

Weekly Top 10

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WASHINGTON, D.C. October 9, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

This week NCSEJ lost a friend and long time diplomat and human rights activist Richard Schifter who passed away at the age of 97. I had the privilege to work with Ambassador Schifter for many years. He was an individual of great conviction and a true champion of human rights during his long and distinguished career in and out of government.

Russia took steps today to end the increase in tensions between Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Russian foreign ministry confirmed that both Armenia and Azerbaijan had agreed to participate in negotiation talks in Moscow, with Russia serving as the mediator. On Thursday evening, the Azerbaijani foreign minister had discussions with the three co-chair of the OSCE Minsk Process. [Both the co-chairs and the foreign minister are now reported to be on their way to Moscow.](#)

Today, Kyrgyz President Sooronbai Jeenbekov [declared a state of emergency in the capital Bishkek](#) and ordered the military to end days of unrest. The declaration is in response to ongoing protests in the country, sparked after what many consider to be rigged parliamentary elections. The current political uprising [is the third time in the past 15 years](#), the supporters of the opposition have protested in rebellion to the government.

This Sunday, Tajikistan will hold presidential elections. It is widely expected that the incumbent, Emomali Rahmon, [will win a fifth consecutive term](#). The election is regarded as a symbolic gesture, as Mr. Rahmon has ruled the country with an iron fist since independence from the Soviets in the early 90's. Rahmon, 68, will secure another seven-year term in the upcoming election, but he may

not serve out the full term. it is widely expected he will pass on power to another member of his family before the seven-year term expires.

On October 25, Ukraine will hold local elections across the country under a new system adopted under President Zelenskyy. For the first time, voters will choose leaders of united territorial communities, a new form of the administrative cell created by the decentralization reform, [which transferred budget control from the central government to the regions](#). Despite these changes, polls show the majority of Ukrainians still support Zelenskyy's party, Servant of the People for local councils.

On October 31, [Parliamentary elections in Georgia will take place](#). Georgia will choose the tenth parliament which will be a referendum on the Georgian Dream party, that has steered the country through the coronavirus crisis. The opposition promises [to create a diverse coalition of parties to replace the GD in power](#).

Finally, this week NCSEJ held a webinar with the U.S. Ambassador to Poland, Georgette Mosbacher. Ambassador Mosbacher discussed U.S. foreign policy towards Poland and her commitment to advancing Jewish concerns in Poland.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

[If you enjoy these Newsletters, please consider making a donation to NCSEJ to help us support the Jewish communities of Eurasia during these uncertain times.](#)

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**NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10
Washington, D.C. October 9, 2020**

**Putin, Long the Sower of Instability, Is Now Surrounded by It
Anton Troianovski
The New York Times | October 7, 2020**

YEREVAN, Armenia — In Russia's self-proclaimed sphere of influence, Russia is losing its influence.

Concurrent crises in Belarus, Central Asia and the Caucasus region have blindsided the Kremlin, leaving it scrambling to shore up Russian interests in former Soviet republics and undermining President Vladimir V. Putin's image as a master tactician on the world stage.

“There is nothing good about these conflicts for Moscow,” Konstantin Zatulin, a senior Russian lawmaker and Putin ally who specializes in relations with what Russians call their “near abroad.”

Mr. Putin has spent years building up Russia as a global power, with a hand in hot spots from Latin America to the Middle East, and even meddling in presidential elections in the United States. But after working for years to destabilize the West, he suddenly finds himself surrounded by instability; once seen as sure-handed in foreign affairs, he seems to have lost his touch.

In Belarus, Mr. Putin responded to a street uprising in August by propping up the country’s unpopular autocrat, President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, turning public opinion against Russia in what had previously been Europe’s most Russia-friendly country.

In Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, protesters this week appeared on the verge of toppling President Sooronbai Jeenbekov, less than two weeks after Mr. Putin pledged to him in a rare in-person meeting that “we will do everything to support you as the head of state.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

Power vacuum in Kyrgyzstan brings political crisis to a head **Isabelle Khurshudyan** **October**

MOSCOW — Kyrgyzstan's government has been at a standstill this week after annulled parliamentary elections created a power vacuum with multiple political factions vying to fill it. Now, the central Asian country is likely to see its third president suddenly toppled by a revolt in 15 years.

The situation has left Kyrgyzstan in a state of leaderless disarray: President Sooronbay Jeenbekov has said that he remains in control even as his whereabouts have been unknown since opposition forces broke into the parliament building Tuesday and seized several other government complexes. Some speculated that he might have fled the country.

But Friday, Jeenbekov dismissed Prime Minister Kubatek Boronov and his cabinet and said he was ready to resign once new leadership is appointed.

It’s unclear if the move will lead to a seamless transfer of power. Kyrgyzstan’s political impasse has been spurred on by a divided opposition that has so far failed to agree on who would lead the new provisional government.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russia says Armenian, Azeri foreign ministers to attend Moscow talks: RIA **Reuters | October 9, 2020**

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Armenia and Azerbaijan have confirmed that their foreign ministers will come for talks to Moscow, the RIA news agency cited Russia’s foreign ministry as saying on Friday.

With President Vladimir Putin calling for a halt to military actions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Kremlin extended the invitation to Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and his Armenian counterpart Zohrab Mnatsakanyan on Friday.

“Baku and Yerevan confirmed their participation in talks in Moscow. Active preparation is under way,” said Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

[Read the full article here.](#)

How the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict Could Affect Georgia **Zaal Anjaparidze** **The Jamestown Foundation | October 8, 2020**

The resumption of Azerbaijani-Armenian hostilities over the Karabakh region, located only 560 kilometers from Georgia’s capital of Tbilisi, has raised concerns within the Georgian government about the consequences of this conflict for the country, which faces tough parliamentary elections on October 31.

On October 3, following a week of intensive military clashes up and down the occupied districts of Azerbaijan, the National Security Council (NSC) of Georgia,

an advisory body chaired by the prime minister, announced a temporary ban on transiting military cargos through Georgian territory to Azerbaijan and Armenia. The ban, which Tbilisi communicated to both belligerents, covers transit via air as well as land routes. However, the NSC emphasized that civilian goods can continue to be delivered to Armenia and Azerbaijan via Georgia without any restrictions. The Armenian-Azerbaijani fighting has been a rare occasion when the ruling Georgian Dream (GD) and the major opposition parties actually agree on what Georgia's stance should be—neutrality and seeking a swift de-escalation of the conflict (Agenda.ge, Civil.ge, October 3-4).

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Scramble for Power in Kyrgyzstan **Alexander Gabuev** **Carnegie Moscow Center | October 8, 2020**

Kyrgyzstan is seeing its biggest protests in a decade, which could become the prologue to the third revolution there in fifteen years. In just one night, President Sooronbay Jeenbekov lost much of his authority, though formally he retains his position. Meanwhile, his bitter enemy, former president Almazbek Atambayev, is out of prison and back in the game, as are many other players. Behind the current chaos and endless power grabs runs the central nerve of Kyrgyz politics in recent years: the battle for power between regional groupings masquerading as political parties.

Thousands of people took to the streets of the capital Bishkek on October 5 to protest the results of the parliamentary elections and demand new elections. That night, protesters seized Bishkek's White House, home to both the Kyrgyz parliament and the presidential administration. The crowd then went on to the National Security Committee building and freed ex-president Atambayev and other high-ranking former officials from a jail inside.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Poland, Lithuania recall ambassadors from Belarus **AP | October 6, 2020**

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland and Lithuania have recalled their ambassadors from neighboring Belarus, where hundreds of people have been detained during massive protests against the authoritarian president who won a sixth term in office in an election widely seen as rigged.

The foreign ministries of Poland and Lithuania, nations that offer support to the Belarusian opposition, have said they were recalling their ambassadors from Minsk for consultations. Poland suggested ambassadors from some other European Union nations were also being recalled.

The move by Poland and Lithuania followed Friday's announcement by Belarus that it was recalling its ambassadors from the two countries and urging them to do the same. Belarus also demanded that Poland and Lithuania scale down their missions in the country because of their "destructive activity."

[Read the full article here.](#)

Sukkot in WW I-era Russia **Chen Malul** **Intermountain Jewish News | October 8, 2020**

itches at the entrances to all of the homes. Opened roofs. The year 1916 appears under the photograph featured on an aged postcard.

The setting: Seppl Alley, a Jewish street in Ivanovo — known as "Yanov" in Yiddish — a town then in the Russian Empire, near Pinsk in modern day Belarus.

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The photo was taken during the Jewish festival of Sukkot, two years into the Great War.

Two elements stand out in particular: the houses' opened roofs and rectangular ditches in front of every home.

The roofs can be rather clearly understood.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The aftermath of the Washington Agreements **Grejs Gjergji**

The New Eastern Europe | October 6, 2020

On September 4th Kosovo's Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić signed an agreement aimed at normalising economic relations between the two states under the auspices of United States President Donald Trump and his representative for the dialogue process, Richard Grenell.

In the press conference following the event, Hoti asserted that the agreement expressed the will of the people of Kosovo and that it did not require ratification by the parliament because of its nature as an engagement of the government of Kosovo. In fact, Hoti started the process of reporting on the agreement in front of parliament and the dialogue he engaged in with the EU on September 17th. This agreement was largely criticised by the opposition as being essentially political and not bringing the recognition of the state of Kosovo as promised by the representatives before starting the negotiations.

In fact, the agreement was signed by both of the parties separately, except for the relevant dispositions for the establishment of railways and highways linking the two countries and dispositions concerning the interruption of Kosovo's attempts to be part of international organisations, with Serbia promising to stop its de-recognition campaign. This engagement by Kosovo might have significant consequences, taking into account its fragile statehood. Indeed, the lack of control of the northern part of Mitrovica by central governmental authorities, where cross-border criminality is still flourishing, combined with its lack of recognition by five members of the European Union and the failure - until now- to become a member of important international organisations, specifically the latest failure to become a full member of UNESCO in 2015, are all elements that constitute a real risk to the fragile statehood of Kosovo. Therefore, Kosovo's engagement to stop its recognition campaign might add to the fragile status of the country.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Eurasian Economic Union Intergovernmental Council meets in Yerevan despite war

CommonSpace.eu | October 9, 2020

The Intergovernmental Council of the Eurasian Economic Union met in Yerevan on Friday (9 October) at the invitation of Armenia prime minister Nikol Pashinyan.

The prime ministers of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan attended the meeting. Kyrgyzstan was not present at the meeting due to the political crisis in the country.

The meeting of the Intergovernmental Council took place in the Armenian capital despite the ongoing fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh.

[Read the full article here.](#)

At capacity A sharp increase in coronavirus cases leaves hospitals across Russia running out of beds

Meduza.io | October 8, 2020

In Russia, against the backdrop of a sharp increase in new coronavirus cases, the number of available hospital beds for COVID-19 patients has decreased significantly, and patients undergoing diagnostics are waiting for hours to get CT scans. In a new report, the Russian business newspaper "Kommersant" breaks down how the second coronavirus wave is impacting the country's hospitals, based on conversations with patients and their relatives, as well as official statements from the regional authorities.

[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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