



Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. July 17, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

**FROM: James Schiller, Chairman;
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

This week, the Mayor of Uman Ukraine announced that the annual pilgrimage to the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov will be cancelled due to the coronavirus. Each year, thousands of followers of Rabbi Nachman visit his grave during Rosh Hashanah. The Mayor said the city of Uman is not able to provide the safety measures that are needed during the pandemic.

Last Sunday, President Andrzej Duda was reelected President by a slim margin in a runoff election. After the results of the election were announced, the Civic Platform Party challenged the results and filed a protest to the Polish Supreme Court this week claiming an unfair electoral process.

Lastly, I'd like to recommend a podcast by Carnegie Moscow Center centering on [Russian Foreign Policy in a Post-Pandemic World](#). Topic discussed include Russia's position in the context of the U.S.-China rivalry, the effects of the ongoing oil war, the negotiations in the Donbass, and Russia's domestic affairs.

Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

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NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10
Washington, D.C. July 17 2020

No New Year Pilgrimage to Ukraine for Israeli Jews This Year
HaAretz | July 14, 2020

Israeli Hasidic Jews will have to forego an annual pilgrimage to the central Ukrainian town of Uman this year because of the coronavirus pandemic, the town's mayor has said.

Every Jewish New Year, tens of thousands of Hasidic Jews visit the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, who revived the Hasidic movement and died in 1810.

This year, Jewish New Year celebrations run from September 18-20.

"The common opinion is that the arrival of tens of thousands of Hasidic pilgrims to Uman to conduct the celebration in the traditional format is impossible," mayor Oleksander Tsebriy said on Facebook.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Poland's narrow election has big consequences for its democratic future
Ishaan Tharoor
The Washington Post | July 15, 2020

In a runoff election Sunday, Polish President Andrzej Duda won by a razor-thin margin. Duda, backed by Poland's ruling right-wing nationalist Law and Justice party, or PiS, claimed 51 percent of the vote. His challenger, centrist Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, received 49 percent. A few months ago, not many expected the race to be so close. But while Trzaskowski's strong showing demonstrated the depth of opposition toward the country's government, a triumphant Duda and his allies now eye the means to entrench their rule.

The office of the Polish president doesn't have the same executive powers as the White House, but Duda will have the capacity to approve or reject policy formulated by the PiS-led Parliament, which probably won't see new elections until 2023. "Analysts say they expect Law and Justice to leverage his win to further its hard-line policies, including an effort to 're-Polandize' the media and bring foreign-owned outlets under Polish control," my colleagues reported.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Thousands of migrants from Uzbekistan are stranded in makeshift camps at the Russia-Kazakhstan border
Maria Shesterikova
Meduza | July 14, 2020

In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, thousands of migrants from Uzbekistan have found themselves stranded at the Russia-Kazakhstan border. Left without work in Russia, they wanted to make their way home over land through Kazakhstan, but the country's escalating coronavirus epidemic has led Nur-Sultan to tighten entry restrictions and the border remains closed. Left with nowhere to go, these migrants have set up a makeshift camp in an open field, where they are trying to survive without food, water, or money in 37 degree heat (98.6 degree Fahrenheit). Maria Shesterikova, a journalist from Russia's southwestern Samara Region, travelled to the local border with Kazakhstan to speak with the camp's inhabitants. Here's her special report for Meduza.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Podcast: Russian Foreign Policy in a Post-Pandemic World
Elena Chernenko, Alexander Gabuev, & Dmitri Trenin
Carnegie Moscow Center | July 10, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has only intensified the rivalry between the United States and China, hastening the advent of a new era of bipolarity. How can Russia maintain equilibrium and avoid being drawn into the U.S.-China confrontation as a junior partner of China? Will the collapse of oil prices and subsequent loss of revenue force Russia to rein in its ambitious foreign policy of recent years? Are there renewed hopes for progress in the Donbas peace talks? And will the Kremlin finally be forced to turn its focus to domestic affairs? Carnegie Moscow Center director Dmitri Trenin and Elena Chernenko, a special correspondent at the Kommersant publishing house, join podcast host Alexander Gabuev to discuss these issues and more.

[Read the full article here.](#)

A Peculiar Electoral Stalemate in Belarus **Grigory Ioffe** **The Jamestown Foundation | July 14, 2020**

July 14 was the deadline for the registration of candidates in the 2020 Belarusian presidential election. In the meantime, the campaign has entered a baffling stage, whereby the electoral result to be announced on August 9 is exceedingly clear and, yet, feels like an impasse. By denying registration to Victor Babariko (Tut.by, July 14), the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) effectively confirmed that, had he have been allowed to run, the Belgazprombank chairperson would have been a formidable rival to the incumbent president. Earlier, the other leading presidential hopeful, former ambassador and technology entrepreneur Valery Tsepkalo's, lodged a complaint to the CEC for disqualifying 60,000 signatures collected on his behalf. But it was rejected, and he now plans to file a complaint with the European Human Rights Court (Interfax, July 6). Tellingly, Tsepkalo also made a statement in support of Belarus's multi-directional foreign policy, albeit recognizing the country's special ties with Russia that go far beyond economic links (Naviny, July 6). In turn, Babariko's campaign staff released a biographical film devoted to him (Tut.by, July 9), invoking his professional achievements and the memory of his wife, who died in an accident in 2017. Additionally, members of Babariko's electoral team met with Western diplomats in Minsk (Tut.by, July 8).

[Read the full article here.](#)

Olga Oliker on Russia: Insights and Recommendations **RM Staff** **RussiaMatters | July 16, 2020**

This compilation of observations and policy ideas related to Russia by Olga Oliker is part of Russia Matters' "Competing Views" rubric, where we share prominent American thinkers' takes on issues pertaining to Russia, U.S.-Russian relations and broader U.S. policies affecting Russia.

Oliker, who now directs the International Crisis Group's Europe and Central Asia program, has been producing in-depth Russia-related analysis in English for over 20 years. Her articles, reports and monographs have covered subjects ranging from armed conflict in the North Caucasus and Central Asia to arms control and the Russian military. Prior to joining ICG, Dr. Oliker directed the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and spent many years as an analyst at the RAND Corporation. Her writing has appeared in the New York Times, The Washington Post, Foreign Affairs, Survival and multiple other publications.

This compilation is meant as a sampling of Dr. Oliker's views on Russia. All sections may be updated with new or past statements. The quotes below are divided into categories similar to those in Russia Matters' news and analysis digests, reflecting the most pertinent topic areas for U.S.-Russian relations broadly and for drivers of the two countries' policies toward one another.

[Read the full article here.](#)

'Go Home!': US Ambassador to Warsaw Draws Antisemitic Fury From Polish Far Right **Ben Cohen** **Algemeiner | July 15, 2020**

The US ambassador in Warsaw has been facing a sustained rhetorical attack from Polish right-wing nationalists this week, with one televised missive falling upon classically-antisemitic tropes in denouncing her for allegedly violating the

country's sovereignty.

Georgette Mosbacher — appointed as envoy to Poland by US President Donald Trump in 2018 — has faced a deluge of criticism following a recent Twitter exchange in which she condemned a former Polish defense minister for a “disgusting and deplorable” statement made during the presidential election campaign that resulted in a narrow victory for the incumbent, Andrzej Duda, over the weekend.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Hungarian Foreign Minister Set to Visit Israel, Meet Counterpart Noa Landau HaAretz | July 15, 2020

Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó is set to visit Israel next week and meet with his counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi, amid growing voices in the European Union condemning Israel's annexation plans.

Hungary, led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, is considered Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's biggest supporter in the EU, and the only member state that has yet to condemn Israel's annexation plans, choosing to remain vague on the issue.

Ashkenazi spoke to Szijjártó in May and discussed the two countries' "common standpoint" on the issue of "retaining identity and the importance of sovereignty and security," as well as "action against illegal migration," the Hungarian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. But Ashkenazi's office denied the content of the conversation as described by his Hungarian counterpart.

According to the Hungarian statement, Szijjártó assured Ashkenazi that they will "continue to refrain from supporting statements that condemn Israel in both the EU and the United Nations, and also regards the procedure against Israel by the International Criminal Court as unfounded." However, the statement did not mention the issue of Israeli annexation of parts of the West Bank.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Azerbaijan to model Diaspora program after Birthright Excel Gil Hoffman The Jerusalem Post | July 14, 2020

The Republic of Azerbaijan's State Committee on Affairs is working with Birthright Excel to create their local version of the highly successful business and leadership fellowship.

In the 20 years since its establishment, Birthright Israel became the largest educational-tourism organization in the world and received much acclaim from countries that also have a large diaspora. Using Birthright as a model, several countries launched heritage trips for children of their former residents, including Birthright Armenia, Heritage Greece, ReConnect Hungary, Birthright Macedonia and Global Irish Summer Camp.

While fewer than 10 million Azerbaijanis live in Azerbaijan, the country boasts a large diaspora: The number of Azerbaijanis around the world is estimated to be 30 million-35 million, including 13 million in neighboring Iran.

“Last year, we visited Birthright's Center for Israeli Innovation at the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange building and had several meetings with Birthright executives” said Vugar Mammadov, head of international relations in the State Committee on Affairs with the Diaspora of the Republic of Azerbaijan. “They helped tremendously in improving our own version of an Azerbaijani heritage trip in the form of a summer camp and inspired us to do more. The purpose is to engage with Azerbaijani youth in the diaspora, help them retain their national identity in the future and better represent the interests of our people and our state.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

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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