with the Tajik government. (5) The U.S. contributed $43 million in aid to Tajikistan for 2003 and it has been rumored by Nezavisimaya gazeta that the U.S. has offered to increase significantly their support to Tajikistan if the Russians are not allowed to establish a permanent military base in the country. (6) Of course these rumors are officially denied, but certainly the increased U.S. involvement in the region has given Tajikistan added leveraging power.
For the base to be established, Tajikistan has requested that Russia write off $300 million of Tajik debt, and grant Tajikistan control over the organization of the base. An unnamed source with the Russian Defense Ministry pragmatically commented on the Tajik demands: "We can write off a part of Tajikistan's $300 million debt to Russia, especially since Dushanbe is unable to pay off the entire debt anyway, and it can hardly count on financial assistance from the United States." (7) Going further, the source added: "Moscow has no intention of agreeing to Dushanbe's claims to obtain the right to manage the movable property of the 201st division and other Russian units, as well as their real estate in the event of the Tajik leadership taking the decision that they should withdraw from the republic." (8) In other words, Russia is willing to grant Dushanbe some concessions, but ultimate control of the base remains with Russia.

Anticipating that the situation will eventually be resolved and Russia will establish a military base in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan has been informed that the Russian base in Osh (in Southern Kyrgyzstan), will be transferred to Kyrgyz jurisdiction. (9) The base currently serves the Russian border troops stationed in Tajikistan and it is unlikely that such a transfer will occur until after the Russian base in Tajikistan is established.

**Update on media in Kazakhstan**

Updating the status of the media in Kazakhstan, (10) on 17 and 18 March the lower and upper houses of parliament, respectively, passed amendments to a bill that critics claim will further limit free speech. While the private media are relatively developed in Kazakhstan, approximately 80 percent is controlled by the family and friends of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. The recent media bill has a number of groups, such as Reporters Without Borders, concerned that an arbitrary system of registration and ambiguously-defined restrictions will allow inappropriate manipulation of the media and diminish the necessary conditions for objective reporting. (11)
Already threats, beatings, and prison sentences for outspoken journalists foster an environment of self-censorship. There is a prevailing sense that the opposition media is unduly harassed, and the recent sentencing of Vladimir Mikhailov suggests political motives. Mikhailov, publisher of the independent weekly Diazapon and director of both Rifma media company and Arsenal publishing, was sentenced to a one year prison term for failing to implement a 2002 court order requiring him to reposition a load-bearing wall in a rental space which he owned. What is at issue is the disproportionate prison sentence, which is believed by some press freedom observers to be an attempt to curtail Diazapon's criticism of local and regional officials. (12)

**Role of Iran and China in the region**

While Russia and the U.S. are seen as the most active among the actors vying for hegemonic influence in Central Asia, Iran and China have made steps towards improving relations within the region. Iranian President Mohammad Khatami met with Abdygany Erkebayev, Kyrgyz Chairman of the Legislative Assembly, where the mutual desire to expand relations and implement existing agreements was expressed. (13) Tehran called on Uzbekistan to increase the transit of goods between the two countries via the Bafq-Mashhad railway line, scheduled to open within the next few months. (14) Khatami further reached out to Tajikistan, expressing a desire to expand cooperation between the two countries (15) and Iran has agreed to help Tajikistan complete the construction of the 670 million watt hydraulic power plant in Sangtudeh. (16)

On 25 May, China and Tajikistan plan to open the first border trading port between the two countries. The Kalasu Port will allow direct trade and travel between the two countries (though the border will be closed to third country nationals), thereby decreasing the transit cost of products that had been transported through a third country. (17) Kazakhstan is also hoping to tap into the Chinese trade market with plans to construct a new railway that would more efficiently connect China and Europe. (18) And in the later half of 2004,
Kazakhstan will begin the construction of the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline which will transport oil from the center of Kazakhstan to the Chinese border. (19)

Source Notes:

(1) ITAR-TASS, 1710 GMT, 17 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0317 via World News Connection.
(2) ITAR-TASS, 0544 GMT, 9 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0309 via World News Connection.
(3) Mayak Radio (Moscow), 1700 GMT, 4 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0304 via World News Connection.
(4) ITAR-TASS, 1440 GMT, 5 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0305 via World News Connection; Eurasia Insight, 4 Mar 04 via www.eurasianet.org
(5) For more on the Salimov extradition, see NIS Observed, 5Mar 04 via www.bu.edu/iscip
(6) Eurasia Insight, 4 Mar 04, via www.eurasianet.org
(7) ITAR-TASS, 1710 GMT, 5 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0305 via World News Connection.
(8) A clause on the status of the base proposed by Tajik officials includes: "the Tajik president (Emomali Rakhmonov) has the right to take command of Russia's 201st division in emergency situations and use it for protecting national interests." Russia, of course, views such clause as unacceptable. ITAR-TASS, 1439 GMT, 4 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0304 via World News Connection.
(9) Kabar News (Bishkek), 1700 GMT, 10 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0310 via World News Connection.
(10) See NIS Observed, 6 Feb 04 via www.bu.edu/iscip
(11) RFE/RL, 18 Mar 04 via www.rferl.org
(14) IRNA (Tehran), 1518 GMT, 13 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0313 via World News Connection.
(16) IRNA (Tehran), 1122 GMT, 16 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0316 via World News Connection.
(17) Xinhua (Beijing), 1536 GMT, 6 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0306 via World News Connection.
(18) Xinhua (Beijing), 1220 GMT, 12 Mar 04; FBIS-SOV-2004-0312 via World News Connection.

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