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Power, Policy & Political Parties: Interview

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Boston University
Power, Policy & Political Parties: Interview
with Boris Nemtsov

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During his tenure as the governor of Nizhny Novgorod, beginning in 1991, Boris Y. Nemtsov gained international renown as one of the most promising young reformers and a possible successor to President Yel'tsin. In 1997 he was summoned to the Kremlin to become deputy prime minister (and later first deputy prime minister) in Victor Chernomyrdin's government. After Sergei Kirienko became prime minister, Boris Yefimovich continued in his post, concentrating on curbing monopoly power and supervising the ceremonial funeral of Nikolai II. He resigned his government position in the aftermath of the ruble devaluation last August and went on to organize the coalition called "Just Cause," which unites several democratic parties for the upcoming Duma elections. Susan Cavan and I met with Boris Yefimovich on February 8. We appreciate the courtesy of Harvard University's Davis Center for Russian Studies in facilitating this interview. -- ML

Miriam Lanskoy: When you first entered the government you referred to yourself as a "kamikaze." That was a term Gaidar used in '92 as well. What did you mean, that you would be swallowed up in intrigue or that your measures would prove unpopular?

Boris Nemtsov: I had never been a bureaucrat before. I was elected every time -- three times -- to my previous positions. I had some ideas what Moscow's corridors of power would mean. I didn't know of any examples of persons who spent some time in the White House in Moscow [and] who became more popular than they were before the appointment. If you are popular before Yel'tsin puts you in the White House, you
immediately become unpopular. If you are intelligent, your popularity will grow and then go down. If not, it will happen immediately. That's why I used this term, "kamikaze."

Second, I didn't know about the underground scene inside the White House. When I was in Nizhny Novgorod I believed that I knew, but I was mistaken, I did not know. I did not understand what kind of pressure needed to be put on Yeltsin, on Chernomyrdin, and other persons [to accomplish one's objectives]. I did not know what kind of treatment you would receive if you did something wrong, for example from the oligarchs' point of view. I couldn't even estimate the number of conflicts on the inside.

I feel, generally, that it is not so easy to be in Moscow for a long time and to do something to stop some of the corrupt practices. And that's what we did. My first real accomplishment was to alter the distribution of contracts among suppliers to the government.

I instituted a system where public officials had to make full public disclosure of their property and finances.

Susan Cavan: But only a few officials actually did that.

BN: No, thousands and thousands did: everybody except Luzhkov.

SC: Was anyone ever investigated?

BN: Sometimes, yes. You know this is not so bad. I knew there would be wrong information -- bureaucrats are not so afraid about such things. They would try to find some opportunity to overcome this difficulty. Finally the independent press tried to investigate. Not everyone tried, but those who were interested, like Berezovsky, tried to investigate this more carefully and found a lot of things.
This is very important. This [trend toward disclosure] is impossible to stop. How can you issue a decree now to abolish the financial disclosure? How would you explain that to the public? We started it and it's impossible to stop. If you have some elements of democracy, it is impossible to reverse this.

**Power Struggles**

SC: What is the role of public opinion now?

BN: Russia has independent mass media. What does it mean in Russia? There are several groups, for example, the MOST-Media group, the Berezovsky group, the Alekperov group, the Potanin group, the Luzhkov group and then some independent papers, like *Kommersant*. (1) They have different views on the same subject. And this is really the independence of the press. But, within a group there is no independence. Within a group there is strong control and discipline, like under the communist system. Fortunately we have several groups and there is no monopoly in this area. Primakov tries to control everything -- he's Soviet. (2) He is intelligent, experienced, but Soviet. He wants to control everything. But it's not so easy. For example he came to agreement with Vyakhirev and Gusinsky, but he has no idea how to find compromise with Berezovsky.

ML: Primakov seems to have become more powerful in recent months while Berezovsky's influence has declined. How did that come about?

BN: There are several rumors about the resignation of the prosecutor, Yuri Skuratov, last week.(3) One of the quite realistic explanations is that this is the result of Berezovsky's influence.

What is the source of Berezovsky's power? There is only one source -- he has two, but the most influential is the First Channel (ORT). He always uses ORT for his political purposes, for blackmail. If he wants to press me, [present] me with specific views or
demands, there will be a Sergei Dosenko special on [the issue]. I don't think he is weak now, because he has another source of power, his relationship with some people in the Kremlin, like Yel'tsin's daughter [Tatiana Dyachenko]. That's why I don't think that Berezovsky will decline.

**ML:** The explanation for extensive presidential power has been the need to push through reform. But now Primakov has that power ...

**BN:** Can you give me examples of his strong power, examples of Primakov's power?

**ML:** He's chairing a meeting of the Security Council and they're expected to approve...

**BN:** No! Never! Never! He will be fired immediately after that. His "treaty" will be neglected tomorrow. Forget about that! I know that -- I looked into this very carefully. Yel'tsin is very envious about anyone in the world who wants to cut his power, his own power. There are three parts to Primakov's "treaty." First, the Duma has to stop the impeachment process. Second, Yel'tsin will not dismiss the State Duma. Third, Yel'tsin has no chance to fire the government. One is nothing for Yel'tsin, because to organize impeachment is very complicated in Russia. Second, to dismiss Duma -- he's not worried about that. But the third part, when Primakov suggests to Yel'tsin 'don't fire me,' that is impossible. Yel'tsin was so angry about that. Believe me; look at tomorrow's news. The treaty will be about the first two parts. The third: Never.

**SC:** There were reports on Friday that Yel'tsin agreed to it at the Security Council meeting.

**BN:** To what?

**SC:** The Primakov proposal.

**BN:** No, what kind of proposal ... the third one?
**SC:** Yes.

**BN:** Don't fire the government ...

**SC:** All of them are in place until the next Duma elections.(4)

**BN:** This is another story. (Laughter) Let me explain. The Primakov treaty had a very important chapter, that Yel'tsin can't touch Primakov until the next presidential election. This is not the same. Now he can read, "don't touch the bulk of the government until the Duma election." That's a great idea. I totally agree. Because you know Primakov organized a very stupid economic policy this year; to organize barter, to forget about cash flow into the budget, and to print a huge amount of money. It is his responsibility, what has happened with the Russian economy during these few months. I absolutely agree with Yel'tsin. What is absolutely unbelievable, and what is not going to happen, is Yel'tsin agreeing not to touch Primakov up to 2000. That's another story you know.

I think that Yel'tsin has a chance to appoint his own successor. This is his chance. He will try to use it. He will appoint a new prime minister and the new prime minister will be his successor. This is Yel'tsin's view -- I know him.

**ML:** Who would that person be?

**BN:** I know who it is not. (Laughter) Luzhkov it's not.

**ML:** Not Luzhkov ...

**BN:** Primakov, maybe, but he is not so lucky... maybe. There will not be too many choices. This is the main thing now. The main struggle for the next few months will be over who will be appointed prime minister after the Duma elections. This is the main challenge for Russia.
Disunity Among Democrats

**ML:** Let's talk about the Duma elections. It seems that the Democrats have the best chance against the Communists if they are united. Why did you unite into a coalition of parties rather than as a party?

**BN:** Well, it doesn't matter for the election; under Russian laws, if you have a coalition, you also have a united list. The same thing happens [with a coalition as] with a party. So, it doesn't matter. To organize a united party is a very complicated task because we have a lot of small parties who believe that people will love their courage. If you tell them "forget about your supporters, let's organize some united party," it would take a lot of time, a lot of discussion, a lot of trouble, and maybe some of the parties you ask will never want to be together. But the coalition is enough to take part [in the Duma election] as a united team.

The problem is not whether we run as a coalition or as a party. The problem is what will happen with Yavlinsky and what will happen with "Our Home is Russia." We have our coalition, "Just Cause." My view is that, to win, we have to play together. Yavlinsky's view: Never.

**ML:** Why is that?

**BN:** "I'm the leader. I'm great and people love me and that's why I'll be on my own forever" -- this is his view. This may be a bit primitive way of putting it, but generally this is his view.

**ML:** Is that because Gusinsky will support him with money?

**BN:** Not money. Prospects, opportunities to have some use of TV and regional branches. Gusinsky has a lot of regional branches, not only nationwide, but regional branches. This is important.
Another explanation for Yavlinsky is that he doesn't want to have anything to do with these guys who were in the government, who are responsible for reform. That's why he is absolutely against Gaidar and Chubais. Their popularity is low -- that is true. What is strange for me is that he is against Kirienko. This is strange. The intelligentsia in Russia, the elite, has two problems with Yavlinsky. First, he will never be responsible for anything. He is in opposition to everything and he has no concrete task in his life. Second, he has no ideas on how to organize coalitions. People are nervous about that. I think that Yavlinsky needs us more than we need him. But he's against this. Then if we will join them, I will [bring in] more votes. I am a symbol of democratic reform -- but there is no movement from him in that direction.

ML: He was here in December and I asked him whether he would cooperate with your coalition. He said he invited all of you into YABLOKO. (5)

BN: I'll explain to you how he did it. It's a funny story. He said, "We won't let you into YABLOKO right away. First you have to be a candidate member for five years." This is very offensive. Who is he that I should be his candidate? He worked under me in Nizhny Novgorod. When he proclaimed the idea that, "Boris, you can be a member after four years" -- this is impossible. Maybe, this is for you, so he can explain "I invited [Nemtsov] to be a member of YABLOKO, but he refused." If he had said, "Let's organize a coalition and YABLOKO will be our symbol," that would be different.

ML: Well, what are you going to do about it?

BN: This is a bad joke -- candidate for four years. Probably, he is afraid about his leadership. I'm not.

ML: Your coalition, then, does it have a regional structure?

BN: We have the coalition in 20 regions now. But the main task for me, especially for me, is to define it structurally, with different members taking the responsibility for
different sections of the country. I'm responsible in the Volga region and some Siberian regions like Krasnoyarsk krai and so on. The main task is to organize the structure of the coalition.

**SC**: When you said 20 regions, did you mean that the governors or members of the legislative council are in line?

**BN**: It's funny: Officials are not against us. Maybe they're afraid of Chubais because he is chief of our electricity system,(6) or maybe there is another reason. I don't know. They are always very pleased to meet us. They are concerned about our public support. Deputies from regional parliaments, they support us a lot; especially managers and new business representatives.

**SC**: I hate to press the point: When you say they support you, do you mean that you have an office there with staff, or is it just that you've heard from people...

**BN**: No, we have a much easier way of feeling their support: Governor TV. The governor goes on a TV show about my visit to his region. "Governor TV" means regional TV stations. If they show "Boris met with the governor, they discussed this, this, and this. Then Boris gave a lecture at the university" -- without any argument or discussion -- this means I have their support. Offices don't really matter to us. TV is really the main issue.

**Decision Makers**

**ML**: How powerful is the Security Council and to what extent does that power depend upon who is SC secretary? It seems that when Skokov was there it was very powerful and since then it declined ...

**BN**: Unfortunately there is no legal foundation for the Security Council; that's why everything depends upon personal politics and the personal position of the Security
Council secretary. Lebed was very powerful. That's why the council was powerful at that
time. Lebed was involved in the Chechnya war and the peace treaty, and after that he
was fired. Rybkin had no political connection -- he was weak. That's why the council
was weak. There is no legislation about the Security Council. The only thing we have is
the constitution, which suggests the existence of such organization inside the Kremlin.
But there is not a law -- I think this is a problem. It all depends on underground
relationship with Yel'tsin, Tatiana, Yumashev and Bordyuzha.(7)

SC: That is an interesting point. Bordyuzha is both chief of staff and head of the Security
Council. Doesn't that give him significant power?

BN: Yes, but it's not enough. You have to be a political leader and this is a problem -- to
be a political leader and to stay in the Kremlin. If you are not Yel'tsin, this is impossible.

SC: Some people manage it for awhile.

BN: Can you give me an example? I know of only one -- Lebed.

SC: Filatov.(8)

BN: No. He wasn't a political leader.

ML: Primakov.

BN: I mean Secretary of Security Council. Bordyuzha does have much more power than
before. That's true, but that's not enough to solve big questions like resolutions of the
government, appointments for very important positions...

SC: Do you have any idea why Yumashev was dismissed?
**BN:** Today Yel'tsin is at the funeral [for King Hussein of Jordan]. He went because he wants to show the world that he's powerful, he's in good shape. I have my own view: Maybe it's just a joke. I think that when he was in the hospital, he read the newspaper and noticed that he had no power, that nobody paid any attention to him. Life was going in one direction and Yel'tsin was staying in another hospital. Well, I think that he was so angry about that he wanted to prove to the nation that he's a Russian tsar. How to prove it? Fire somebody. If you fire some very small bureaucrat nobody will notice. It was impossible to fire Primakov or somebody in his government. What other choice did he have? To fire Dyachenko? That's why his choice was his chief [of staff]. This is my explanation, maybe it's not true, but ...(laughter)

**ML:** Let's look at some other instances of firing. When Chernomyrdin was fired in March '98, what was the run-up? Were you involved in the decision making?

**BN:** I was not. Chernomyrdin made several very important mistakes. His first mistake was when he reduced our power, I mean Chubais and myself. When we got into office we did very efficient things. We reduced the inflation rate; there was GDP growth, rate of incomes for people increased in that year; foreign investment tripled; the situation in industry improved dramatically. In the end of '97, Chernomyrdin was so afraid of the powerful assistants that he decided to reduce our powers. And he did. He said "I am responsible for the energy sector, I am responsible for this, this and this, and that."

**ML:** What led up to his firing?

**BN:** Yel'tsin was sick, like every time. In the middle of January when we took a helicopter ride, Yel'tsin said to me "Boris, what is happening with Chernomyrdin? Does he need more power, that he takes power from Chubais and Nemtsov?" Yes, he did [take power away from us]. But this was his mistake because he had no idea how to cooperate with the government. We had all the power. He [Chernomyrdin ] would be responsible...for salaries, payments, whatever.
His second mistake occurred in the United States when he met with Al Gore and said "you and me, we'll define the future of our great nations in the 21st century."

Unbelievable! Unbelievably stupid! Of course, Yel'tsin was shocked by this move. But I was not involved in this. Early in the morning I was driving my car from the country, it was a Monday, and Chubais called me in the car and said "Boris!" he was so excited about this news, he said "Boris! I was fired just now! A few minutes ago! But you're still in the government, we'll meet now in your office." (Laughs) I had no idea about his resignation, really.

SC: What about the appointment of Sergei Kirienko?

BN: Well that's a funny story about the appointment of Kirienko. I saw Kirienko the day before that, it was Sunday. He was my deputy, as the Minister for Fuel and Energy. He is my guy, but if he had known about his new appointment I would have noticed. He said nothing. We discussed some very interesting things about the Unified Energy System, but he did not know, I'm sure. Early the next morning he was invited to Yel'tsin's office.

SC: But who would have selected Kirienko? I mean, did Yel'tsin know enough about everyone in the government to be able to say "Kirienko is the one I want"?

BN: Yel'tsin saw Kirienko three times before. One time -- the 10th of March, as far as I know -- I think it was in March, I was in Germany and Kirienko called me and asked what kind of behavior was required of him when meeting with Yel'tsin. Well, because I've known Yel'tsin for about eight years, I gave him some advice about that. Up until then, there had been no connection. I think that it was some discussion between Yumashev, Dyachenko, Berezovsky, and some other oligarchs, maybe Chubais. The discussion started in the middle of '97 about appointing a new chairman of the government, but this was only talk.

SC: In March was there any awareness of what was coming down the road -- the possible devaluation?
BN: We had a political task at that time: to get support from the State Duma. As far as the financial situation is concerned, we paid more attention to the stability of the [domestic indicators]. By then it was too late; from my point of view we had to devalue the domestic currency by the end of '97, immediately after the Indonesian and South Korean crises.

ML: Is it possible that Kirienko was set up to take the blame for the economic crisis?

BN: No, I don't think so. I don't think that Russian bureaucrats are so clever. Nobody had any ideas about the financial crisis. The first time we discussed that was in the end of April with [US Deputy Treasury Secretary] Larry Summers and [US Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs] David Lipton. They came by my office and we discussed, not exactly devaluation, but the financial situation in the country, the domestic and international debt, and general aspects of economy. Larry told me at that time that the eastern crisis could affect the Russian economy deeply and we would have to prepare something to defend against it.

SC: During April, before the actual confirmation, was the government not meeting?

BN: No, no, we met. But when you have one task -- to get through the State Duma -- you have to concentrate on that task. There were a lot of meetings, a lot of discussions, but none of that really counted. It's obvious. It's impossible to do two serious things at the same time. You have to be concentrating on the subject. If you already know in general what's happening in the economy, you can pick up on what is going on, but you have to talk all the time to Zyuganov, to Yavlinsky, and with others. And it's funny -- Yavlinsky was against us -- 100% against us.

SC: He supported Primakov.

BN: No, no. He was against us. Absolutely, 100%. Without any explanation.
SC: You had access to Yel'tsin, but didn't other ministers have to go through someone to get access to Yel'tsin?

BN: Yes, yes. For one year. From March '97 to March '98. After that no, there was no connection. Maybe also during the funeral days.

SC: What's the connection between the presidential apparat and the government in decision making?

BN: It depends on the personal relationship between Yel'tsin's chief of administration and the prime minister. This is absolutely an apparatchik problem. For example, when Kirienko was appointed, he insisted that Yumashev give him more freedom to deal with economic questions. A special decision from the president's office determined how decrees should be prepared and how such decisions would go through the system, the Kremlin administration. It was a very important decision and we simplified the system dramatically. Chernomyrdin's office would have to wait months for an important decree; with Kirienko, two days was enough.

SC: In the Chernomyrdin government a decree traveled first to the chief of staff and then...?

BN: When we were working in the Chernomyrdin government, we prepared the decrees. In the Kirienko government we did the same. But Chubais told me before that some decrees were prepared in the Kremlin administration, including economic ones.

SC: When Chubais was chief of staff?

BN: He was hmm maybe at that time. I don't know exactly about that. Good question.
International Issues

ML: The last question is on foreign policy. Sometimes there is such an obvious difference between the Democrats and the Nationalists and Communists in the domestic issues, like the budget. The difference in foreign policy is not always so obvious.

BN: Yes.

ML: Is there a difference?

BN: Well, we have some differences and some similar positions. We are against "NATO expansion." I think this is really a very terrible decision from the NATO organization because Russia appears to be only a small part of the international world. If you occupy the boundaries of Russia with some organization, it looks like Russia is not part of the economy, not a part of European peace, not part of international [peace].(9) This is my explanation. The Communists' explanation is that NATO is our enemy that wants to destroy the country. Nonetheless, both of us are against NATO expansion.

As far as Iraq, we have another position. We are against Hussein very much, and of course, the Communists support Hussein. But we are against the American position, not because we support Hussein, we are against him. But this is very artificial. America organized a very strong alliance of United Nations members around Hussein. He has become a hero once again. You don't destroy Hussein! You do nothing! You organized very strong support for this gentleman.

ML: Would you support an all-out US effort to destroy Hussein?

BN: Well, that's better. Frankly, that's better. That's better than bombing Iraq and nothing happening.
**ML:** How about Iran?

**BN:** I think we have a similar position with the Communists. We are for cooperation with Iran but we are against the distribution or sale of nuclear weapons that the Communists support. For example, the US State Department insists that we stop any relationship with Iran. This is stupid. This is business: Iran has a lot of oil resources, for example, our oil companies want to invest money in Iran to take out oil. We are for competition. We regret that the American government is against American business. They forbid American companies to invest money. To produce oil -- not nuclear weapons, but oil. I have my own position: To invest money in Iran -- I support that. As I explained to the State Department, "you are not a planning committee." We are for competition and the private sector. I told Strobe Talbot about that several times. We are against nuclear weapons distribution -- this is true, but this is business.

**SC:** I just wonder, with Iran having all that oil, why do they need a nuclear reactor?

**BN:** They started to build this reactor ten years ago. It's a long story. We have to finish it, not because it's right, but because if we stop, there will be an exorbitant penalty for the Russian economy. We would have to pay a huge amount of money if we stop. It's in the contract. Who will give us money? We are not so wealthy, like the United States. That's why we have to finish it. **SC:** It's a Soviet contract?

**BN:** Yes, of course. Everybody knows. The State Department guys know about that, but they say "stop it." What does it mean, "stop it"? Give us money and we will stop everything.(10)

**ML:** What is the difference with the Communists on the policy towards the "Near Abroad?"

**BN:** I'll give a more interesting example: Belarussia. Our new position is that we are for unification with Belarussia but it has to be a region of the Russian Federation.
Lukashenka would not be a president, but instead a governor or a member of our parliament. We would stop the Belarussian Central Bank immediately. Their central bank becomes only a branch of the Moscow central bank, we have a united customs administration with its chief in Moscow. And Lukashenka would be like [Tatarstan President Mintimer] Shaimiev. We will implement a democracy to this country, publish newspapers, stop prohibitions on propaganda, including anti-Lukashenka propaganda. We want unification, Slavic people want to be together, but without stupid decisions from Mr. Lukashenka. He has to forget about his independence, that is our position. The Communists are for unification, but only in words, because they are afraid of Lukashenka as a political competitor. They are of the same type. That's why we are for unification and they are against.

SC: Are there any other states, besides Belarus, with which you want to unify?

BN: No. I don't think so. I'm not that stupid.

Notes:

(1) Each of the most powerful "oligarchs" is associated with a set of media holdings. The state-run media under Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov include television channels (RTR and 51% of ORT), the wire services ITAR-TASS and RIA Novosti, and several radio stations and newspapers. Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov controls the city-owned local television and cable channels and is influential with some Moscow papers. In addition to the major newspapers, Nezavisimaya gazeta, Ogonek, and Novye izvestia, Boris Berezovsky, the president of LogoVAZ, controls the board of ORT and, through one of his companies, owns 38% of ORT shares. Vladimir Gusinsky of the MOST Bank and allied MOST Media group boasts the private television station NTV and Radio Ekho Moskvy. The newspapers Izvestia and Komsomol'skaya pravda are associated with Vladimir Potanin, president of Oneximbank. Gazprom Chairman Rem Vyakhirev has some influence over NTV and several newspapers. Due to his status as president of LUKoil, Vagit Alekperov has some influence with the new television network REN and

(2) In January and early February Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov attempted to gain personal control of the major state-owned media by appointing his KGB cronies to top positions. Former information chief of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), Yuri Kobaladze, was made first deputy chairman of ITAR-TASS and deputy chairman of the holding company that controls the RTR television network. Primakov also named SVR officer Lev Koshelev to be in charge of RTR's Vesti news program. SVR officer Igor Amvrossov was appointed to run Radio Russia. See Russia Reform Monitor, No. 579, 27 January 1999.

(3) It is widely believed that Boris Berezovsky used his influence to obtain Yuri Skuratov’s resignation in retaliation for a raid on the offices of Berezovsky's company Sibneft. -- ML

(4) What exactly was agreed to at the 5 February Security Council meeting remains unclear. According to some reports, the president agreed to keep the government in place until the next Duma elections while others suggest he merely agreed to consult with the other branches before removing the government. See Susan Cavan's analysis, Editorial Digest, Vol. IV, No. 3, 15 February 1999, on ISCIP's web site at www.bu.edu/iscip/news.html. On 25 February, Yel'tsin promised to keep Primakov as prime minister until the presidential elections in 2000. The following week, the Primakov-Berezovsky power struggle appeared to be tilting in Primakov's favor. On 4 March, Yel'tsin, as chairman of the CIS Council of Heads of State, unilaterally fired Berezovsky from his position as CIS executive secretary. -- ML

(5) Grigory Yavlinsky spoke at the Kennedy School of Government on 14 December 1998. In response to my question about the need for unity among the Democrats, he said that he would welcome the members of Just Cause into YABLOKO and in the event of electoral success they would share the Duma seats and cabinet portfolios. He
later went on to say that there was no danger of splitting the democratic vote, because Just Cause lacks a substantial following. The only people who will vote for them, he said, are "their wives." The last word, so far, belongs to Boris Nemtsov, who told his Davis Center audience on 12 February that "Yavlinsky's wife will vote for me." -- ML

(6) After he left the post of first deputy prime minister in March 1998, Anatoly Chubais became chairman of the board of Unified Energy System, the Russian electricity monopoly. -- ML


(8) Sergei Filatov was Yeltsin's chief of staff from January 1993 to July 1996.

(9) This, of course, is a gross exaggeration: NATO is not about to "occupy" Russia's borders. Of the three newest NATO members, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, only Poland is contiguous with Russia, and that is a border with the Russian militarized exclave of Kaliningrad, which is separated from the rest of Russia by Lithuania and Belarus. -- ML

(10) Russian military analysts, like Pavel Felgenhauer, give an entirely different explanation. Thus, the latter has written that the purpose of Russian cooperation with Iran was to oppose the United States in the Persian Gulf. See Pavel Felgenhauer, "Defense Dossier: The Arms Bazaar Beckons," The Moscow Times, 24 September 1998.

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