

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. June 5, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

Before the beginning of yesterday's webinar featuring Georgian Ambassador to the United States David Bakradze, NCSEJ Chair Daniel Rubin made the following statement regarding the murder of George Floyd and the events of the last week:

At the foundation of what we do at NCSEJ is fight discrimination and ensure the human rights for the Jewish communities of the former Soviet Union and Eurasia. In the past several days we have witnessed discrimination, divisiveness, and violations of human rights in our own country at a level not seen in decades. As an organization we cannot fight discrimination in one arena and ignore it in another - especially in our own backyard.

Accordingly, NCSEJ fully supports the statement of the Conference of Presidents and has added its name, along with other Jewish organizations including the ADL, B'nai B'rith International, and the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, to [a Washington JCRC statement of solidarity with the African-American community](#) and condolences to the family of George Floyd.

Advocacy in support of human rights and human dignity has never been more important in the United States and around the world.

As the late Martin Luther King spoke out in support of the rights of Soviet Jews in the mid 1960's, it is the American Jewish community's responsibility to do the same for the African-American community today.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

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NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10
Washington, D.C. June 5, 2020

Jewish Community of Greater Washington Expresses Solidarity With African-American Community
JCRC | June 2, 2020

WASHINGTON DC—June 2, 2020 - The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater

Washington and dozens of Jewish organizations in the Washington region today issued the following statement following the killing by police of George Floyd and the ongoing response in our region and across the country:

We, the undersigned Jewish organizations in the Greater Washington region, join all people of good conscience in condemning the brutal killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer. We are outraged that yet another Black life has been lost to systemic American racism.

At a time when our nation has been convulsed by a global health crisis disproportionately impacting communities of color in our region and around the country, we demand justice, not only in the prosecution of arrested former-officer Derek Chauvin, but also in the prosecution of the three former officers who stood by while Floyd was killed. And we demand that the system of ingrained, pernicious racism that enabled this horrific killing be uprooted and replaced by a culture of equitable, just law enforcement that protects Americans of all skin colors.

The Jewish people will not be bystanders—our organizations and our community are called to solidarity with people of color in this moment. We value our long-standing role as mutual friends and allies to the African-American community. We are committed to dismantling institutionalized racism in America. We are in conversation with our African-American partners to listen, learn, and support. And we are committed to making our own institutions more welcoming to Jews of color and bringing justice to all marginalized people. Each of us must dig deeper into our own stereotypes and biases and upend them. Pursuing racial justice is a human and a moral duty, and a reflection of sacred Jewish values.

The work is hard and the obstacles daunting, but we must not resort to exhaustion, cynicism or complacency. The road to justice begins in our own backyards: we are each responsible for nurturing children, schools and local communities that are free from bias. We are each responsible for creating a society where all young people can flourish and where no child grows up to become the next Derek Chauvin.

There is no room on this journey for violence, destruction or lawlessness as we have witnessed in our own community in Washington, DC. We were pained to see the burning of St. John's Church, "the Church of the Presidents," and attacks on numerous other landmarks and businesses in our nation's capital. We appreciate those who are responding to this tragedy peacefully and thoughtfully and urge all members of our community to work with one another and with law enforcement to build a better and more inclusive Washington region. We express our deepest condolences to the family and community of George Floyd and share a traditional Jewish mourning sentiment in asking that his memory be a blessing to those who loved and knew him.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Trump uses Russia as a shield, or weapon, in fight with European leaders over future of Group of Seven

Anne Gearan

The Washington Post | June 2, 2020

The on-again, off-again saga of this year's Group of Seven economic meeting has had several plotlines.

To review: President Trump first announced he would host it himself at his Doral golf resort in Florida. Then, after criticism over his decision to use his private business as the site of a government event, the annual meeting was relocated to the woodsy Camp David retreat in Maryland.

The coronavirus pandemic then led to it being rescheduled as a virtual event. But after a few weeks, Trump attempted to reverse that decision in favor of an in-person session at the White House in June. When that proposal was met with resistance from other G-7 nations, Trump said on Saturday that the whole thing is on hold until at least September.

It wasn't until that last plot twist that Trump raised what seemed the dormant, and fraught, question of whether Russia should again be included in the clubby annual meetings. The potential invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin to join the meeting would insert a poison pill into discussions about holding any meeting at all this year, when the United States is the G-7 host.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Twists and Turns of Belarus's Unusual Electoral Campaign

Grigory Ioffe

The Jamestown Foundation | June 3, 2020

Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka spoke with the workers of the Minsk Tractor Factory, on May 29 (ONT, Belta [1] [2], May 29). Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, Lukashenka stated, "I am still of the opinion that it is more than just a disease. A disease is half of the issue or even less. Everything else is politics." The Belarusian leader recognized that his

policy of not imposing a quarantine was not to the liking of other countries. “And some even pushed for it... So, imagine we brought the economy to a halt. Then, in order to turn it around, we would need money. And who has money? America, China, Russia has a little bit, too, and some others. They will bring you the ruble [i.e., money] and say, ‘You get the ruble, and we get the factory.’ This is what that was all about,” he claimed. In addressing the current epidemiological situation in Belarus, Lukashenka noted that some hospitals, initially reprofiled to serve exclusively COVID-19 patients, are already beginning to return to their routine work within their specialization. “This suggests that we are slowly prevailing.”

The second newsworthy issue touched upon by the president was the election campaign. To the question about his attitude toward the other presidential hopefuls, Lukashenka replied that the only rival he knows personally is his former aide Valery Tsepkalov. “But he is crafty. He would not say why the president fired him [as the director of the High-Tech Center back in March 2017]. Ask him yourselves why I fired him. Let him honestly respond. But then he would not want to continue his campaign. So, he will not tell you honestly. And we know why but do not want to deal with compromising material at the moment.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

On the Black Sea, Georgia rebrands as a holiday haven from the pandemic

Isabelle Khurshudyan

The Washington Post | May 30, 2020

MOSCOW — Put aside the ancient vineyards, the ski resorts and Black Sea beaches. The country of Georgia has a new tourism pitch: a place to take a break from the pandemic.

Georgia’s response to the novel coronavirus is a relative success story: 746 confirmed cases, 576 of whom have recovered, and 12 deaths. Now it wants to parlay that into a holiday draw. Georgia is far from alone in trying to reinvent itself for tourism in the wake of covid-19. But the South Caucasus nation, tucked between Turkey and Russia, offers a look into some of the emerging strategies, such as promoting low infection rates and being selective about who gets in.

“We have to put up with the fact that we may not get as many tourists as we did last year, but we should add this competitive advantage to our traditional competitive advantages, such as our history, our 8,000 years of winemaking, our cuisine, our culture and hospitality,” Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Gakharia said recently.

Georgia is among the first wave of countries cautiously restarting their tourism industries even as coronavirus concerns linger for both potential travelers and destinations.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia is searching for new citizens in a post-Covid world

Olga Gulina

Riddle.io | June 2, 2020

Russia laid out its interest in certain groups of foreign citizens in its official migration policy guidelines for 2019–2025. According to that document, the policy aims to fix problems related to the country’s development “to protect the national labour market, to maintain interethnic and interreligious harmony, as well as to address issues in the sphere of protection and preservation of Russian culture, Russian language and heritage of the peoples of Russia, all of which are at the foundation of its cultural code and civilisation.” For the first time, the policy guidelines referred to migration policy, including the policy of granting Russian citizenship, as a tool to address Russia’s demographic, socio-economic and geopolitical challenges.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia’s 2019 cyberattack against Georgia was followed by a full-spectrum propaganda effort

Givi Gigitashvili

The New Eastern Europe | June 2, 2020

A joint investigation by Georgia, the United States, and the United Kingdom has concluded that Russia’s Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU) was responsible for a massive cyberattack against Georgia in October 2019. The results of the investigation were announced on February 20, 2020. Georgia’s Foreign Ministry has said that the cyberattack aimed to undermine the country’s national security and disrupt the proper functioning of state institutions.

The Kremlin has responded to an investigation that found Russia responsible for a cyberattack in Georgia in October 2019 by denying any responsibility and accusing Georgia and its Western partners of Russophobia. The Kremlin launched a multichannel strategy using official diplomatic channels, Kremlin-funded media, and fringe outlets to widely spread Russia’s narrative about the investigation. Within Georgia, pro-Kremlin outlets also accused the Georgian authorities of obstructing the chances of political normalisation between Russia and Georgia. This strategy of using multiple channels to spread the same narrative has become a

staple of Russian disinformation efforts in recent years. It often derives from the understanding that readers are more apt to assume that a piece of information received from several sources is based on various perspectives and is more likely to be true.

The cyberattack was carried out on October 28, 2019, and resulted in around 15,000 websites being temporarily disabled. The list of affected websites included the official websites of the Presidency of Georgia, various courts, local municipalities, and civil society organisations. The work of several TV channels was interrupted as well.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Post-COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities for Central Asia

Bakhrom Radjabov

CACI | June 4, 2020

It is obvious that the World will never be the same due to the COVID-19 global outbreak. Human communication, social norms and habits are transforming. More digitalization and less physical interactions are becoming a daily routine in education, medical treatment, entertainment, and business. Global politics and the global economy will also experience drastic changes. Not surprisingly, Central Asian states have also become a part of these global shifts. Let us consider a few sectors affected by the coronavirus.

First, COVID-19 hit the medical care systems of Central Asian republics and became a stress test for them. According to the Global Health Security Index (GHSI) score, 73 percent of the world's population lives in countries that scored below 50 on a scale between 0 (absolutely not prepared) and 100 (well prepared). The report found that no country was truly prepared for pandemic (scoring 100) – all lacked fundamental health care capacities vital for epidemic and pandemic response. None of the Central Asian republics scored above 50, although their degree of preparedness based on the GHSI score differed.

Second, the World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Economic Updates suggest various negative scenarios for the region, including a major recession in 2020, with growth contracting to between -4.4 and -2.8 percent. Before the global pandemic, among the Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan was expected to have the highest and most dynamic economic growth rate in the region, projected to 5.7 percent in 2020 and 6.0 percent in 2021. However, these numbers are now revised to 1.6-1.8 percent. EBRD's economic forecast for Uzbekistan's GDP growth in 2020 is about 1.5 percent with a perspective of growth up to 6.5 percent in 2021.

Although it was clear that the pandemic would dramatically hit the economy, Central Asian governments took measures against the COVID-19 outbreak based on the resources available and their understanding of immediately required actions. The most common measure recommended by the WHO was quarantine.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Cheburashka was the beloved misfit of Soviet animation. It's now a missing treasure for Russia

Robyn Dixon

The Washington Post | May 29, 2020

MOSCOW — The best-loved soundtrack of Soviet-era childhood rang with melancholy about the lost past and the unfortunate fact that birthdays come only once a year. Its star was an animated outsider — a fuzzy, large-eared "creature unknown to science" — named Cheburashka.

The endearing Cheburashka became a cultural icon with serious star power — chosen as Russia's Olympic mascot four times and still beloved for story plots full of his naive optimism and poignant efforts to belong in Soviet life.

Now there is a corporate struggle between Russia and Japan over Cheburashka's real place in the world.

Russia's state-owned Soyuzmultfilm, the main Soviet animation studio founded in 1936, is struggling to recover the rights to Cheburashka from a Japanese company — much like how the character Cheburashka faces endless setbacks but never quite loses hope. The sting of Russia's loss of the global rights is less about nationalism than nostalgic pride and the attempts of the Russian studio to recover its past glory. Think of the American bonds to Mickey Mouse or Belgium's embrace of Tintin.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Polish historian Ewa Kurek: Coronavirus is 'Jewfication' of Europe

Eli Nahum

Antisemitism

Warsaw - Polish historian Ewa Kurek gave an interview on Wrealu24 in March, in which she described the coronavirus outbreak in Europe as a "Jewfication."

According to Kurek, who began her academic career as a Holocaust historian and is now considered as a radical Catholic writer, COVID-19 is used to introduce “Jewish” values into “our Western Christian culture.” She claimed that in Spain, they are facing a shortage of ventilators and need to decide who gets to be treated and who isn’t, hinting that this is allegedly “Talmudic” logic and against the Catholic value of the sacredness of life.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Responding to a Pandemic, Putin Trades Russia’s Future for His Own
Cyrus Newlin and Heather Conley
CSIS | May 27, 2020

Vladimir Putin had a very different economic plan for Russia in 2020 when he announced sweeping changes to the Russian constitution in January and endorsed legislation to reset his term limit in March, allowing himself the option to remain in power until 2036. With a National Welfare Fund (NWF) worth more than \$156 billion in hand, it was anticipated that the Kremlin would increase social spending to soothe any public discontent with Putin’s announced continuation in power. But Covid-19 and a poorly timed energy price war with Saudi Arabia upended those plans, confronting the Kremlin with a grim new economic reality as it approaches a national referendum on proposed constitutional changes and 2021 parliamentary elections. In April, a simultaneous collapse in oil prices and a 33 percent drop in economic activity resulted in a staggering GDP contraction of 28 percent. The Russian Central Bank forecasts a 4-6 percent reduction in GDP in 2020. Several macroeconomists expect the economy to shrink by more than 10 percent this year.

While Russia is not alone in grappling with a sudden and extraordinary global economic downturn, Moscow’s response to the crisis is constrained by a set of circumstances particular to Russia. If oil prices remain unexpectedly low (below the current \$40/barrel level the government currently budgets) for several years, the government may be forced to consider two politically unattractive and risky options: either increase taxes on its citizens to sustain planned investment or consolidate the budget by cutting spending on the politically important National Projects. Even if global energy prices rebound, however, the policies that Moscow has already implemented to date are reconfiguring Russia’s economy in the long term, making it more susceptible and vulnerable to future external shocks and less policy responsive. In fact, Russia’s current timid economic response to the pandemic suggests this is already the case. To date, Russia’s direct anti-crisis measures add up to under 3 percent of GDP, compared to roughly 10 percent in Germany and the United States. The long-term political repercussions from the economic fall-out may not be fully understood for several years.

Russia enters a global recession at once better prepared and more vulnerable—a paradox of the government’s dependency on oil and gas revenue, its failure to implement serious economic reforms, and six years of Western-imposed sanctions. Its large current reserves and NWF are both products of prudent monetary and fiscal policies that balanced the budget at an artificially low price of \$40-42/barrel. This conservative approach, guided by the Kremlin’s desire to reduce impact from future Western sanctions on its economy and financial markets, will mean that Moscow will likely not have to borrow in international markets. Despite some internal division, Russia’s able economic technocrats have safely maneuvered through the rocky shoals of past crises. Yet the depth and timing of the current crisis suggest that the toughest decisions lie ahead.

[Read the full article here.](#)

New Document Consolidates Russia’s Nuclear Policy in One Place
Olga Oliker
Russia Matters | June 4, 2020

Rejoice nuclear strategy nerds! On June 2, the Russian Federation published a brand new document titled “Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Nuclear Deterrence.” In this six-page document, Russia has laid out its official position on nuclear deterrence.

This is the first time we’ve seen such a thing from Moscow. Any prior versions were classified. Thus, for decades, those of us who wanted to write about Russian approaches to nuclear weapons had to piece together Moscow’s positions and intentions from components of other documents (most notably a line or two in the country’s military doctrine), statements from officials, exercises, force structure and the writings of Russia’s own specialists and strategists (the military literature is summarized particularly well in an excellent recent two-part series from the Center for Naval Analyses). To be sure, none of us will stop reading the other documents, watching the exercises, reading the papers and listening to what officials say. But it is nice to have it all in one place.

And putting it all in one place is very much what this new document, which I’ll be calling “Foundations” for the balance of this essay, does. There is little that is strikingly new here. Rather, Foundations echoes things we have heard from officials, including Russian President

Vladimir Putin, and read in formal documents past. But by bringing them all together, it clarifies a few things. It also highlights some seeming inconsistencies. Importantly, as I know you are all wondering, “escalate to de-escalate” as defined by Western analysts and the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review is almost certainly still not Russia’s policy, but Foundations alone isn’t going to kill the debate.

[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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