

Boston University

OpenBU

<http://open.bu.edu>

Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy

The ISCIP Analyst

2007-02-08

The ISCIP Analyst, Volume XIII, Issue 7

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/11832>

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

Russian Federation: Executive Branch

By Susan Cavan

PRESIDENCY

"I do not rule, I simply do my work"

President Putin held a press conference with the foreign and domestic media this year, where, once again, he fielded questions on a range of issues from intellectual property rights to Orthodoxy and the role of nuclear technology in Russian security.

Putin objected early on to a question about his rule and the choice of a successor, quibbling over the choice of the word rule, "I do not rule, I simply do my work." (1)

The topic of succession, raised early and returned to on more than one occasion, brought contradictory and, at times, prickly responses from the President. When an NTV correspondent couched a question about the 2008 elections by mentioning Yel'tsin and his "habit of naming his successors," Putin testily answered, "I have said many times that there will be no successors. There will be candidates for the post of president of the Russian Federation." (2)

When a Reuters correspondent later followed up on the NTV question and asked Putin if he would, "as you have hinted you may do...indicate that you think would be best suited to becoming the next president?" and continued to press by asking if this "person (could) be a high state official?" Putin responded, "Everyone who should be is already working as a high state official." Putin added, "I reserve the right to express my preferences, but I will do this only once the election campaign begins." (3)

Despite a previous remark that his successor was an unknown, at least at present, Putin now seems to suggest that the next Russian president is currently serving in an official capacity—an assertion that certainly fuels speculation over "known" successor frontrunners, such as Dmitri Medvedev and Sergei Ivanov. Putin's claim that he will express a preference for a particular candidate only after the presidential campaign is underway, however, could chill the ambition of would-be successors, who are unsure of the support they have from the current president. Putin has positioned himself to remain central to the succession struggle, and yet simultaneously, above the fray.

Putin also was questioned repeatedly on issues of corruption in the Russian state bureaucracy. While he did assure his audience that prosecutions and investigations were proceeding and producing results, he opined that "The depths of the government are as deep as the oil and gas reserves of the Russian Federation, and it is certainly true that things sometimes disappear there." (4)

Chasing shadows

Speaking of successors, two oft-named candidates who have sparred verbally over ideology (of all things), namely, the meaning of the phrase "sovereign democracy" and the need, if any, for qualifying terms before the word democracy, recently appeared together on a "Real Politics" broadcast with Gleb Pavlovsky. First Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev and Presidential Aide Vladislav Surkov fielded questions from a meeting of One Russia's "young political elite" for the broadcast, and, of course, the question of terminology came to the fore. (5)

Medvedev responded to the question of whether or not he and Surkov disagreed over the term "sovereign democracy" by saying that he and Surkov, who have been discussing the phrase for years, have "no major disagreements." Surkov

joined in to explain that their disagreements are "only about terminology and...these are nuances." (6)

Surkov continued to explain "nuance" to the audience by suggesting that he and Medvedev both enjoy the band Deep Purple, but Medvedev "likes the song Kentucky Woman and I like Lazy." (7)

The exchange continued with Medvedev interrupting to assert, "I don't like Kentucky Woman very much [laughing] but I do like Deep Purple." He then added, "Slava, [short for Vyacheslav] there are common songs that we sing together." To which Surkov replied, "But we won't tell anyone about them." (8)

For clarity's sake, Pavlovsky explained that the common songs to which Surkov referred were composed and conducted by the president. Their appearance on the program clearly did little to dispel the appearance of tension among members of the apparatus.

Prosecutorial re-creation?

The dismissal of Vladimir Ustinov and his replacement with Yuri Chaika did not mark the end of changes in the prosecutor's office. Further shake-ups include deputy prosecutors; most recently, Deputy Prosecutor General Sergei Gerasimov resigned and has been replaced, apparently at Chaika's suggestion, with Ernest Valeev, a lawyer and former public prosecutor for the Tyumen Region. (9)

There are also suggestions that Putin is considering dusting off an element of the Kozak judicial reforms, which recommended, in part, separating out the investigative authority of the prosecutor's office. (10) Investigations would be carried out by a new agency directly linked to the Kremlin.

Chaika may be moved over to head this new agency, but other candidates include Drug Tsar Viktor Cherkesov and the head of the MVD's Investigation Committee, Aleksei Anichin. (11)

Potinin's staying power

While many of the infamous "oligarchs" of the 1990s have been dispossessed of their Russian holdings, gone abroad, in some cases with asylum, or are sitting in jail, some continue to consolidate their positions within Russia. Vladimir Potinin, who has been noted meeting with the president in the Kremlin on regular occasions, certainly has been able to maintain a comfortable living while remaining in Russia.

Potinin recently took sole control of the once much sought after Norilsk Nickel, after the company's chief executive, Mikhail Prokhorov, agreed to resign from his post and "sell his half combined 54.8 percent stake in Norilsk to Mr. Potinin." (12) Prokhorov apparently was motivated to sell both Norilsk and liquidate other elements of the holding company Interros, in which he and Mr. Potinin are partners, after a widely publicized arrest in France on organized prostitution charges.

There is speculation that the move to secure Norilsk for Potinin is only the first step in an eventual resumption of state control of the enterprise. As such, Potinin soon may find a majority buyer among the well-known Russian state firms with close Kremlin connections.

Source Notes:

(1) Transcript of Press Conference with the Russian and Foreign Media, 1 Feb 07, Round Hall, The Kremlin, Moscow via www.kremlin.ru, accessed 5 Feb 07.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid.

(5) NTV Mir in Russian, 2115 GMT, 3 Feb 07; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(6) Ibid.

(7) Ibid.

(8) Ibid.

(9) ITAR-TASS, 2 Feb 07, 323 EST via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(10) Susan Cavan, "Kremlin judicial reforms draw fire from procuracy," NIS Observed, Executive Branch, Vol VI, No. 8, 2 May 01 via www.bu.edu/iscip.

(11) Newsweek Russia, No. 5, 29 Jan-4 Feb 07; What the Papers Say (WPS) via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(12) Neil Buckley, "Norilsk Nickel comes under sole control," The Financial Times (London), 1 Feb 07 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

Russian Federation: Domestic Issues and Legislative Branch

By Robyn Angley

Chechen amnesty

An amnesty for gunmen in the North Caucasus has come to an end amidst mixed reviews. It was proclaimed by National Anti-Terrorist Committee Chairman and FSB Director Nikolai Patrushev in July 2006, following the death of Shamil Basayev. The amnesty was extended several times but finally concluded on 15 January.

The announced results of the amnesty vary, depending on the source. Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov claims that 456 fighters surrendered, (1) while Chairman of the Duma's Security Committee Vladimir Vasiliev stated that 546 gunmen had come forward. Chechen Prosecutor Valeri Kuznetsov, on the other

hand, put the number at 467, and announced that, of that number, 90 already had received pardons. (2)

Some observers, among them Novaya gazeta war correspondent Vyacheslav Izmailov, contend that the majority of the amnestied gunmen essentially had been pardoned before the amnesty and were counted only now for effect. (3)

Among those pardoned in the current amnesty were former Defense Minister of Ichkeria (the separatists' name for Chechnya) Magomed Khambiyev and former chief of Dzhokhar Dudayev's bodyguard, Abu Arsanukayev. Khambiyev is currently a member of the Chechen parliament and Arsanukayev is involved in the Chechen security forces. (4)

Also among those named in the amnesty were three nephews of former Ichkerian Vice President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev. (Yandarbiyev was killed in Qatar by Russian security forces in February 2004.) According to RIA Novosti, the three men "wanted to return to peaceful life and work in their republic" and "had lived outside Russia until now." (5) In contrast, the separatist website Kavkaz-Tsentre claims that Yandarbiyev's nephews were detained by "occupation forces" before the amnesty and then were portrayed in the media as having given themselves up. (6)

What will those pardoned in the amnesty do now? They will contribute to rebuilding Chechnya, according to Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov. "Virtually all amnestied people joined the process of restoring the republic: some work in law enforcement bodies, others—in agriculture and still others—in construction. They also include deputies and officials of local administrations." (7) Upon closer inspection, service by the amnestied in the security forces seems especially likely. Although, in Kadyrov's words, "Illegal armed formations are practically wiped out, their ringleaders either exterminated or tried and sentenced," yet "the Kadyrov regiment is staffed with amnestied gunmen by

99%” and the “North and South battalions by almost 90%.” (8) In point of fact, for most of the gunmen, surrendering one’s weapon in this particular amnesty may not mean giving it up so much as simply agreeing to use it for the other side.

Don’t mess with Chechnya

Two non-governmental organizations, the Russian Chechen Friendship Society and the Russian Justice Initiative, have come under fire from the state. Both groups have been very active regarding human rights cases in Chechnya.

The Russian Chechen Friendship Society is one of the few that has continued reporting on the human rights situation in Chechnya. On 23 January, the Federal Supreme Court denied the group’s appeal to overturn the decision made to shut it down last October. The ruling was based on Russia’s anti-extremist legislation, under which groups whose leaders have been convicted of extremist activities may be closed down. In February 2006, the organization’s director, Stanislav Dmitrievskii, was convicted of “inciting ethnic hatred” (9) by printing materials authored by the now deceased former President of Ichkeria Aslan Maskhadov and his close aide Akhmed Zakayev.

The Russian Justice Initiative, on the other hand, has been instrumental in presenting cases demonstrating human rights abuses in Chechnya to the European Court of Human Rights. It has won all five of the cases it has brought to the Court, resulting in both fines and embarrassment for the Russian state. The organization had its state registration, mandated under new NGO laws, denied once in November and a second time in January.

The "victory" that the state has claimed in Chechnya is tenuous at best; Moscow will continue to suppress NGOs that look at the region with an inquisitive eye.

Alkhanov on the way out?

Chechen president Alu Alkhanov commented in an interview with *Moskovskiy komsomolets* on 23 January that he did not want to continue as the regional head in 2008 when his term expires. (10) Alkhanov is head of the region in title only. His prime minister, Ramzan Kadyrov, son of Alkhanov's deceased predecessor Akhmad Kadyrov, is the subject of a virtual cult of personality in Chechnya—his picture is up on billboards, he has his own fan club, and he has a stadium named after him. (One Chechen television channel even offered an essay competition with the following theme: "Ramzan: A Hero of Our Time. Discuss." (11)) Kadyrov was widely expected to be named president in October 2006 when he reached the requisite thirty years of age.

Now, following Alkhanov's statement, Kadyrov has begun to position himself even more overtly as the region's next president. He initiated a review of Chechnya's executive bodies and, in a move that should prove very popular, also has announced that he will see to it that the cases of detained Chechens are brought before the legal system. Especially since the beginning of the second Chechen war, many Chechens have been held on false charges or without charge at all. By announcing that he intends to bring these cases to light, Kadyrov presents himself as a champion of the ordinary Chechen and someone who can bring stability instead of war.

Kadyrov's drive for positive publicity has led to an interesting twist in his relations with human rights activists. Previously, Kadyrov has been accused repeatedly of being responsible for many of the disappearances that have taken place in Chechnya, as well as being complicit in torture. Now, in an attempt to reposition himself, Kadyrov has invited journalists and human rights groups to have unrestricted access to Chechnya. (12) The chief offender is now the lord of the manor while the Kremlin continues to play the harsh and distant imperial overlord. But, trusting Kadyrov is playing with fire.

Source Notes:

- (1) "Duma-sponsored amnesty for surrendered gunmen proves effective," TASS, 16 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (2) "We surrender; Chechnya cannot calculate how many gunmen surrendered in the amnesty," Rossiskaya gazeta, 16 Jan 07; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (3) Vyacheslav Izmailov, "Who has been given freedom," Novaya gazeta, 24 Jan 07; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) "Security chief of late Chechen separatist leader surrenders," RIA Novosti, 12 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) "Chechen rebel site ridicules Moscow claims of mojahedin surrender," Kavkaz-Tsentre news agency website, 15 Jan 07; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) "Duma-sponsored amnesty for surrendered gunmen proves effective," TASS, 16 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (8) Olga Allenova, "Ramzan Kadyrov claims credit for the amnesty," Kommersant, 16 Jan 07; WPS via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) "Russian court forces closure of Russian Chechen Friendship Society," US Newswire, 23 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) "Chechen leader on amnesty, high-profile murders, economic aid, corruption," Moskovskiy komsomolets, 23 Jan 07; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) Andrew Osborn, "The warrior king of Chechnya," Independent Extra, 4 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) "Chechen PM invites journalists, rights activists, offers 'unrestricted access,'" RIA Novosti, 31 Jan 07; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces (Internal)

By Monty Perry

Military doctrine, round two

Back in September of 2006, the Russian Defense Ministry was quick to deny press reports that a new military doctrine, which presents the main threats to Russia as emanating from NATO, the US and terrorism, was in the works. (1) After a brief lull, Russia's military doctrine again is making headlines, this time with some more concrete evidence. If indeed it comes to fruition this time, it will be the third complete iteration of a post-Soviet Russian Military Doctrine, with the first being finalized in 1993 and the second hitting the streets almost seven years later.

On January 20, the Russian Academy of Military Sciences convened its annual meeting, inviting top law enforcement chiefs, defense analysts, and security officials to discuss a new military doctrine. (2) Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov originally was scheduled to be one of the keynote speakers, although General of the Army Yuri Baluyevsky, the Russian Chief of the General Staff, ended up replacing him at the event.

Baluyevsky began his speech with an apparent reversal of Ivanov's policy regarding the transformation of the Russian military. Specifically using the term "reformation" and stating that the process was as yet unfinished and would continue indefinitely, he seemed directly to contradict the Defense Minister's 2003 attempt to end "reformation" in favor of the less damning "transformation." He then very specifically laid the groundwork for the new doctrine, by illuminating the primary threats to the Russian Federation as he saw them. (3) Citing recent and drastic changes to the whole system of international relations, Baluyevsky identified the United States' increasing influence in post-Soviet areas as the number one "threat," followed closely by NATO expansion to the east. He envisioned threats from both developed and developing nations, however, and listed terrorism and local conflicts on Russia's borders as areas of concern. Finally, in one of the more unusual subjects of discussion, he stated that the

growth of “hostile information activity” with respect to Russia was a significant threat. (4)

No specific timelines were provided for the completion of the Doctrine, but General Baluyevsky stated that there were “plans for lengthy public debate.” Significantly, the lack of a current National Security Document to provide direction may end up delaying the release of a military doctrine. (5)

Another key speaker was General of the Army Mahmoud Gareyev, who acts as the President of the Academy. This speech concentrated on specific measures that needed to be taken, in order to counter the litany of threats the Chief of the General Staff identified. First and foremost, he labeled an increase in defense spending to 3.5% of GDP (2.5% is the current rate) as an imperative. He also advocated an expansion of the mobile reserve to create a seamless transition from peacetime to wartime footing. Finally, he sought to increase the influence of both the Minister of Defense, by making him a Deputy Commander-in-Chief, and the Security Council Staff, by giving it the responsibility for responding to all “non-military” threats. For reasons to be discussed later, this may be a not-so-transparent effort to curry approval for the plan from the Defense Minister. (6)

There are a number of issues and unanswered questions that arise from this very open discussion of the Russian Military Doctrine. First, of course, is the question of Defense Minister Ivanov and where he stands with respect to the Doctrine, reform and Armed Forces in general. In September, Ivanov stated that he had not “received instructions” to write a new military doctrine and denied that an effort was underway. (7) Now, it seems that instructions have been given, but to whom? His absence at the Academy's meeting concerning what is arguably the most important issue facing Russian the military is surprising. It is interesting to note that Ivanov had the primary hand in writing the previous doctrine from 2000, when he was the Security Council Secretary. It also will be remembered that Ivanov took the opportunity at the last annual meeting of the Academy to criticize

both the General Staff and the Academy itself. (8) Combined with the apparent disconnect with Baluyevsky over "reformation," his absence may indicate a serious rift between Ivanov and his military leadership over the doctrine.

The hierarchy of threats also points to a significant change in Russian military thinking. By stating that "cooperation with the West" has not reduced the military threat, Baluyevsky has shifted significantly the tenor of the last document. No longer primarily concerned with terrorism and irregular (as opposed to conventional) warfare, this indicates a preference for more traditional standing armies. In fact, this doctrine may represent a simple articulation of what already is programmed in Russian military procurement. Both Putin and Ivanov have stated on many occasions that ninety percent of Russia's national security is assured by their strategic nuclear forces. (9) In fact, almost one third of Russia's defense budget for this year has been earmarked for new weapons procurement, with seventeen new ICBMs slated for production. These measures are needed to counter what Russia describes as "nuclear blackmail" by the United States. (10)

Another course shift was indicated by the discussion of the "hostile information" against Russia. Baluyevsky flatly told his audience not to "read the papers so much" or listen to "the experts." Although not explicitly stated, this may point to the much deeper issue of conflict over the environment and natural resources. Given the international criticism Russia received over the recent fossil fuel rows, first with Ukraine last year and then with Belarus earlier this month, it is understandable that this subject might be in the forefront of the military mind. Russian military analysts from the Military Forecasting Center already have identified the environment and energy as the leading causes of conflict in the next 10-15 years. More specifically, they have stated that NATO leaders already are inclined to view changes in energy prices as a form of aggression. (11)

These factors add up to form a much more “angry” military doctrine than the last two versions. Baluyevsky’s underlying assumption is that conflict of one type or another is inevitable, due to the rivalry between nations. This, in turn, leads to the discussion of whether or not the size of the military should be constrained by what the economy can support, or whether it is simply threat-based and the economy must support the required military costs. Considering that the projected doctrine seems to be entirely threat-based, with the most probable threat being peer nations, it’s not difficult to see which argument will win out. (12)

Regardless of content, it may be a very tough “row to hoe” if Baluyevsky wants to push this doctrine through “lengthy public debate.” In addition to the already discussed opposition he may face in civilian oversight, he also faces significant friction from the chiefs of the armed services. Indeed, he took the opportunity to fire a shot across their collective bows when he opined that all of the services were pursuing their individual war planning, without regard for an overall joint strategy. It’s a known fact that Baluyevsky has pushed for a restructuring to regional, rather than service-based, commands. From a military perspective, this makes quite a bit of sense, but the commanders of each service have opposed it vigorously. This new doctrine seems to be the perfect vehicle for Baluyevsky to attempt these changes. The opposition does not seem to be limited to only the service chiefs, with General Vladimir Belous, a noted defense expert, calling the proposed doctrine “common paperwork.” (13)

Regardless of how the debate transpires, when round two of the great doctrine debate is over, it seems that there will indeed be a new strategy for the Russian Armed forces. Although it’s final form has yet to be seen, at least in this round, the Russian top brass acknowledged that it exists.

Source Notes:

- (1) See ISCIP Analyst, Armed Forces: Internal, 19 Oct 06; Vremya novostei, 1 Feb 07; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (2) "Enemies Have Become More Numerous and Aggressive," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 22 Jan 07, pp. 1-7; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (3) "Military Reforms Will Continue Indefinitely," Nezavisimoe voennoe Obozrenie, No. 3, 26 Jan 07, p. 1; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (4) "Enemies Have Become More Numerous and Aggressive," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 22 Jan 07, pp. 1-7; WPS via Lexis Nexis-Academic Universe.
- (5) "Military Reforms Will Continue Indefinitely," Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, No. 3, 26 Jan 07, p. 1; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) "Emotions Run High Over Military Doctrine," Gazeta, 20 Sep 06, p. 2; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (8) "Fuss Is Not Interesting to the Minister," Moskovskie novosti, No. 3, 26 Jan 07, p. 16-17; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (9) "A New Doctrine's Old Foundations," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 19 Dec 06, p. 3; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (10) "Putin: Russia Must Maintain Nuclear Capability," Associated Press, 16 Nov 06, 1:38 PM GMT via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (11) "A Partisan War or an Energy War," Izvestia, 25 Jan 07, p. 5; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (12) "Military Reforms Will Continue Indefinitely," Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie, No. 3, 26 Jan 07, p. 1; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (13) "Enemies Have Become More Numerous and Aggressive," Nezavisimaya gazeta, 22 Jan 07, pp. 1-7; WPS via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

Russian Federation: Armed Forces (External)

By Daniel DeBree

Turkmenistan military: a national labor pool

With the recent death of Turkmenistan's President and self-proclaimed leader-for-life, Saparmurat Niyazov, there has been increased interest lately in the stability and future of the resource-rich state. Concern for the nation's vulnerability to both internal and external strife has increased in the wake of Niyazov's death. The turmoil began immediately when Niyazov loyalists within the People's Council (Halk Maslahty) convened an emergency session and replaced the constitutionally authorized interim President, Ovezgeldy Ataev, with Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov. The council also altered the constitution and changed the minimum presidential age from 50 to 49 so Berdymuhammedov could run legally in the upcoming election. (1) Unfortunately, these high-level power struggles and corrupt practices will tend to propagate down through the entire government and exacerbate the nation's problems. At the same time, external powers with an interest in Turkmenistan's abundant resources are keeping a close eye on the situation.

In this time of increased instability, a reliance on the armed forces could become a reality in any number of different scenarios. Arguably one of the strongest militaries in Central Asia, Turkmenistan spends more per capita on defense than any other Central Asian country. With a population of just under 5 million, Turkmenistan spends "between 500 and 600 million dollars a year on defense and security." (2) For illustrative purposes, the military's duty entails defending a population roughly equivalent to that of the greater Houston area, spread across a geographic area the size of California. As the Turkmen Armed Forces celebrate their 15th anniversary, the force of 50,000 strong still closely resembles the old Soviet Army. (3)

Turkmenistan's military is constituted mostly of 18-year-old conscripts serving 2 year obligations in one of several different branches. Ground forces make up approximately half of the military population with 26,700 troops. Additionally, there are "10,000 in the Air Force and Antiaircraft Forces, and 400 in the Navy.

Border Guards, Interior Troops of the Interior Ministry, National Security Service, and Secret Service (presidential bodyguards) total 17,800 men.” (4)

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan has remained steadfast in its effort to maintain a military-political line of “positive neutrality.” This staunch policy has kept the country from becoming too dependent on any single group or state for support, and from the undue influence of any external power. Five basic policies taken together make up the definition of positive neutrality. “First of all, [Turkmenistan] does not regard any nation as its enemy. Second, it will not join any collective bloc. Third, it will not use arms against any nation except in self-defense. Fourth, it will not maintain foreign troops on its territory. And finally, fifth, the state will assist the world community in averting wars and armed conflicts.” (5)

In addition to inheriting the military hardware and infrastructure left over from the Soviet era, the Turkmen military has pursued contracts with Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Iran for new and upgraded equipment. In fact, the newest branch of the Turkmen armed forces, the Navy, has bought several warships and leased a destroyer and seven other boats from Iran. (6) On the other hand, despite its pledge to avoid membership in collective blocs, in 1994 Turkmenistan became the first Central Asian country to join NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) accord. (7) Turkmenistan also has maintained diversity in its sources of officer and technical training. At nearly the same time that agreements were being forged to acquire Navy ships from Tehran, Turkmen officers were receiving military training at the Pentagon through the PfP program. (8) Among others, Turkey and Pakistan also have been longtime providers of personnel training for Turkmen military members. (9)

Most of Turkmenistan’s ability to fund the military—and entire country for that matter—comes from extensive exports of natural gas (reserves are estimated at 4 trillion cubic meters). “Georgia repairs military hardware (Su-25s) for the

Turkmen Air Force in return for gas. The Ukraine, which also needs Turkmen gas, promises Ashkhabad to repair four MIG-29s...and provide more than \$500 million worth of sophisticated military hardware.” (10)

Despite being rich in resources and potential wealth, government corruption and mismanagement of export revenues have kept the country deep in poverty. According to the CIA’s World Fact Book, Turkmenistan ranks 4th worst in the world in unemployment at a staggering 60%, ahead of only Zimbabwe, Liberia, and Nauru. (11) Interestingly though, before his death, president “Niyazov...sacked thousands of workers in recent years, apparently to save on government expenditure, even though the country should be earning a healthy income from gas and cotton sales abroad.” (12) To fill the positions left vacant by these systematic firings, the leadership turned to the armed forces for cheap, and in the opinion of the government, under-utilized manpower. “The state traffic police was turned over to the Defense Ministry last year, and the traffic is now regulated [entirely] by servicemen of the Armed Forces.” (13) In overwhelming numbers, public sector jobs are being performed by the military. Soldiers are working more and more in the fields of construction, health care (orderlies and nurses), transportation (train conductors, truck and bus drivers), and janitorial services. (14)

In addition to contributing further to the already morbid unemployment problem, the practice of using military members to do public-sector labor also is crippling the readiness of the military. “One regimental-strength unit guarding bridges across the river Amu Darya in the east of the country now has just 300 conscripts instead of 2,000 it used to have.” (15) In order to satisfy the increasing demand for a free labor force, recruitment officers have had to begin pursuing people with physical disabilities and those who don’t even meet basic literacy requirements.

Next week’s presidential election will usher in only the second post-Soviet administration and provide an opportunity for realistic, much needed economic

and government reform. However, experts seem to agree that while some liberalization will occur, the president's close control of the military and security services will remain essentially unchanged. In a 26 January 2007 televised statement of congratulations and well-wishes, acting and likely next president Berdymuhammedov said that "care of the Armed Forces of the independent and permanently neutral Turkmenistan and its personnel has been and will remain a top priority for our state. Further strengthening its material resources and raising its military power and social protection and support for our courageous defenders of our homeland and their families will always be in the focus of attention." (16) Though this statement is somewhat generic, the gist of it seems to be saying "be ready for more of the same."

Source Notes:

- (1) Azimov, Dadodjan, "Turkmenistan: What Chance a Thaw?" 31 Jan 07, Spero News via <http://www.speroforum.com/site/print.asp?idarticle=7696> .
- (2) "Russia-based Website Looks at Growing Defense Spending in Central Asia," 26 Jan 07, Ferghana.ru news agency website; BBC Worldwide Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.
- (3) Goupai, Oleg, "Turkmen Army: 15 Years Later," 31 Jan 07, Krasnaya zvezda via Lexis-Nexis.
- (4) Tsyganok, Anatoly, "Military-Gas Neutrality," 12 Jan 07, Voenno-promyshlenny kurier via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) Aleksandrov, Sergei, "A Useful Strategy," 3 Jun 05, Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye – Moscow via World News Connection.
- (6) Tsyganok, Anatoly, "Military-Gas Neutrality," *ibid*.
- (7) "Chances of Russian-Turkmen Military Cooperation Slim," 21 Dec 06, Agentstvo voyennykh novostey via World News Connection.
- (8) Tsyganok, Anatoly, "Military-Gas Neutrality," *ibid*.
- (9) "Chances of Russian-Turkmen Military Cooperation Slim," 21 Dec 06, Agentstvo voyennykh novostey via World News Connection.

- (10) Goupai, Oleg, "Turkmen Army: 15 Years Later," *ibid.*
- (11) CIA – The World Fact Book, World Unemployment, accessed 5 Feb 07 via <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2129rank.html>.
- (12) "Turkmenistan: Pressed into Service," 9 Sep 06, The Times of Central Asia via Lexis-Nexis.
- (13) Goupai, Oleg, "Turkmen Army: 15 Years Later," *ibid.*
- (14) *Ibid.*
- (15) "Turkmenistan: Pressed into Service," *ibid.*
- (16) "Acting Turkmen President Says Care of Army "Top Priority"," 26 Jan 07, Turkmen TV Altyn Asyr Channel; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

Russian Federation: Foreign Relations

By Alexey Dynkin

Middle East crossroads

The escalating conflict between Iran and the United States presents Russia with a choice between abandoning an important economic and strategic partner or aligning itself with a radical Islamic regime against the world's most powerful country. Until now, the Russian position appears to have consisted of avoiding either choice, and instead following a "middle course" between the two sides. Indeed, such a policy reflects Primakov's vision of "multi-polarity," which he mentioned in his overview of Russia's achievements in 2006. (1) A number of factors, however, indicate that in the current situation, a middle course may not be possible, and that whatever choice Russia makes will have a significant effect on the future direction of Russian foreign policy.

Not surprisingly, given Russia's penchant for supporting regimes of international notoriety (a feature of Primakov's "multi-polarity" inherited from the Soviet era), countries associated with Russia in various ways have found themselves previously in open conflict with the United States. The most recent cases have

involved Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia in 1999 and Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 2003. In both of these instances, the main source of Russia's objections to US military intervention seems to have consisted not so much of the specific ties between Russia and these regimes, but frustration at the ability of the United States to initiate military action far beyond its borders and Russia's inability to prevent this. Moreover, since at least the Iraqi intervention was a source of widespread domestic and international controversy, Russia was able to express opposition that was not out of line with the controversy in the West. Thus, Russia's opposition to US intervention in Iraq was shared more or less by official Paris and Berlin, a portion of the American public, and a majority of the population in most European countries. In fact, the US war in Iraq may have become a textbook illustration of Primakov's multi-polarity – a situation in which the United States, despite its superpower status, made a decision which aroused widespread external, as well as internal opposition, which Russia was able to exploit to its advantage, effectively diverting most of the world's attention from its own questionable international activities (such as in Georgia). Based upon such precedents, then the more regional conflicts in which the United States becomes engaged, the more advantageous it becomes for Russia.

Regarding the current US-Iranian tensions, particularly over the issue of Iran's nuclear program, it is remarkable how Russian rhetoric about the urgency of a peaceful resolution has coincided with actions that minimize the chances of such a resolution actually coming to pass. At a press conference on Thursday, February 1, Putin emphasized the need to "find such a variant of the atomic power industry development that would provide full guarantees to Iran, on the one hand, access (to such technologies) and on the other—would remove all concerns of the international community." (2) At the same time, Russia has refused unyieldingly to impose any kind of international mechanism through which Iran would be compelled to verify that its nuclear program actually is confined to peaceful purposes. Thus, UN Resolution 1737, adopted in December 2006, "Decides that Iran shall provide such access and cooperation as the IAEA

requests to be able to verify the suspension outlined in paragraph 2 and to resolve all outstanding issues, as identified in IAEA reports...” but does not specify any consequences for refusal to cooperate with the IAEA, beyond the scope of the sanctions spelled out in the resolution, which are limited to a ban on imports of material that could be used for enrichment or heavy-water production. (3) Since these conditions do not account, in any way, for whatever material that already is in Iran, it is evident that the resolution is of little comfort to those who are concerned with Iran’s nuclear weapons program, and Russia’s blocking of a more binding resolution only makes the possibility of a diplomatic solution (to the extent that one is even possible) to the Iranian nuclear standoff more remote. In addition, Russia’s continued shipments of advanced weapons systems to Iran (most recently the Tor-M1 anti-aircraft missiles) encourage the Iranian leadership to continue to defy US pressure, again escalating tensions between the two sides.

There are several principal factors that distinguish the situation concerning Iran from previous crises. One is that, while it is not commonly stated in Western circles, Russia actually is one of the primary causes of the conflict, being the main supplier of nuclear technology, material and know-how to Iran, since the signing of the contract for construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in 1995. Russia may not be directly involved in the production of nuclear weapons, but, according to GlobalSecurity.org, even the construction of the two light-water reactors at Bushehr theoretically would enable Iran to produce enough weapons-grade plutonium in a year for 30 nuclear weapons. (4) Officially, in order to prevent this from happening, Iran is bound by agreement, recently reiterated by Secretary of the Russian Security Council Igor Ivanov, to return all spent nuclear material to Russia and to have all transfers of nuclear material overseen by IAEA inspectors. (5) Nonetheless, if Iran is able to circumvent these terms and proceed with the development of nuclear weapons, the main responsibility for providing Iran with the means for developing these weapons would lie with Russia. If the worst-case scenario were to play out and Iran actually developed and then used

a nuclear weapon, Russia, along with everyone else, would be dealing with a completely different world from the present one.

According to an editorial in Gazeta.ru, post-Soviet Russia has not had any real strategic partners, while the Russian leadership is plagued by a chronic unwillingness to make important political decisions. (6) In any other situation where a war appeared to be imminent, this would be a perfect opportunity to stay neutral and make the most out of it. Given Russia's role in the origins of the crisis, however, this may not be possible. At the same time, in supporting Iran, Russia risks finding itself on the side of a country that seems determined to take on almost the entire world; after all, Iran not only has threatened Israel openly and defied the US, but has attempted to bully the Persian Gulf states, to trigger a coup by proxy in Lebanon, and to project power in Iraq and Afghanistan. Perhaps it is not surprising that the signals coming out of Moscow have been ambivalent. For example, just three days after the Russian Economic Development and Trade Ministry rejected a proposal by Iranian supreme ayatollah Ali Khamenei to form an OPEC-style gas cartel, Putin stated in a press conference that it was an "interesting idea..." and that "we will think about it." (7) Putin's next Middle East tour, scheduled for the middle of February, will take him to Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, countries that are all fearful of Iran's ambitions, and with which he plans to discuss both arms deals (with Saudi Arabia), and possible gas cooperation (with Qatar). (8) Once again, critical strategic decisions will have to wait; in the meantime, better to keep all options open—while it is still possible.

Source Notes:

(1) "Yevgeny Primakov Looks Back at Economic and Foreign Policy Developments in 2006," by Yevgeny Primakov, president of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 17 Jan 07, The Russia Business Monitor, via Lexis-Nexis.

- (2) "Decisions On Iran Needed To Unblock Its Relations With IAEA-Putin," 01 Feb 07, Itar-Tass, via World News Connection.
- (3) United Nations Security Council Resolution 1737, 23 Dec 06, via <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/681/42/PDF/N0668142.pdf?OpenElement>.
- (4) "Bushehr," Weapons of Mass Destruction, GlobalSecurity.org, via <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/iran/bushehr.htm>.
- (5) "Russian security chief spells out conditions for supply of nuclear fuel to Iran," 30 Dec 07, Mayak Radio, OSC translated text via World News Connection.
- (6) "Rossii Predlozhili Gazovyy Dzhihad," 29 Jan 07, Gazeta.ru via http://gazeta.ru/comments/2007/01/29_e_1308846.shtml.
- (7) "Russia to consider idea of international 'gas OPEC'," RIA Novosti, via Johnson's Russia List (JRL), #38, 01 Feb 07.
- (8) "Putin's Next Stop Will Be the Mideast," by Anatoly Medetsky, The Moscow Times, via Johnson's Russia List, #35, 31 Jan 07.

Newly Independent States: Caucasus

By Creelea Henderson

GEORGIA

Radioactive red herring

No sooner had Russian Ambassador Alexander Kovalenko arrived back on the job in Tbilisi last month, than a story broke in Washington that injected new rancor into relations between Russia and Georgia. While on a state visit to Washington D.C. in late January, Georgian Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili revealed details to the American media about a nuclear smuggling incident that occurred last year in Georgia. The story, published on 25 January in the New York Times and Associated Press and subsequently corroborated by officials in the US State Department and the Georgian Interior Ministry, was challenged in Moscow where it was labeled libelous propaganda calculated to discredit

Russian nuclear security in light of the country's recent push to become a leading exporter of nuclear technology.

In January 2006 a Russian from North Ossetia, Oleg Khintsagov, passed through the breakaway province of South Ossetia to meet with a contact in Tbilisi. He carried in his pocket a metal rock composed of three and a half ounces of enriched uranium, a sample of the two kilos of radioactive material to which he claimed to have access back in Vladikavkaz. Khintsagov's contact in Tbilisi turned out to be a Georgian agent working on a sting operation together with the CIA. The smuggler was arrested, his contraband was seized, and soon after his trial in Georgian court, where he was sentenced to 8-10 years imprisonment, the radioactive trail went cold. (1)

On the day that Moscow was set to release a memorandum on the construction of four nuclear power stations in India, the story of the smuggling incident reported in the Western media cast doubt on Russia's ability to control its nuclear stockpiles, or so claimed Andrei Cherkasenko, Chairman of the board at AtomPromResursy, who was the first to respond to the story in the Russian media. (2) By pointing to the fact that Georgian sources had reopened the story after a year of silence, he raised the question, "why now?" and suggested that it was no coincidence that the story broke alongside Rosatom's announcement of nuclear partnership with India. Georgian officials in Tbilisi said that information about this "highly sensitive case" was confidential for a year because they hoped to obtain more details, but it became impossible to pursue the case further without Russian cooperation, which was not forthcoming.

In an attempt to identify the seized material and determine its provenance, Georgian authorities sent samples of the uranium rock to Russian and American experts in the FBI, US Department of Energy and Russia's federal atomic energy agency, Rosatom, in February 2006. The two countries' experts all reached the conclusion that the material was weapons-grade uranium 235, enriched to 90%

and last processed over a decade ago. (3) The critical question of the uranium's provenance remains a mystery. Sources at Rosatom claim that the uranium sample provided by Georgia was too small to determine the country of origin. (4) If true, their claim underlines a profound lack of communication between the Russian security services, since it would seem to be contradicted by the contents of a letter sent by the Federal Security Services (FSB) to Tbilisi in May 2006 that reveals far more information than what Rosatom officials have been willing to acknowledge. The letter, confirming the delivery of two uranium samples, makes no mention of a request for additional material, but states that "in case of Russian origin the powder could be both an industrially produced and an experimental batch of a product." (5) This, along with the joint finding that the material had been processed a decade ago, led American experts to surmise that the material may have originated in one of Russia's closed nuclear arsenals, a conjecture that, due to its highly confidential nature, would not be confirmed or denied by Rosatom.

The obscurity perpetuated by Russian security services may explain Georgia's decision to try Khintsagov in Tbilisi, rather than returning him to be tried in his native country, as was done in a prior case in 2003, when two foreigners accused of smuggling nuclear material were handed over to authorities in Armenia and Turkey. Although the FSB was able to use information provided by Tbilisi to identify Khintsagov positively and trace his movements across the Georgian border from 2005-2006, they were unable or unwilling to pursue the incident further and the case lay dormant for a year while Georgian authorities waited for Moscow to carry out further investigation.

Georgia's statement that Russia has refused to cooperate is borne out by the contradictory reports and defensive posturing coming from Russian officials. Kremlin sources have claimed that by airing the cold case Georgian authorities are trying to embarrass Moscow. Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, told Interfax that he considers the Georgian report a provocation, adding that "we

would prefer that this very problem had been resolved by experts.” (6) Rosatom issued a statement asserting that Russia’s nuclear materials are stored under stringent supervision. (7) Deference to the authority of Russian government experts and security services is a patently inadmissible and disingenuous proposal, given the evidence of unchecked uranium peddling in the Khintsagov case. Questions of Georgia’s inopportune timing and recriminatory talk of provocation are no more than red herrings thrown out by Moscow to divert attention away from a grave security breach that has opened the way for criminal trade in nuclear materials.

Georgia's revelation casts further light upon the chronic problem of its breakaway provinces. Statements made by President Saakashvili on the day the story broke called for a movement toward Georgian reunification, and the Khintsagov case provides the Georgian government with a compelling argument for the urgency of reintegrating its renegade provinces and reasserting control over the unpoliced territory within its sovereign borders. Abkhazia and South Ossetia have become rutted with robbers’ highways, where traffic in illegal commodities can flow unchecked. The gravity of the threat to international security apparently is lost on the de facto leadership of the breakaway province of South Ossetia. When questioned about last year’s case of nuclear smuggling, the region’s foreign minister, Murat Dzhoyev said, “as concerns their claims that contraband, or moreover, the laughable claim that nuclear materials are going through South Ossetia, that's just funny...I hope not a single serious person in the world takes this seriously.” (8) The case is being taken very seriously by at least one reputable person, American Ambassador to Georgia John F. Tefft, who remarked that the case “highlights how smuggling and loose border control, associated with Georgia's separatist conflicts,” pose a threat “not just to Georgia but to all the international community.” (9)

Any move by Tbilisi to reintegrate its renegade provinces will require the stalwart support of Western powers. If they have to be spooked into defying Russia on this issue by the specter of black market nuclear contraband, so be it.

Source Notes:

- (1) "Smuggler's Plot Highlights Fear Over Uranium," By Lawrence Scott Sheets and William J. Broad, New York Times, 25 Jan 07 via (www.nytimes.com).
- (2) "Specialists call Georgian announcement of uranium smuggling provocation," RIA Novosti, 25 Jan 07, in Russian via (http://rian.ru/defense_safety/20070125/59697834.html).
- (3) "Smuggler's Plot Highlights Fear Over Uranium," By Lawrence Scott Sheets and William J. Broad New York Times, 25 Jan 07 via (www.nytimes.com); "Uranium Patriots," by Pavel Felgenhauer, Novaya gazeta, 29 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (4) "Russian state scientist confirms uranium sent by Georgia was weapons-grade," by Mike Eckel, AP, 26 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (5) "Uranium Patriots," by Pavel Felgenhauer, *ibid*.
- (6) Quoted in the article, "Russian state scientist confirms uranium sent by Georgia was weapons-grade," by Mike Eckel, AP, 26 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (7) "Uranium Patriots," by Pavel Felgenhauer, *ibid*.
- (8) "Smuggler's Plot," By Lawrence Scott Sheets and William J. Broad, *ibid*.
- (9) *Ibid*.

Newly Independent States: Central Asia

By Monika Shepherd

What lies ahead for a post-Niyazov Turkmenistan?

With the recent death of Turkmenistan's infamous president for life and self-styled "Chief of the Turkmen" (Turkmenbashy), Saparmurat Niyazov, and new presidential elections scheduled for 11 February 2007, Turkmenistan's citizens unexpectedly have been presented with the opportunity to gain, if not a democratic government, then at least a kinder, gentler autocrat. (1)

Niyazov was appointed First Secretary of the Turkmen SSR's Communist Party Central Committee in 1985, and then became president in 1992, after the Soviet Union collapsed and Turkmenistan became independent. (2) He was known as one of the world's most oppressive and idiosyncratic dictators, responsible for such eccentric policies as a ban on car radios, ballet, opera, gold teeth, and the wearing of long hair and beards. He also reduced public school education to nine years, (3) closed all rural libraries, and in March 2005 shut down all hospitals outside Ashgabat, effectively denying health care to thousands of his country's citizens. (4) Internet access and the media were strictly censored and political opposition was not tolerated; out of the handful of opposition activists who persevered and were not jailed, most were forced to seek asylum outside Turkmenistan.

The late president's interim replacement is Gurbankuly Berdymuhammedov, who prior to Niyazov's death concurrently held the posts of Deputy Chairman of the Turkmen Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Health, and who is among the six candidates vying for the presidency in the upcoming elections. There are signs that Mr. Berdymuhammedov already may have won much of the battle to secure the presidency: he has been named chairman of Niyazov's funeral commission (under Soviet rule, this was often a way in which to identify the Party secretary's successor), and he was selected as acting president by rather extra-constitutional means. According to Article 60 of the Turkmen constitution, the chairman of the Mejlis (Turkmenistan's parliament), Avezgeldy Atayev, should have assumed the president's duties, (5) however, Mr. Atayev is the subject of a criminal investigation by the Office of the Prosecutor-General, making him

ineligible to serve as acting president. (6) He stands accused of “abuse of power and violation of citizens' rights” and is under arrest. (7) The constitution also specifies that new presidential elections should be held within two months of the acting president’s appointment and that an acting president can not be nominated to run for the aforementioned office. (8) This obstacle was handily overcome at an extraordinary session of the Halk Maslahaty (the People’s Council, which consists of 2,464 delegates and exercises many of the same powers as the Mejlis) (9) on 26 December, (broadcast live on the Turkmen TV Altyn Asyr channel), when the constitution was amended (10) in order to allow any candidate who receives at least one-third of the Halk Maslahaty’s votes to run for president of Turkmenistan. The vote on whether or not approve the amendment was not broadcast live. (11)

In addition to approving Mr. Berdymuhammedov’s candidacy, the council also voted to support five other candidates to run for the presidency: Deputy Oil and Gas Minister Isanguly Nuryyew, Deputy Head of the State Sports and Tourism Committee Durdy Durdyew, Abadan Mayor Orazmyrat Garajayew, and construction engineer Annaberdi Copanow. The candidates represent the country’s five provinces – by law, each province, as well as the city of Ashgabat, is permitted to nominate two presidential candidates for the Halk Maslahaty’s approval. (12) Mr. Berdymuhammedov received the most votes, garnering the support of nearly all the council delegates, as well as the endorsements of the Central Election Commission and the chair of the Democratic Party (Turkmenistan’s ruling party). (13) None of the candidates represent any of the exiled opposition parties, which have been completely excluded from the succession process. In fact, none of the opposition party leaders have been permitted to return to the country, much less participate in the election.

Thus far, despite many predictions to the contrary by Russian and Western pundits, the presidential campaign has proceeded in a calm and orderly fashion, with all of the candidates continuing to sing the late Niyazov’s praises and

pledging to carry out his policies. However, there are faint signs that despite his publicly proclaimed devotion to his predecessor's goals, Mr. Berdymuhammedov may have a slightly different set of objectives in mind for his country. Many of his campaign promises call for overturning Niyazov's policies, including his proposals to reevaluate the public school system so that Turkmen high school diplomas once again will be recognized internationally (which implies reinstating the 10-year school requirement); to send students to study in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States; (14) to review and possibly increase pensions for retirees; to provide all citizens with Internet access; to build new hospitals and health centers, as well as pharmaceutical factories and to send medical personnel abroad for training. (15) This last proposal is particularly significant, because, as the late president's Minister of Health, Mr. Berdymuhammedov was responsible for carrying out Niyazov's orders to close all of the rural health clinics and fire their personnel. The other presidential candidates have echoed this call for reform, pointing to various sectors of Turkmenistan's infrastructure which need to be revamped, such as telecommunications, education, agriculture, the social welfare system, and the economy. (16) No one has dared yet to point out that most of these reforms are at odds with Niyazov's vision for his country, which, over the last several years, seemed to be aimed at forcing the population into an ever increasing state of poverty, ignorance, oppression, and isolation from the rest of the world. Niyazov's many monuments to himself continue to stand, his portraits still hang on the walls and the fifth book of his poetry was published posthumously. (17)

Once Gurbankuly Berdymuhammedov is the president-elect and feels sufficiently secure in his power, he may begin dismantling Niyazov's cult of personality. Whether such a move would be accompanied by political liberalization, or whether he will attempt to fashion himself into a second Turkmenbashi remains to be seen. One thing does seem certain – due to Niyazov's misguided policies, Turkmenistan now faces a number of economic and social crises and whatever

else he does, Mr. Berdymuhammedov will be virtually compelled to reverse the majority of his predecessor's edicts, in order to avert a socioeconomic disaster.

Source Notes:

- (1) "Turkmen People's Council Selecting Presidential Candidates," 26 Dec 06, Turkmen TV first channel; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (2) "Profile: Turkmen president Saparmurat Niyazov," 21 Dec 06, Xinhua via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (3) "The Personality Cult of Turkmenbashi," 21 Dec 06, Guardian Unlimited via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (4) "Turkmen leader closes hospitals," 1 Mar 06, BBC News via <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4307583.stm>.
- (5) "Turkmen Security Council Session Discusses Stability," 21 Dec 06, ITAR-TASS; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (6) Shohrat Kadyrov, "Power struggle in Ashkhabad is but beginning," 5 Feb 07, Ferghana.Ru Information Agency via <http://enews.ferghana.ru/>.
- (7) "Turkmen acting president sacks parliament speaker," 23 Dec 06, Xinhua News Agency via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (8) "Turkmen Security Council Session Discusses Stability," 21 Dec 06, ITAR-TASS; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (9) Bruce Pannier, "Turkmenistan: People's Council Assumes Duties of Parliament," 20 Aug 03, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty via <http://www.rferl.org/features/>.
- (10) "Turkmen Acting President Joins Election Race," 26 Dec 06, Turkmen TV first channel; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.
- (11) "Acting Turkmen President Officially Takes Over For Next 60 Days," 26 Dec 06, ITAR-TASS news agency; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(12) "Turkmen People's Council Selecting Presidential Candidates," 26 Dec 06, Turkmen TV first channel; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(13) "Turkmen Acting President Joins Election Race," 26 Dec 06, Turkmen TV first channel; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(14) "Turkmen Leader Promises Reforms," 5 Jan 07, Turkish Daily News via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(15) "Acting Turkmen leader ready to give more chance to his rivals – FULLER," 3 Jan 07, Turkmen TV Altyn Asyr channel; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(16) "Turkmen Presidential Hopefuls Meet Electorate," 9 Jan 07, Turkmen TV Altyn Asyr channel; BBC Monitoring International Reports via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

(17) "New collection of poems by Saparmurat Niyazov published in Turkmenistan," 4 Jan 07, The Times of Central Asia via Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe.

Newly Independent States: Western Region

By Tammy Lynch

UKRAINE

Fighting for the pipelines

On 6 January, Ukraine's former Prime Minister and current opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko and her allies were able to celebrate an important victory, when the parliament supported a bill to prohibit any reorganization of the ownership of Ukraine's gas infrastructure.

Earlier, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich's ruling coalition had refused to place the bill on the parliamentary agenda. But a blockade of the parliamentary

rostrum by The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and President Viktor Yushchenko's Our Ukraine bloc, coupled with the resulting media attention, forced Speaker Oleksandr Moroz to call the bill for a vote. Once the measure was placed on the agenda, deputies with an eye on possible upcoming special elections, and faced with massive public opposition to any foreign ownership of the country's energy infrastructure, had little choice; all but nine MPs in the hall voted in favor.

Ukraine earlier banned the "privatization" of all gas infrastructure, but this new law goes much further.

The measure states, "The reorganization (merger, incorporation, separation, spin-off, transformation), concession, renting, leasing, mortgaging, privatization, or other actions to change the ownership of state trunk pipeline enterprises as well as the transfer of shares of such enterprises to the authorized capital of other companies shall be prohibited."

In addition, "State trunk pipeline enterprises may not be declared bankrupt and liquidated under bankruptcy legislation." (1)

The law will at least begin to answer one of the opposition's main concerns – that Ukraine's state gas company, Naftohaz Ukrainy is being intentionally mismanaged in order to drive it into bankruptcy and create an opening for private ownership.

The law also will put a stop to the apparent proposal of the Yanukovich government to provide Russia part of its gas transportation system in exchange for a stake in Russian gas extraction or a lower gas price. Although the Yanukovich government is now adamantly denying that it ever would have considered providing any country with part ownership of its most lucrative and strategically important asset, there have been numerous statements in recent days that suggest just the opposite.

Russian President Vladimir Putin set off the alarm for Ukraine's opposition during his annual press conference. "We are talking about merging our assets," he said. "Our Ukrainian partners would like not only to form a gas transmission consortium, but also to have the opportunity to enter gas production in the territory of Russia." Putin called the idea "revolution," and said, "There is interest." (2)

Following criticism of the idea, Deputy Prime Minister Mykola Azarov then suggested that "nobody will give anybody the ownership of Ukraine's gas transportation system." However, there were discussions about "joint management" in order to "receive cheaper gas," he said. According to Azarov, "joint management" would decrease the "huge sums" Ukraine spends annually on its pipelines to maintain them. He failed to explain why Russia would absorb Ukraine's "huge" expenses in exchange for the right to "manage," but not "own" the pipelines. (3)

The day after Putin's comment, a Naftohaz Ukrainy spokesman confirmed, "A political decision has been taken at the top level giving the green light for drafting specific projects by economic entities [Gazprom and Naftohaz] of the two countries, Ukraine and Russia." (4)

And further, Minister for Fuel and Energy Yuriy Boyko said, "Ukraine has made a series of proposals to Russia, and we have already selected a model that will be further developed and improved." (5)

Finally, soon after Putin's comment, an unidentified "Ukrainian source" told Russia's Vedomosti that privatization of the gas transportation network was outlawed in Ukraine, but "if its companies are guaranteed access to Russian gas fields, Ukraine may change its mind." (6)

Or maybe not. In fact, the simple suggestion that assets would be turned over caused the quickest policy about-face thus far for the Yanukovych government. On the state-owned and increasingly less objective UT-1 television station, journalists portrayed the passage of the opposition's bill as "a small victory for The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc," but "nothing new" since privatization of the pipelines already was banned. In reality, said the commentator, the ruling coalition simply voted for the bill "for a quiet life" – a reference to Tymoshenko's loud declarations.

Regardless, the passage of the bill should send a strong statement to President Putin and members of the Ukrainian government who apparently expected no response to their statements and proposals. Ukraine may be struggling to create a consolidated democracy, but its parliament is far from a rubber stamp and its opposition is far from cowed.

In return for unblocking the parliamentary rostrum, The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc also demanded that a number of other bills be placed on the agenda; the vote results for these bills will provide interesting information about both the strength of the ruling coalition and the opposition.

Tymoshenko and Our Ukraine unite.... sort of

On 5 February, The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and Yushchenko's Our Ukraine announced that they had signed an agreement to create a "joint" parliamentary opposition. "Our joint opposition efforts will help eradicate as soon as possible the criminal-oligarchic authorities and revive Ukraine's democratic and European development through disbanding parliament and holding early elections," the statement reads. (7)

Tymoshenko immediately called the agreement "extremely important," but this was not the impression given by some within Our Ukraine. Several of its members immediately denounced the statement. "I personally will not back the

outlined joint activities with the Tymoshenko Bloc,” said Our Ukraine Deputy Pavlo Zhebrivskyy. (8) Former Prime Minister and OU member Anatoliy Kinakh agreed. “I oppose the agreement which was signed as a result of a political trade,” he said. (9) Meanwhile, apparently without irony, OU Deputy Kseniya Lyapina said she was suspicious of the deal because it was unclear if Tymoshenko could be trusted to live up to the agreement.

Tymoshenko and her allies likely will not be surprised by the confusion and division in Our Ukraine over the supposed deal. Several agreements, including an intention to create a coalition government in Spring 2006 and the coalition government agreement itself, were quickly disavowed by some of Our Ukraine’s various factions. What does seem clear, however, is that the leadership of the two former “orange blocs” is continuing to try to find ways to work together. This is, at least, a start.

MOLDOVA

Status quo in Transnistria

As the international community focuses on the Kosovo question, very little attention has been given to the “frozen conflicts” still plaguing the area of the former Soviet Union. Perhaps the most “frozen” of these is Transnistria in Moldova.

Since 1992 and the conclusion of a short civil war between Transnistrian separatists and Moldova, the region has been locked in a tense status quo. Legally part of Moldova, Transnistria (also known as Transdnestr or Dniestr) claims independence and has been maintaining itself separately – with the assistance of Russia.

In a September 2006 referendum, Transnistria residents voted in favor of unification with Russia, although the result is disputed by Moldovan officials, who

point out that the region's closed, unreformed Soviet-style society did not allow any debate on the issue or provide exposure to any independent media.

Now, Transnistrian officials would like to use the Kosovo solution, whatever that may be, as a blueprint for resolution of their conflict. "Our citizens have no fewer rights than Kosovo nationals," the self-proclaimed Speaker of the Transnistrian parliament said recently. "We are certain that the status of the Dniester Moldovan republic will not be lower than that of Kosovo...." (11)

Transnistrian officials earlier were buoyed by Russian President Vladimir Putin's comments one year ago when discussing potential Kosovo settlement scenarios. "We cannot accept a situation," he said, "in which certain kinds of principles would be applied in one area and entirely different principles in another." (12)

Putin has backed away somewhat from those statements of late, but has remained supportive of all three separatist republics on the former Soviet area (the other two being in Georgia).

Moldovan officials, meanwhile, have steadfastly refused to admit the possibility of any "Kosovo precedent," and have pointed out that Transnistria sits in the middle of Moldova with no realistic possibility to join any other territorial entity.

Regardless, Transnistrian authorities seem rejuvenated by the possibility that any sort of precedent for broad autonomy or independence may be set in Kosovo, and have agreed to resume talks with Moldova after over a year away.

Source Notes:

(1) ITAR-TASS, 1000 EST, 5 Feb 07 and "Ukraine passes bill banning privatization of gas pipelines," Interfax, 6 Feb 2007; via Lexis-Nexis.

- (2) "Putin Heard 'Revolutionary' Gas Proposals From Boyko and Klyuyev," *Ukrayinska pravda*, 1 Feb 07 via www.pravda.com.ua.
- (3) "PM Assures Ukraine Will Not Give up its Gas Pipeline Network," *Ukrayinska pravda*, 6 Feb 07 via www.pravda.com.ua.
- (4) UNIAN News Agency, 1609 GMT, 2 Feb 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (5) "Ukraine President cautious about gas consortium with Russia," RIA Novosti, 2 Feb 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (6) "Ukraine asks for a place in Russia," *Vedomosti*, 2 Feb 07, p. A1; What the Papers Say Part B via Lexis-Nexis.
- (7) Statement of the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc and Our Ukraine about joint opposition activity in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, BYUT Press Service, 1003 CET, 6 Feb 07 via www.tymoshenko.com.ua. See also "Our Ukraine and BYuT signed declaration on joint opposition activity," Our Ukraine press service, 0823 CET, 6 Feb 07 via www.razom.org.ua/en.
- (8) Interfax-Ukraine, 0905 GMT, 6 Feb 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (9) Interfax-Ukraine, 1409 GMT, 6 Feb 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (10) Interfax-Ukraine, 0905 GMT, 6 Feb 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (11) Infotag, 1710 GMT, 31 Jan 07 via Lexis-Nexis.
- (12) "Russian President said worried over Kosovo possible settlement," *Glas Javnosit*, Belgrade, 1 Feb 07; BBC Monitoring via Lexis-Nexis.

Copyright Boston University Trustees 2007

Unless otherwise indicated, all articles appearing in this journal were written especially for *Analyst*. This article was originally published at <http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol13/ed1307.html>.