

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. May 1, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

**FROM: Daniel Rubin, Chairman;
Aleksander Smukler, President;
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

We are holding a series of conference calls and webinars with leaders from the region. The latest was a webinar with the U.S. Ambassador to Moldova, [Derek J. Hogan](#).

If you are not receiving notification of these calls and would like to join us, please contact David Pasmanik at dpasmanik@ncsej.org

Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 **Washington, D.C. May 1, 2020**

Putin's Coronavirus Crisis Is Not "Under Control" **Dr. Jiri and Leni Valenta** **Besa Center | April 30, 2020**

The coronavirus has caused a three-dimensional crisis in Russia: a health crisis, an economic crisis, and a personal crisis for Putin. The false low figures Moscow has released about domestic virus cases and deaths are an attempt to disguise a devastating situation.

[Read the full article here.](#)

A Dilution of Cement: Belarusian Civil Society, Local Leadership Take Initiative in COVID-19 Pandemic Response **Grigory Ioffe** **The Jamestown Foundation | April 28, 2020**

By April 25, Belarus, a country of 9.5 million residents, had registered 9,590 people who had tested positive for COVID-19; 67 of those infected had died; 1,573 patients had recovered; and a total of 139,000 tests had been conducted (ONT, April 25).

A day earlier, Yury Drakakhrust, an analyst on the Belarusian Service of Radio Liberty (BSRL), compared the situation in Belarus with that in 21 other countries most affected by the pandemic, using the data set published by Woldometer's coronavirus tracker. Namely, on April 23, Belarus had 849 COVID-19 cases per one million population. Drakakhrust's approach was to survey the entire sample and date range in order to identify all other countries that at one point in time had the identical virus contraction rate of 849 cases per million; then, he compared those countries' mortality rates on that date with Belarus's 6 deaths per million, registered on April 23. When he analyzed the data, Drakakhrust writes, he found that Belarus's mortality rate on the day in question is close to those in such countries as Israel, Austria, Norway and Germany, but 15 times less than in the United Kingdom and 6 times smaller than in Belgium. Either Belarus is in good shape, or its health statistics are skewed, he concludes (Tut.by, April 24).

[Read the full article here.](#)

(Re)categorizing Post-Soviet State COVID-19 Containment Strategies

Olga Gulina

PONARS | April 24, 2020

(PONARS Eurasia Commentary) Post-Soviet governments have ordered their anti-coronavirus priorities differently as they have tried to balance the health of the population with the security of the state. A PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo divided the post-Soviet countries into four groups depending on their pandemic reactions: early responders, late responders, laggards, and deniers. Russia, the authors argued, opted for band-aid containment solutions and therefore can be placed in both the first and second categories. However, this classification primarily reflects the speed of the countries' responses.

Additional factors for categorizing post-Soviet state responses to the pandemic include the provision of economic assistance (or the absence thereof) for businesses and citizens, and whether human rights obligations were suspended. Also, the type of state—federative or unitary—is an important factor. Most former Soviet republics are unitary, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine. Russia is the best example of the other type, with 85 federal regions each taking many of their own measures. Actions taken by federal states show regional differentiation, which will likely produce different effects over the course of the struggle against the spread of the virus.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Techno-Economic Blocs in Eurasia

Emil Avdaliani

Riddle | April 30, 2020

In Eurasia, the US and China are emerging as competitors. Along with other regional powers, their aim is to shift the post-Cold War balance of power there. Much is written about how major Eurasian states tend to establish certain spheres of influence over their immediate neighborhoods through military and economic means. Yet too little is being said about how the major players are flexing their muscles there through technological prowess. In other words, we begin to witness the emergence of so-called 'techno-economic blocs'. Tied into this is the coronavirus pandemic. Its effects will likely speed up the decoupling of these emerging blocs even on an ideological level.

These emerging technological or techno-economic blocks are based on competing technological platforms. They are clearly imports to the region. The biggest have been created by companies in the US, China, EU states, and Russia. And they have a growing geopolitical significance in Eurasia as they create new types of communication dependencies among the populations across the region and governments that rule them.

However, each techno-economic bloc is still striving for independence. Control over currency zones, desires for distinct development models, plans to develop software of their own. This would allow a techno-economic bloc to break out from other competing blocs, thus increasing independence and influence in what is now a faltering global order.

[Read the full article here.](#)

US-Russia Deconflicting 75 Years Ago: Flares and Friendly Fire at the Elbe

Simon Saradzhyan

Russia Matters | April 27, 2020

This month 75 years ago, U.S. and Soviet forces linked up on the Elbe River in Germany at the end of the European phase of World War II. The anniversary prompted current leaders of the U.S. and Russia to transcend the frosty relations between their countries and issue a rare joint declaration that cited the meeting as "an example of how our countries can put aside differences, build trust and cooperate in pursuit of a greater cause." What the declaration did not say, however, is that the April 25, 1945 link-up featured some deliberate flouting of military orders that led to friendly fire. On that day, U.S. Army and Red Army servicemen took turns violating orders issued by their commanders to ensure a safe and orderly meeting at the Elbe River, including instructions to fire green (U.S. Army) and red (Red Army) flares and a ban on straying outside zones designated for patrol (U.S. Army), according to an account based on first-hand recollections of that meeting's participants published in Russia's Kommersant daily.

[Read the full article here.](#)

**Jewish hotel in Poland offers free rooms to coronavirus treating doctors **

KATARZYNA MARKUSZ

The Jerusalem Post | April 29, 2020

WARSAW (JTA) — The Hotel Ilan in Lublin, a city in central Poland, is offering 60 rooms for free to health care professionals busy battling the coronavirus, at times for exhaustive stretches.

Breakfast is included, said Agnieszka Kolibska, the hotel manager. It's the only hotel in the city offering free rooms for doctors.

Some don't want to go home right away and be in close contact with family members after a shift working closely with coronavirus patients.

"We are glad that as a hotel and the local Jewish community we can support health care in these hard times," Kolibska said.

The hotel is located in the building of what was formerly one of the largest yeshivas in the world, founded by Rabbi Meir Yehuda Shapiro in 1930. The building now belongs to the Warsaw Jewish Community organization.

Elsewhere, in Warsaw, the Jewish Theater donated a hundred sewn masks to the city's Social Welfare Center. Now it's preparing to send a package of them to an orphanage in Warsaw.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Without Tourist Revenue, Prague's Jewish Community Fears for Future of Welfare Services

Reuters Via NYTimes | April 27, 2020

PRAGUE — With ticket sales to Prague's Jewish quarter halted during the coronavirus lockdown, the community is having to tap its reserves to pay for welfare services for Holocaust survivors that tourists usually help fund.

And even though the Czech Republic's cultural attractions are due to reopen next month, with global tourism at a standstill the community is looking at ways to cut spending elsewhere to keep funding the programmes for the elderly.

The Jewish quarter - dating back 1,000 years - has long been one of Prague's most popular destinations, with historic synagogues and one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in Europe drawing visitors from around the globe.

The ticket revenue and rents from tenants such as restaurants fund meals, medical treatment and nursing care to the several hundred elderly members of Prague's Jewish community, many of them Holocaust survivors, such as 90-year-old Petr Brandejsky.

"I am very grateful for what the community is providing," he said in his flat where he receives food deliveries during the lockdown instead of daily lunches at a community centre.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Eurasian Union Flunks Its Stress Test

Stephen Blank

CACI Analyst | April 27, 2020

Crises are often telling indicators of an institution's fitness. The Coronavirus pandemic is currently putting governments and regional institutions like the EU under profoundly challenging stress tests. Another such regional institution is the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which Russian President Vladimir Putin and its champions have claimed is organized along the lines of the EU. Whatever the EU's successes or failures, it is clear that the EEU has failed to display even a semblance of the EU's cohesion. Moscow has simply disregarded the interests of its partners and pursued a sharply unilateralist policy that seriously complicated if not threatened its partners' economies, particularly in Central Asia.

[Read the full article here.](#)

'Aliyah' continues with nine Ukrainian Jews en route to making homes in Israel

JNS | April 27, 2020

Despite travel bans, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has sponsored aliyah flights for 580 Jewish immigrants since February.

Even with all the global travel bans imposed due to the coronavirus, aliyah to Israel is continuing apace as another nine Jewish immigrants from Ukraine will arrive at Ben-Gurion International Airport early on Monday morning on a flight arranged by the Jewish Agency for Israel and sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ).

The immigrant families will join another 36 newly arrived Russian-speaking Jews for a two-week quarantine period in a hotel under special arrangements with the Israel government and the Jewish Agency, which are also being supported by the ICEJ.

Although flights have been grounded nearly everywhere in recent months, the ICEJ has worked in cooperation with the Jewish Agency to still bring 580 new Jewish immigrants on aliyah to Israel since February. This has included 465 Russian-speaking Jews arriving from various regions of the former Soviet republics, as well as 115 Ethiopian Jews making the journey home from Addis Ababa.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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About NCSEJ

Founded in 1971, the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.



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