



# Russia and Eurasia REPORT

FROM THE CSIS RUSSIA AND EURASIA PROGRAM | VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 2 | FEBRUARY 2004

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Caucasus Initiative Seminar with Aram Karapetyan of the New Times Party and Jori Hokobyan of the Social Democratic Party

The seminar will be held on Tuesday, March 2, from 1:30 to 3:00 pm

Contact Nancy Lord at [nlord@csis.org](mailto:nlord@csis.org) for more information

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

### HIV/AIDS Task Force

The CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program is working closely with the CSIS HIV/AIDS Task Force, co-chaired with Senators William Frist (TN) and Russell Feingold (WI), to address the problems of HIV/AIDS in second wave countries. This REP project is part of a larger CSIS project conceived by Africa program director Stephen Morrison that includes the Africa program, the Russia and Eurasia program, the China program, and the Southeast Asia program. The project is generously funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation; REP Director and Trustee Fellow Celeste A. Wallander and Senior Fellow Sarah Mendelson head the Russia HIV/AIDS project.

Until the mid-1990s, Russia and Eurasia had relatively few cases of HIV. Today, however, these states are experiencing the highest rate of growth of HIV infection in the world. But the coming HIV/AIDS pandemic in Russia is only one

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## ELECTIONS, RUSSIAN STYLE

*Jacqueline M. Miller*

Three months after conducting Duma elections that international observers, most prominently the OSCE, declared fundamentally flawed, Russia prepares to re-elect Vladimir Putin on March 14. There continues to be widespread concern that Russia's democratization process is stalled or even regressing based on the conduct of the December 2003 Duma election, the upcoming March 2004 presidential election, as well as the October 2003 presidential contest in Chechnya.

### The Presidential Election in Numbers

That Vladimir Putin will win a second term on March 14 is, barring unforeseen circumstances, a foregone conclusion. A recent poll showed that a full 90 percent of Russians believe that Putin will win reelection. Putin is a popular president—more than 70 percent of those polled were planning on voting for him. Putin's biggest rival in the campaign is the "against all" vote, which is expected to surpass 4 percent (the against all vote in the Duma election was 4.7 percent). His biggest problem, however, is voter apathy. According to the federal election law, if turnout is under 50 percent, the election must be ruled invalid.

Perennial presidential candidates Gennady Zyuganov, Grigory Yavlinsky, and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy have decided not to run against Putin, leaving a field of largely unknowns in the race. In the 1996 presidential elections, Zyuganov was a real contender. He won 32 percent of the vote in the first round (to Boris Yeltsin's 35 percent) and lost to Yeltsin in the second round, receiving 40 percent of the vote to Yeltsin's 54 percent. In 2000, he won 29 percent of the vote compared to Putin's 53 percent. Had he run this time, Zyuganov would have been Putin's most serious challenger, but in all likelihood would have been lucky to muster 10 percent of the vote. In 1996 Zhirinovskiy garnered nearly 6 percent of the vote in the first round, behind Aleksander Lebed and Grigory Yavlinsky. In the 2000 election, Zhirinovskiy's support slipped to 2.7 percent. Yavlinsky, leader of Yabloko, won 7.4 percent of the vote in 1996 and 5.8 percent in 2000. The liberal leaning political parties in Russia, after their abysmal showing in the Duma elections (they have argued that electoral fraud deprived them of representation, citing parallel vote count figures released by the Communist Party), are not fielding candidates and are calling on their supporters to boycott the election.

So who is running? The six registered candidates, aside from Putin, include the Liberal Democratic Party's Oleg Malyshkin, former head of Zhirinovskiy's security and who Zhirinovskiy himself called a hot-head after he physically attacked two other Duma candidates during a live television interview; KPRF candidate Nikolai Kharitonov, who in one campaign speech said he was "contesting these elections

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aspect, although an extremely significant one, of a larger healthcare crisis in Russia that threatens Russian economic growth, social stability, and even Russian security.

Our strategic goals for this project are threefold—to get U.S. leaders in Washington D.C. to understand and recognize the scope and form of the problem of HIV/AIDS in Russia; to shape the U.S. policy initiatives that result from that increased awareness; and to call attention to and help address the gaps in knowledge for effective international assistance and Russian policies. Over the next 6 months we will hold a series of working group seminars with experts primarily from the DC area, host public seminars at CSIS to increase attention to the problem, and conduct briefings on Capitol Hill for congressional staff and members. All of these meetings will serve to generate ideas for a high level Task Force visit by public policy and opinion leaders to Russia in fall 2004. The Russia and Eurasia program's work will contribute to the comprehensive CSIS Task Force meetings and conference on second wave countries in Washington in 2005.

For more information on the HIV/AIDS Task Force, please contact Nancy Lord at [nlord@csis.org](mailto:nlord@csis.org)

## PROGRAM PUBLICATIONS

Report for the December 2003 PONARS Policy Conference is now online at <http://csis.org/ruseura/ponars/conferences/con031212.pdf>

All PONARS publications can be accessed from our website: <http://csis.org/ruseura/ponars/publications.htm>

in order to return to the people what the thieving reforms stole from them"; Irina Khakamada, who had to run as in independent when her party, the Union of Right Forces, decided to boycott the election; Sergei Glazyev, whose decision to run led to his ouster as co-chair of the Motherland bloc, which had achieved stunning success in the Duma elections; Ivan Rybkin, who took a bizarre excursion to Kyiv, claiming at first to have been merely visiting friends and then to have been kidnapped, and who is now conducting his campaign from London; and Sergei Mironov, speaker of the Federation Council and an ardent Putin supporter.

Polling numbers have moved only minimally, with Putin enjoying a consistent 70 percent. His next closest rival, according to the polling data released by Russia's Public Opinion Foundation (FOM), aside from "against all," is Kharitonov, who has seen his support double from mid-January so he now polls at over 3 percent. However, a contemporary poll shows that 58 percent of the population does not know who Kharitonov is. Other candidates are similarly poorly placed:

"If you were to vote in the presidential election, for which of these candidates would you vote?" (%)

	Feb 14-15, 2004	Jan 31-Feb 1, 2004	Jan 10-11, 2004
Putin	69.9	70.8	71.0
Kharitonov	3.3	2.3	1.5
Glazyev	2.2	3.7	3.4
Khakamada	2.1	1.4	1.2
Malyskin	0.6	0.5	0.2
Mironov	0.4	0.4	0.3
Rybkin	0.1	0.3	0.2
Against All	4.2	3.4	3.8

Source: Public Opinion Foundation ([http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0407/domm0407/domm0407\\_1/d040703](http://bd.fom.ru/report/map/projects/dominant/dom0407/domm0407/domm0407_1/d040703))

A contemporary poll from the independent VTsIOM-A, which asked the question "If the presidential election were held next Sunday, for which of the following candidates would you vote," gave Putin 80 percent of the vote, Kharitonov 5 percent, Glazyev 4 percent, Khakamada 2 percent, and against all 4 percent (<http://www.levada.ru>).

### What Opposition?

Clearly, those running against Putin do not do so with any expectation of winning the presidency—some even plan on voting for Putin themselves. Mironov and Malyskin openly support Putin. Khakamada and Glazyev are running in defiance of their parties. The four opposition candidates (Kharitonov, Glazyev, Khakamada, and Rybkin) insist that the election is a sham, arguing that state run television is offering biased coverage and that rule violations are discrediting the election. Khakamada has been particularly vocal in her criticism of the campaign process and filed a protest with the Central Election Commis-

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sion after state television broadcast remarks Putin made at a meeting with supporters essentially kicking off his campaign, which would be a violation of election law if Putin's campaign was being covered and other candidates were not given equal airtime. The protest was dismissed when the CEC ruled that the state channel had not violated campaign laws because they were not covering a candidate but informing voters of the activities of the president.

Irina Khakamada has since proposed that the opposition candidates withdraw from the presidential race; Glazyev, Rybkin, and Kharitonov were reportedly giving the idea serious thought—although Glazyev later decided he would stay in the race. Opposition candidates serve to give to the contest a legitimacy it would otherwise lack. If they withdrew, Putin would be left facing Mironov, who decided to run declaring “When a trusted leader goes into battle, he must not be left alone”; and Malyshkin, who has said that Putin is doing a pretty good job and sees his party as offering constructive criticism to Putin. Even Malyshkin's mother apparently plans on voting for Putin, saying in a television interview “Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin is, I think, a good President. We don't need any better.”

Mr. Putin is, some argue, desperate for competition so that the election has some semblance of legitimacy. Yet Putin will not participate in the presidential debates and will not use the free airtime granted to all candidates (although he makes campaign-like speeches that are aired nationally during prime time).

The Russian people know that the outcome of the election is a foregone conclusion. There is concern that the turnout could fall below 50 percent (the Duma turnout was officially reported to be 56 percent). With 90 percent of Russians believing Putin will win (and one has to wonder what the other 10 percent are thinking), there is little incentive to go to the polls. Russia's liberal-leaning opposition has called for a boycott. The CEC chairman acknowledged that if turnout did fall below 50 percent, the election would be declared invalid.

Critics of Putin's politics are legion, but that is fundamentally not what is at issue here. Critics contend that the electoral system is not fair because restrictive campaign laws and the use of administrative resources have fundamentally distorted the election in favor of the administration. The same restrictions that hampered Duma candidates in the December election are pointed to again as hampering alternative candidates in this election from gaining a foothold and challenging Putin—although given the low public profile of any of the other candidates, they would have an uphill battle in front of them to gain greater recognition even with equal access to media and other resources.

In just two election cycles, political competition for the highest office in Russia has become anemic at best. In 1996 there was real competition for the office of president, even in the face of financial intervention by Russia's oligarchs in favor of Yeltsin. In 2000, despite the advantage of incumbency and a short campaign period, Putin barely avoided a runoff. And now, with unassailable popularity, his closest rival struggling to hit the 5 percent mark in polls, and amid claims of a distorted process, Putin will win reelection in a few short weeks.

### **March 15**

On March 15, 2004, Putin will be the clear winner of Russia's presidential contest. Given his firing of the unpopular government on February 24, Putin will start his second term with a clear slate and, given his likely landslide, will claim a strong mandate from the Russian people to continue with what he has termed Russia's “managed democracy.” A small but vocal contingent of detractors will continue to argue that the elections, and therefore Putin, lack legitimacy and that Russia's democracy has turned into a sham. But they will likely have fewer and fewer outlets within Russia to make their claims and, if Putin continues with his remarkable popularity, fewer and fewer Russians willing to hear them.

*Jacqueline M. Miller is Assistant Director of the Russia and Eurasia Program*

## FEBRUARY HEADLINES

### **Putin sacks Government**

18 days before the presidential election, President Vladimir Putin fired his long-standing prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov. Although Kasyanov's departure was expected, it was not expected until after the March 14 election. Kasyanov was one of the remaining holdovers from the Yeltsin administration and had publicly criticized the government's handling of the YUKOS matter and the arrest of former YUKOS chairman Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Deputy Prime Minister Victor Khristenko has been appointed interim prime minister until a new government can be named. Putin called Kasyanov's performance satisfactory and explained the firing by saying he felt he was obliged to "familiarize the Russian public with the person whom I will nominate for prime minister for chairman of the government." Although speculation abounds, Putin has not yet named his proposed successor to Kasyanov (who must be confirmed by the Duma) but said he would do so within a week.

### **Strategic Failure**

The weakness of the Russian military and especially its strategic forces was in stark evidence in February with three missile launch failures in two days. With President Vladimir Putin standing on the bridge of one nuclear submarine to observe the launch of two SLBM's from another, the malfunction was a considerable embarrassment. Although the head of the navy explained that the two launches were "virtual" launches so there had been no launch failure, the presence of Putin and domestic and foreign press on the bridge of a submarine to watch the launch undermined that excuse. The next day, a missile launched from another submarine self-destructed shortly into its flight as it veered off course. The decline in Russia's conventional forces has long been in evident; a similar decline in nuclear forces is striking.

### **Moscow Subway Bombing**

On February 6, at least 41 people were killed and more than one hundred wounded in an explosion in Moscow's busy subway system. The blast, which struck a train leaving the Avtozavodskaya station, is presumed to be the result of a suicide bombing by Chechen terrorists. After the blast, Russian president Vladimir Putin declared "Russia doesn't conduct negotiations with terrorists — it destroys them" and laid the blame for the blast squarely on Aslan Maskhadov, separatist leader and former president of Chechnya. Maskhadov denied responsibility and condemned the attack. With no one declaring responsibility for the blast, Putin declared "We don't need these confirmations. We know for sure that Maskhadov and his bandits are connected with this terror." The bombing occurred five weeks before the presidential election. Backlash against Chechens has intensified. Sergei Rogozin, chair of Motherland, called Chechens, who are Russian citizens, "the enemy within" and impugned all Chechens by calling them an "ethnic criminal community."

The subway explosion is the latest in a growing list of attacks carried out by Chechen terrorists and increasingly carried out by women. Last year, a suicide bomber killed herself and 5 bystanders on December 9 in front of the National Hotel, close to Red Square the Duma building. On December 5, a commuter train was targeted in the Stavropol region; more than 40 people were killed during the rush hour explosion. On July 10 an FSB sapper was killed trying to defuse a bomb left outside a restaurant in downtown Moscow; five days before, two female suicide bombers killed 15 concertgoers at a rock festival in an airfield outside of Moscow. In October 2002, at least 129 of the approximately 800 hostages died during the siege of Moscow's Dubrovka theater. The hostages died as a result of knockout gas pumped into the building by Russian forces; all the Chechen terrorists were killed.

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### **Former Chechen President Killed**

Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev died on February 13 when his SUV exploded in Qatar; his death came only days after the subway bombing in Moscow. Yandarbiyev became acting president of the break-away region after Dzhokhar Dudayev was killed in a Russian missile attack in 1996. Maskhadov's electoral victory in 1997 ended his brief tenure as president. He fled to Qatar in 1999. In 2003 the United Nations tied Yandarbiyev to Al Qaeda, bolstering the Russian government's insistent but largely unsubstantiated linking of Chechen separatists and Al Qaeda. The FSB has denied involvement in Yandarbiyev's assassination and Russian politicians have speculated that Yandarbiyev was killed in "blood revenge" by other Chechens. On February 26 three Russian citizens were arrested in Qatar for involvement in Yandarbiyev's slaying (one of the men was subsequently released). Russia's foreign minister protested the arrest and rejected the charges, noting that the two men were members of Russia's special services and were in Qatar fighting international terrorism.

### **Aliyev in Moscow**

Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev met with Vladimir Putin in Moscow. The three day visit ended with the two presidents signing a number of accords, including the Moscow Declaration, which outlines the main points of bilateral relations. Nagorno-Karabakh was also a prominent theme, with Aliyev expressing the desire for more active Russian participation in solving the conflict. Aliyev's visit to Moscow comes two months after a visit to Baku by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and rising concern in Moscow over U.S. presence and activities in the region. The Moscow Declaration, as well as bilateral accords signed on delimitation of the Caspian Sea border and continuing discussions of increased cooperation in the energy sphere (including the potential transportation of Azerbaijani oil north through the Baku-Novorossiisk pipeline) indicate that Aliyev is following his father's policy of balancing between Russia and the United States.

### **Impeachment Tit-for-Tat in Lithuania**

Lithuania's president, Rolandas Paksas, has requested that the Seimas, Lithuania's parliament, begin impeachment proceedings against Seimas chairman Rolandas Paulauskas. Paulauskas headed the ad hoc commission that recommended that impeachment proceedings begin against Paksas. The parliament will now have to form an ad hoc commission to investigate Paksas's claim that Paulauskas passed along classified information to other members of parliament during the course of the impeachment discussions. The Constitutional Court is currently deciding whether Paksas violated the constitution as Paulauskas and the ad hoc commission claimed. If Paksas is deemed to have violated the constitution, the Seimas will then vote on whether or not to remove Paksas from office.

### **Saakashvili in Washington**

New Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili met with President George Bush at the White House on February 25th. Saakashvili called the U.S. a strategic partner but emphasized that Georgia hopes to maintain good relations with Moscow. With U.S. officials, most notably Secretary of State Colin Powell, calling for Russia to withdraw its remaining troops from Georgia, Saakashvili announced that United States is going to expand military assistance to Georgia.

### **RFE/RL Crippled in Ukraine**

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Ukraine broadcasts were crippled when Radio Dovira dropped RFE/RL from its airwaves. The move comes as Ukraine prepares for crucial presidential elections this fall. The move by Dovira, which said that RFE/RL broadcasts no longer fit its format, has not taken RFE/RL completely off the air. Independent FM stations still broadcast RFE/RL programming in some cities. Dovira's move came shortly after a new owner installed a new management team and apparently acceded to government pressure to drop RFE/RL. Such pressure had been mounting since 2001 (in relation to the coverage of murdered journalist Heorhiy Gongadze). RFE/RL is approaching individual local FM affiliates with some success to restore the reach of the Ukrainian service.

*Compiled by Jacqueline Miller, Assistant Director of the Russia and Eurasia Program*

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PONARS POLICY CONFERENCE

The PONARS policy conference, held December 12, 2003, included seven panels covering issues such as missile defense and proliferation, economic trends, Islam, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and a concluding panel assessing Russia as a great power. Most of the discussion, however, related to Russian democratization and the status of the rule of law in the wake of the YUKOS scandal and the victory of Kremlin-backed United Russia in the Duma elections.

The Duma elections represented a major victory for the Kremlin and a serious setback for the leading liberal pro-western parties, Yabloko and Union of Right Forces, who failed to reach the five percent electoral threshold in the national party-list voting. The principle concern was the campaign process leading up to the Duma elections, which could not be considered as one that adhered to democratic norms. The heavy use of administrative resources and media restrictions imposed by the government gave a distinct advantage to United Russia and led the OSCE to condemn the election process.

Discussion of the recent events surrounding the YUKOS affair and the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky was lively and multifaceted. Much of the debate centered on an argument that the earlier implicit "contract" between the state and the oligarchs developed in the 1990s, in which super-rich businessmen got to run their enterprises with a great deal of autonomy in return for their political loyalty, had now been fundamentally rewritten. The dominance of both liberal economists and loyal security forces in Putin's administration has generated a new contract based on more formal rules imposed by the state concerning the operation of private business. The YUKOS discussion concluded with a final observation that despite Khodorkovsky's past reputation, many representatives of Russian civil society fear his arrest not only as a direct attack on an important source of funding for independent political organizations in Russia, but also as a sign of creeping authoritarianism.

*Compiled by John Geis from the December 12, 2003 PONARS Policy Conference Report. John Geis is Program Coordinator of the Russia and Eurasia Program.*

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### The CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program

Celeste A. Wallander, Director and CSIS Trustee Fellow

Jacqueline M. Miller, Assistant Director

Sarah E. Mendelson, Senior Fellow

Keith Smith, Senior Associate

Robert McMullin, Visiting Senior Fellow

Cory Welt, Visiting Fellow

Tiiu Kera, Adjunct Senior Fellow

Stephen Benson, Adjunct Fellow

Lee Wolosky, Adjunct Fellow

John Geis, Program Coordinator

Nancy Lord, Research Assistant

Iva Savic, Research Assistant

Liz Zentos, Research Assistant

Anastasia Handy, Administrative Assistant

Interns: George Anjaparidze, Tiffany Casey,

Kristin Padgett, Nathan Puffer, Sanwaree Sethi

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