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Summary:

Political:

Russia Dismisses Georgian Nuclear Accusation

Saakashvili followed last week's announcement that Georgian authorities in March seized a small shipment of highly enriched uranium by criticizing Moscow for not maintaining adequate security levels in the Georgian breakaway territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The situation allowed the areas to become locus points for nuclear smugglers, the president asserted.

Russia Should Forget Cold War Rhetoric, NATO Leader Says

A joint effort on missile defense would improve security for all of Europe, Rasmussen said. Establishing trust with Russia will be easier if the country's military leaders leave behind their hostile Cold War stance toward the 28-nation alliance, Rasmussen said.

Putin heads to Austria for signing of South Stream deal

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin will visit Austria on April 24-25, a Russian government source said on Friday. The gas pipeline project is designed to carry 31 billion cubic meters of Russian natural gas a year across the Black Sea to Bulgaria and further on to Italy and Austria

Russia does not back Iranian nuclear conference's statement

The conference on disarmament and nonproliferation, entitled Nuclear Energy for All, Nuclear Weapons for None, was held in Tehran on April 17-18. Russia was represented by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov.

Putin: Ukraine Deals "Anything But Simple"

Ukraine agreed to extend the lease of Russia's naval base in Sevastopol by 25 years, and President Dmitry Medvedev vowed to rescind the export duty on most of the gas that Ukraine imports.

U.S. Faces Choice on New Weapons for Fast Strikes

In coming years, President Obama will decide whether to deploy a new class of weapons capable of reaching any corner of the earth from the United States in under an hour and with such accuracy and force that they would greatly diminish America's reliance on its nuclear arsenal.

Russian Court Ordered to Hear Appeal in Katyn Case

A Russian human rights group said Wednesday that it had cleared an initial hurdle in its legal fight to declassify documents about a 1940 massacre of Polish officers by Soviet troops that still causes tensions between Russia and Poland.

China To Support Only Harmless Sanctions against Iran

China does not intend to support radical sanctions against Iran that could stop its nuclear program, says the statement made on April 20th by Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu. She stated that Beijing insisted on a diplomatic solution of Iran's nuclear issue, explaining that "dialogue and negotiations" are the most efficient methods

KATYN 2. Moscow spreads rumors about Chechen fighters shooting down President's plane

International terrorists from the KGB, which are being suspected in terrorist attack against the Polish plane and the execution of survived Poles, responded to charges after about a week of deep silence.

Similar messages were published by media outlets in Croatia and Serbia.

The Turkish daily Vatan reported about the video about the execution of survived Poles by the international terrorist organization of FSB Russia and said the video is now being studied by the Polish military prosecutor's office. The only objection that the prosecutor's office could make so far is that the captions with Polish translation of Russian words spoken in the video is not exact.

KATYN 2. Americans interested in details of KGB killing of Polish survivors execution witness

There are clear voices in Polish and immediately after the shots. Another thing - the cockpit was saved, and strangely enough it was the bodies of pilots can not be found. The fire started after a disaster, so if the pilots were conscious they could jump out to prevent the spread of fire.

US to maintain tactical nukes in Europe

Europe, arguing that any cut in the arsenal would require Russia to take a similar step. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has ruled out a withdrawal of its 200 tactical weapons stationed in several European countries, saying Washington is going to be committed to its military alliance in the continent.

The US and Russia currently possess 95-percent of the world's nuclear weapons.

The deal was signed by Russia's Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko and Austria's Economy Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner in the presence of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann.

Russian interior minister hails 'peaceful' Chechen

The decade-long counter-terrorism operation ended in Chechnya on April 16, 2009 and some 20,000 Russian Interior Ministry troops were subsequently withdrawn from the republic, which witnessed two brutal separatist wars in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Russia, Poland seek clarification of reasons behind air crash that killed Kaczynski

Russia and Poland are interested in clarifying the reasons behind the air crash that killed Polish President Lech Kaczynski, top officials from the two countries said Saturday. The Tu-154 plane crashed on April 10 in western Russia, killing Poland's first couple and dozens of other top officials.

Tajikistan to strengthen partnership with Russia, CIS - president

The president also said Tajikistan will develop relations with the United States, France, Germany and other countries.

Economic:

Russian Gas Deal May End Ukraine's NATO Ambitions (Update1)

Russia agreed to cut the gas prices it charges Ukraine by 30 percent, saving the former Soviet republic about \$40 billion over the next decade. At the same time, Ukraine extended Russia's lease on the Crimean port of Sevastopol, home to the Black Sea Fleet, until 2042.

UPDATE 1-Russia's MTS outsources some ops to Nokia Siemens

Russia's top wireless carrier, MTS (MBT.N), said Nokia Siemens Networks [NSN.UL] will operate part of its mobile telecoms networks after it signed the first full-scale outsourcing deal in the Russian telecoms sector.

Ukraine Woos Russia With Lease Deal

Swiftly carrying out his pledge to improve strained ties with neighboring Russia, the new Ukrainian president agreed to a landmark deal on Wednesday to extend the lease on a Russian naval base on Ukrainian territory.

Russia and Ukraine Sign Gas Agreement

Russia's \$40 billion gas-subsidy deal with Ukraine and a new 25-year lease for a Russian navy base may put paid to Ukraine's NATO ambitions and lay the country open to Russian companies, analysts said.

INTERVIEW: Building BRICs

Coining the term BRIC in 2001 has made an investment banking rock star of Goldman Sach's head of global economic research, Jim O'Neill. Following Russia's drubbing in the recent crisis some skeptics have suggested dropping the 'R' in the acronym, but O'Neill claims that his original forecast that Brazil, Russia, India and China will increasingly challenge the world's developed economies is now closer to realization than ever. Indeed, he sees the BRICs – and especially their emerging hordes of consumers – as the main drivers of global growth for the foreseeable future.

Russia, Austria sign deal on South Stream project

The gas pipeline is designed to carry 31 billion cubic meters of Russian natural gas a year across the Black Sea to Bulgaria and further on to Italy and Austria.

Russia returns to global capital markets with \$5.5 bln Eurobond issue

The heavily oversubscribed Eurobonds were issued in two tranches: \$2 billion with a maturity of five years and \$3.5 billion with a maturity of ten years. The order book for the Eurobonds exceeds \$25 billion.

Social:

Russia's parliament to consider celebrating Russia's baptism day July 28

Prince Vladimir baptized medieval Kievan Rus, which comprised parts of modern-day Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, in the year 988. The Russian Orthodox Church, to which the canonical Orthodox Churches in Ukraine and Belarus are subordinate, commemorates Prince Vladimir on July 28.

An Encyclopedia Of Extremism

Ever since Mikhail Lermontov penned the line “the evil Chechen crawls on the bank and sharpens his knife,” Chechens have struggled with what is today rather clinically called “negative stereotyping.” Now Chechnya’s Human Rights Ombudsman Nurdi Nukhazhiev claims that he has found a modern, supposedly respectable publication propagating just those 19th century prejudices. And he wants it banned.

Shenderovich Caught in Sex Video

Satirist and radio host Viktor Shenderovich on Thursday accused Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's administration of trying to discredit him by posting online a video showing him cheating on his wife.

Extremism Cases Call Experts Into Question

A spate of similar decisions in recent months has raised concerns among extremism scholars and rights experts about the competence and independence of those who are invited by prosecutors to offer their testimony.

Leader of Morgue Gang Convicted of Murder

A former St. Petersburg pathologist was convicted Thursday of ordering several murders as the leader of a gang of morgue workers who went into business hiding the bodies of people killed in organized crime disputes.

Nestle's Baby Food Denied Entry to Russia

Nestle hasn’t received any official documents from the consumer protection service regarding the import application, the company’s Russian press service said.

Bad girls are fun in parties and sex, but boring in family life

Their ability to be great fun is on top of the list. They can party all night and they can party the next day too. They laugh a lot, they are fond of flirting. Anybody can feel like a professional lady-killer when hanging out with them.

This is definitely one of the bad, bad, bad girls - picture gallery

Bad girls are pretty and sexy. They walk in elegant ways. They are used to be in the spotlight. They wear necklaces and beads, prefer low-cut necklines and mini skirts. Their lingerie is satin and lace. Well, if they wear it at all.

Dirty Technologies for Respectable Publications

Here is a telling example. All Russian sociological services rejected the information presented in a series of articles about the declining rating of the Medvedev-Putin tandem

and the sending of United Russia officials to Russia's troubled AvtoVAZ car maker. Pieces of false "insider" information from the authorities, reports about the decisions of the Constitutional Court, which the court never made, etc, not to mention quite doubtful publications as "The Revenge for the Caucasus" or the attempts, which an observer of the Vedomosti made to justify the terrible terrorist acts in the Moscow metro.

Patriarch Kirill to attend religious summit in Azerbaijan

The head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, will on Saturday head to Azerbaijan to attend an international religious summit on April 26-27, a church spokesman said.

Russian rocket puts U.S. satellite into space

The rocket blasted off from the Baikonur space centre in Kazakhstan at 11:19 GMT to put a U.S. SES-1 satellite into space. The satellite is due to separate from the carrier rocket at around 20:19 GMT.

Detailed News:

Political:

Russia Dismisses Georgian Nuclear Accusation

Russia yesterday dismissed Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili's accusation that Moscow's loose security standards allowed nuclear smuggling to occur in the region, the Associated Press reported (see [GSN](#), April 22).

"This is not the first time that Saakashvili has been caught red-handed while making false statements," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Igor Lyakin-Frolov said. "He shouldn't present a lie as the truth."

Georgian nuclear safety agency head Zaal Lomatadze said an "organized group of people tried to smuggle in [to Georgia] a small amount of enriched uranium with the purpose of selling it to a would-be buyer."

He criticized Russia for previous nuclear smuggling episodes, noting a 2006 incident that came about following a probe in South Ossetia that saw Georgian officials apprehend four people alleged to be attempting to traffic a small amount of highly enriched uranium. One suspect was reportedly a Russian citizen from South Ossetia.

Authorities would not specify the quantity of material captured in the latest incident nor its enrichment level. Uranium must be enriched to more than 90 percent to be considered weapon-grade material (Jah

Russia Should Forget Cold War Rhetoric, NATO Leader Says

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization should cooperate with Russia on missile defense and Afghanistan even though differences remain between the alliance and the Russian government, said NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

“I do believe that we can improve the overall security environment in Europe and the whole Europe-Atlantic area if we cooperate with Russia,” Rasmussen said after a NATO meeting in Tallinn, Estonia.

NATO foreign ministers met for two days to discuss Afghanistan, the stationing of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, and the creation of a new strategic posture to face future threats.

Rasmussen said ministers decided to initiate a dialogue with Russia about missile defense and the prospect of greater Russian involvement in Afghanistan.

“I think there’s potential for further Russian engagement,” the Secretary General said, citing the fight against terrorism, illegal drugs and piracy.

As NATO works on its “Strategic Concept” for future challenges, Rasmussen chided Russia’s leaders for “old fashioned” thinking.

Missile defense would protect European and Russian populations “against a real missile threat,” he said.

“Russian military doctrine does not reflect the real world,” Rasmussen said. “It states that NATO constitutes a major danger, which is not the reality. I would urge the Russians to forget this old fashioned Cold War rhetoric and instead embark with NATO on shared areas.”

Rasmussen also said that NATO will continue to “insist on full respect for Georgia’s sovereignty.” While keeping a “firm stance on core principles,” he said NATO could still develop practical cooperation with Russia in areas of common interest.

Putin heads to Austria for signing of South Stream deal

He is due to meet with Chancellor Werner Faymann and President Heinz Fischer and oversee the signing of an agreement on Austria's entry into the South Stream project..

The pipeline is expected to go into operation in 2015, its capacity eventually reaching 63 bcm, or some 35% of Russian gas supplies to Europe.

Russia has already signed intergovernmental agreements with Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia to implement the onshore part of the project.

The project is part of Russia's efforts to reduce dependence on transit nations, particularly Ukraine. It is widely seen as a rival project to the EU-backed Nabucco, which would also transport Caspian and Central Asian gas to Europe but would bypass Russia.

On Sunday, Putin will start a two-day visit to Italy where he will meet with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to discuss energy, scientific and cultural cooperation, among other issues.

Russia does not back Iranian nuclear conference's statement

Russia does not support a final document distributed after an international nuclear conference in Iran that gathered top officials and experts from 60 countries, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Friday.

"We consider the final document drafted by the Iranian side following the Tehran conference on disarmament and nonproliferation as nothing more than a resume by its chairman reflecting exclusively his private opinion," Andrei Nesterenko said.

"The document was not discussed by the event's participants and it was not submitted for approval by delegates," he said, without elaborating on the essence of the document.

The United States and other Western countries suspect Iran of developing nuclear weapons under the guise of a civilian nuclear energy program and are seeking new sanctions following Iran's move to enrich uranium to 20%.

The Iran Six (France, Britain, Germany, the United States, Russia and China) began on April 19 discussing the text of a draft resolution imposing sanctions on Iran over its controversial nuclear program.

Putin: Ukraine Deals "Anything But Simple"

Prime Minister [Vladimir Putin](#) on Thursday described the decision to sign the latest \$40 billion gas and naval deals with Ukraine as a pricey attempt to lay the groundwork for other joint economic and political plans.

Ukrainian President [Viktor Yanukovich](#) had agreed the previous day to extend the lease of the Sevastopol naval base for Russia's Black Sea Fleet by 25 years to 2042. President [Dmitry Medvedev](#) promised to rescind the export duty on most of the gas that Ukraine imports, giving the country an effective 30 percent discount.

"It's anything but a simple decision for us. Anything but simple, because it is expensive," Putin said in opening a Cabinet session.

Ukraine will deduct the money that it saves on gas from the new, higher bill that Russia will have to pay to lease the Sevastopol base. Kiev will raise the rental price after the current lease agreement expires in 2017, Putin said.

The increased lease payment will amount to \$1.2 billion per year, Yanukovych said in Kiev on Thursday.

Putin said Russia will continue to pay the current rate, \$98 million each year, until 2017 by subtracting the amount from Ukraine's outstanding gas bills for the early 1990s, which were valued at \$1.1 billion as of January. Afterward, Russia will pay in cash, raising the annual transfers “somewhat” for the next 25 years.

This way, Russia's payments for the naval base could well come close to \$40 billion by the end of the lease in 2042.

Putin justified the agreements — reached after a five-year estrangement between the neighboring countries during the rule of [Viktor Yushchenko](#), Ukraine's previous president and a stalwart advocate of joining NATO — as being worth something more than money.

“I will stress that this means a qualitative breakthrough in bilateral relations. And money is not the key point here at all,” he said. “The key thing is ultimately ... the relationship of trust, the understanding of common interests and historical goals and the feeling of fellowship.”

The achievement, Putin said, is bound to spur future cooperation.

Putin portrayed the country's Black Sea Fleet, used in the short 2008 war with Georgia, as a force for maintaining peace and security regionally and globally. Its warships are contributing to the international crackdown on piracy in the Gulf of Aden off of Somalia and have joined the NATO-led counterterrorism exercises in the Mediterranean Sea, he pointed out.

Russia doesn't need to rent naval bases in any of its other gas-trade customer nations, so they shouldn't bother offering deals similar to Ukraine's, Putin said, in what appeared to be a joke.

Energy Minister [Sergei Shmatko](#) indicated Thursday that Ukraine's proposal to resurrect the international consortium, including Gazprom, to maintain and operate the country's pipelines wasn't dead. The economic panel of the Russian-Ukraine intergovernmental commission for cooperation will work on a more detailed plan for the project, he said.

U.S. Faces Choice on New Weapons for Fast Strikes

Yet even now, concerns about the technology are so strong that the Obama administration has acceded to a demand by [Russia](#) that the United States decommission one nuclear missile for every one of these conventional weapons fielded by the Pentagon. That

provision, the White House said, is buried deep inside the New Start treaty that Mr. Obama and President [Dmitri A. Medvedev signed in Prague](#) two weeks ago.

Called [Prompt Global Strike](#), the new weapon is designed to carry out tasks like picking off [Osama bin Laden](#) in a cave, if the right one could be found; taking out a North Korean missile while it is being rolled to the launch pad; or destroying an Iranian nuclear site — all without crossing the nuclear threshold. In theory, the weapon will hurl a conventional warhead of enormous weight at high speed and with pinpoint accuracy, generating the localized destructive power of a nuclear warhead.

The idea is not new: President [George W. Bush](#) and his staff promoted the technology, imagining that this new generation of conventional weapons would replace nuclear warheads on submarines.

In face-to-face meetings with President Bush, Russian leaders complained that the technology could increase the risk of a nuclear war, because Russia would not know if the missiles carried nuclear warheads or conventional ones. Mr. Bush and his aides concluded that the Russians were right.

Partly as a result, the idea “really hadn’t gone anywhere in the Bush administration,” Defense Secretary [Robert M. Gates](#), who has served both presidents, said recently on ABC’s “This Week.” But he added that it was “embraced by the new administration.”

Mr. Obama himself alluded to the concept in a recent interview with The New York Times, saying it was part of an effort “to move towards less emphasis on [nuclear weapons](#)” while insuring “that our conventional weapons capability is an effective deterrent in all but the most extreme circumstances.”

The Obama national security team scrapped the idea of putting the new conventional weapon on submarines. Instead, the White House has asked Congress for about \$250 million next year to explore a new alternative, one that uses some of the most advanced technology in the military today as well as some not yet even invented.

The final price of the system remains unknown. Senator [John McCain](#) of Arizona, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said at a hearing on Thursday that Prompt Global Strike would be “essential and critical, but also costly.”

It would be based, at least initially, on the West Coast, probably at [Vandenberg Air Force Base](#).

Under the Obama plan, the Prompt Global Strike warhead would be mounted on a long-range missile to start its journey toward a target. It would travel through the atmosphere at several times the speed of sound, generating so much heat that it would have to be shielded with special materials to avoid melting. (In that regard, it is akin to the problem that confronted designers of the [space shuttle](#) decades ago.)

But since the vehicle would remain within the atmosphere rather than going into space, it would be far more maneuverable than a ballistic missile, capable of avoiding the airspace of neutral countries, for example, or steering clear of hostile territory. Its designers note that it could fly straight up the middle of the Persian Gulf before making a sharp turn toward a target.

The Pentagon hopes to deploy an early version of the system by 2014 or 2015. But even under optimistic timetables, a complete array of missiles, warheads, sensors and control systems is not expected to enter the arsenal until 2017 to 2020, long after Mr. Obama will have left office, even if he is elected to a second term.

The planning for Prompt Global Strike is being headed by Gen. Kevin P. Chilton of the Air Force, the top officer of the military's [Strategic Command](#) and the man in charge of America's nuclear arsenal. In the Obama era — where every administration discussion of nuclear weapons takes note of Mr. Obama's commitment to moving toward "Global Zero," the elimination of the nuclear arsenal — the new part of General Chilton's job is to talk about conventional alternatives.

In an interview at his headquarters at [Offutt Air Force Base](#), General Chilton described how the conventional capability offered by the proposed system would give the president more choices.

"Today, we can present some conventional options to the president to strike a target anywhere on the globe that range from 96 hours, to several hours maybe, 4, 5, 6 hours," General Chilton said.

That would simply not be fast enough, he noted, if intelligence arrived about a movement by [Al Qaeda](#) terrorists or the imminent launching of a missile. "If the president wants to act on a particular target faster than that, the only thing we have that goes faster is a nuclear response," he said.

But the key to filling that gap is to make sure that Russia and China, among other nuclear powers, understand that the missile launching they see on their radar screens does not signal the start of a nuclear attack, officials said.

Under the administration's new concept, Russia or other nations would regularly inspect the Prompt Global Strike silos to assure themselves that the weapons were nonnuclear. And they would be placed in locations far from the strategic nuclear force.

"Who knows if we would ever deploy it?" Gary Samore, Mr. Obama's top adviser on unconventional weapons, said at a conference in Washington on Wednesday. But he noted that Russia was already so focused on the possibility that it insisted that any conventional weapon mounted on a missile that could reach it counted against the new limit on the American arsenal in the treaty.

In a follow-on treaty, he said, the Russians would certainly want to negotiate on Prompt Global Strike and ballistic missile defenses.

If Mr. Obama does decide to deploy the system, Mr. Samore said, the number of weapons would be small enough that Russia and China would not fear that they could take out their nuclear arsenals.

Russian Court Ordered to Hear Appeal in Katyn Case

Russia's Supreme Court ordered the Moscow City Court to consider an appeal in which a rights group, Memorial, sought to force the authorities to declassify a 2004 decision by military prosecutors to drop an investigation into the massacre in the Katyn forest. A Memorial leader, Yan Rachinsky, said the ruling could lead to a court decision to open up secret documents providing details about the killings of thousands of Polish officers there. Poland also wants the documents declassified.

Longstanding tensions between Russia and Poland have shown signs of easing after the death of the Polish president, [Lech Kaczynski](#), and 95 others on April 10 in a [plane crash](#) en route to a commemoration ceremony at Katyn. Polish leaders have expressed deep gratitude for the Russian response, including the formal military sendoff for Mr. Kaczynski's body.

[China To Support Only Harmless Sanctions against Iran](#)

China does not intend to support radical sanctions against Iran that could stop its nuclear program, says the statement made on April 20th by Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu. She stated that Beijing insisted on a diplomatic solution of Iran's nuclear issue, explaining that "dialogue and negotiations" are the most efficient methods

KATYN 2. Moscow spreads rumors about Chechen fighters shooting down President's plane

On April 22, a Polish Forum "Free Media" reported that a user Aml sent a message that the information about the murder by the KGB of the Ukrainian journalist Andrey Menderey, the author of the video with gunshots, was allegedly "an Internet canard", "for which we are apologizing". The user didn't give any further details.

It is to be mentioned that if the Ukrainian citizen Menderey is really alive, it would be logical that he would have defuted reports about his death personally, and told all he knew about the situation at the crash site, since maximum publicity is now the only opportunity for him to stay alive.

As for a person Aml, whoever is hiding behind this nickname, he is not competent to defute something, since the initial report appeared in a different Web site, in a guestbook of a major Polish newspaper "O2", and the author of this message was not Aml.

Meanwhile, information about the sabotage act of Russian terrorists against the Polish plane and the subsequent execution of survived Poles leaked on April 22 to mainstream media in some countries and has been reported by numerous newspapers and magazines, primarily in Turkey, but also in Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and in a far lesser extent in the US.

Polish mainstream media kept silence. And surely the mainstream media of Russian terrorists in Russia.

A major Slovenian paper [Zurnal 24](#), published in Lyublyana, writes in a article, entitled "First dead, then alive":

"Andrey Menderey, who filmed the video with the crash of the Polish plane with top Polish political and military leadership inside, has been declared dead, but the report was later defuted. A website of one of the Polish media outlets announced that Menderey was stabbed in Kiev, then taken to a hospital, where an unknown person (in fact, two person-KC) disconnect the life supporting equipment, and stabbed him 3 times, as reported by the Croatian media outlet index.hr.

Shortly afterwards (in fact, 2 days later - KC), the Polish Free Media portal defuted this report and said that it was untrue.

One of the deputies of the Polish Parliament has already expressed a view that the Russians stand behing the plane crash. Others believe that the plane was shot down by Chechen rebels (it is a usual tactics of the FSB to spread such rumors to shift the responsibility to the others - KC)".

Similar messages were published by media outlets in Croatia and Serbia.

It is to be mentioned that the KC has also noticed that, but minor discrepancies in translation are not essential, because most important, Polish words are spoken in the video. The video didn't cover that issue in captions because Polish words were discovered later, after the translated version appeared on the YouTube, with a better computer equipment. And there's surely nobody to speak Polish in the Smolensk forest, except for the survived Poles.

The Turkish paper also reported that the Polish military prosecutor's office checks whether the video was assembled.

It is to be noted that earlier, an American Web site already discussed this problem and came to a conclusion that it is possible to assembly a film if you have numerous videos on the same topic. But the Menderey's film was unique, so he had no other film material or assemble his film from.

On April 23 situation around the execution video, filmed at the crash site and the murder of Menderey, has not changed much. Some other Turkish and Slovenian newspapers covered the story in similar reports.

Polish and Ukrainian mainstream media continue to keep silence. Needless to say about the Russian media.

KATYN 2. Americans interested in details of KGB killing of Polish survivors execution witness

The American Website [Reddit](#), with reference to the murder of the Ukrainian journalist Andrey Menderey by KGB agents in Kiev on April 16, 2010, asks users to provide details on the execution of survived Poles by Russian terrorists from the FSB. Before he was killed, Menderey probably talked to some friends or relatives about the Russian crime. The Reddit writes:

"Andrey Menderey the first recorded the plane crash in Russia, in which voices are heard in Polish, if it is authentic, it is crucial evidence. It is hard to believe that it was so

realistically assembled, except that then it would be likely in many of its online version, and there is one.

They could die in the crash, but that their bodies had the best chance to escape in their entirety. Does the idea is to hide the real cause of their death?

Assuming the authenticity of the video the author risked mortal danger as a witness. I put the information that comes from the Internet, and the truth alone can not fix, but I think that more editors being able to verify whether a man of that name was in the vicinity of Smolensk, and talked to families that what he saw, and other facts. If this is a false trail might be able to inquire whether the local residents have heard something about this film and its author. Here is the info:

- "The person who threw this movie the first was quickly removed and his account was deleted too! The author of this movie was Andrey Menderey, who stabbed in the vicinity of Kiev, April 15, 2010. He has been brought in an awful state to a hospital in Kiev, where he disconnected the apparatus!"

I know that the Polish prosecutor's office will examine this movie. But in the past, many investigations had remitted, were at stake when possible objections to the well known politician and businessman. Still less could be the case when the game would fall international affairs.

Therefore I have reason to believe that the prosecution will undermine the credibility of the material - even if it is true. Such matters should investigate and disclose to the media.

Is the television and radio stations do not have specialized equipment to check the reliability of the material and the prominence of voices heard there?

The fact that everything conspires against the presidential airplane (suddenly very bad weather, incorrect indications of the altimeters, not acting TAWS, poor co-operation with the tower) is already making serious doubts.

For the entry on my blog I've added a lot of interesting new information and hypotheses about the likely (intentional or inadvertent) blame the Russians. And if you bear at least part of the blame (even unintentional) is that disclosure would be a huge blow to the image of Russia - which is why it can not be ruled out attempts to hide these facts.

We publish a letter received from a specialist that developed the three-dimensional navigation systems, which sheds new light on the possible causes of an aviation disaster in Smolensk. Here are the contents of this letter:

- "I am a lecturer at the University of Hamburg and the employee responsible for the so-called advanced research and development of Concern Harman Becker Automotive Systems. I developed and co-created three-dimensional navigation systems, and therefore difficult for me to imagine how TAWS system that was installed in the airplane of the President may fail without extraneous "help".

The author of this letter is Filip Stankevich (Philip Stankiewicz), and the material has been sent on the Polish site «Free mass-media». Автором этого письма является Филип Станкевич (Philip Stankiewicz), и материал был послан на польский сайт «Свободные СМИ».

The note of the editor "Free Media" (on Polish, WM - KC):

"Free Media" asking the Smolensk Forum members for verification of information about the author of film and its fate. If you get a response, we will notify you about it".

US to maintain tactical nukes in Europe

As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance, Clinton said in remarks prepared for delivery to NATO foreign ministers, according to a Washington Post report on Thursday.

"As a nuclear alliance, sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities is fundamental," she said in remarks released by the State Department.

Clinton said that any reduction should be tied to a negotiated nuclear withdrawal by Russia. Moscow, however, says it will not pull out its tactical arms unless Washington removes its bombs from Europe.

Moscow and Washington signed a treaty earlier this month which requires a reduction in their nuclear arsenals by about one-third. The treaty, however, is not observed by any international organization.

The US and Russia currently possess 95-percent of the world's nuclear weapons. Russia and Austria signed a deal in Vienna on Saturday on Austria joining the South Stream gas project.

The gas pipeline is designed to carry 31 billion cubic meters of Russian natural gas a year across the Black Sea to Bulgaria and further on to Italy and Austria.

The agreement is the last deal necessary for the start of the project.

The pipeline is expected to go into operation in 2015, its capacity eventually reaching 63 bcm, or some 35% of Russian gas supplies to Europe.

Russia has already signed intergovernmental agreements with Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia to implement the onshore part of the project.

The project is part of Russia's efforts to reduce dependence on transit nations, particularly Ukraine. It is widely seen as a rival project to the EU-backed Nabucco, which would also transport Caspian and Central Asian gas to Europe but would bypass Russia.

[Russian interior minister hails 'peaceful' Chechen](#)

Just over a year since a counter-terrorism regime was lifted in Chechnya, the North Caucasus republic is enjoying a period of long-awaited peace, Russia's interior minister said on Saturday.

"Not a single terrorist act has taken place this year in Chechnya," Rashid Nurgaliyev told Chechen Interior Ministry officials. "I am sure the peaceful labor of Chechens is under reliable protection."

He also said that only scattered remnants of the militants groups who once "dictated their own conditions" were left in the republic.

However, Oleg Orlov, the head of the Memorial human rights group, says the number of security personnel killed in Chechnya has in fact increased since the counter-terrorism regime was lifted.

He said 85 law enforcement officers were killed and 168 injured between April 16, 2009 and the end of March 2010 compared with 50 killed and 140 injured the year before.

Russia, Poland seek clarification of reasons behind air crash that killed Kaczynski

A Russian deputy prime minister, Sergei Ivanov, said at a meeting with Polish National Defense Minister Bogdan Klich that the data from flight recorders of the crashed plane will make it possible to rule out any unnecessary speculation on the issue.

The Polish delegation of top public figures was on its way to pay tribute to some 20,000 Polish officers executed by Soviet secret police in 1940, when their plane went down in thick fog killing all 96 people onboard.

Russian air traffic controllers earlier said the crew "did not listen" to recommendations to divert to another airport and landed without permission.

Poland's chief prosecutor Andrzej Seremet said earlier that Polish prosecutors would postpone revealing the black box contents until they obtain other necessary information from Russia. The final decision on whether to disclose flight details was expected in two weeks.

Klich urged investigators to speed up the probe into the deadly air crash.

"Clarification of the reasons for this tragedy is the most important task for the Polish and Russian governments. This is joint responsibility. We need to speed up work on it," he told journalists after the meeting with Ivanov.

Tajikistan to strengthen partnership with Russia, CIS - president

Tajikistan will develop relations of cooperation and partnership with Russia and other CIS countries, Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon said in his annual address to parliament on Saturday.

"We intend to strengthen and expand our contribution to partnership and cooperation with the CIS, with the Collective Security Treaty Organization member states and [regional organization] EurASEC, first of all the Russian Federation which is our strategic partner," Rakhmon said.

Speaking of unrests in Kyrgyzstan, Rakhmon said the events "cannot but seriously concern us despite that they are their internal affair."

Kyrgyzstan's opposition took power on April 7 amid violent unrest in which more than 80 people died. There has been sporadic violence since, but nothing like the events at the start of April.

Economic:

Russian Gas Deal May End Ukraine's NATO Ambitions (Update1)

Russia's \$40 billion gas-subsidy deal with Ukraine and a new 25-year lease for a Russian navy base may put paid to Ukraine's NATO ambitions and lay the country open to Russian companies, analysts said.

"Russia is giving Ukraine a 30 percent discount on gas imports, but that's a discount compared to what Kiev had been paying, which is more than what others are paying," said Sam Greene, deputy director of the Carnegie Moscow Center. "In return they're getting a 30-year veto on Ukraine's foreign policy. That's quite a deal," he said in an e-mailed response to questions today.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his Ukrainian counterpart, Viktor Yanukovich, reached the gas and fleet agreements on April 21. Medvedev said Russia needed "certainty" about the future of its Black Sea Fleet.

Gas Disruptions

Yanukovich took office in February pledging to improve Ukraine's relationship with Russia, which had soured under his predecessor, Viktor Yushchenko, who sought to lead the country into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and to reduce its reliance on its eastern neighbor. OAO Gazprom, Russia's gas-export monopoly, cut deliveries during annual price disputes, twice disrupting supplies to European customers dependent on Ukraine's pipeline network.

Russia opposes further eastward expansion of NATO to include the former Soviet republics of Ukraine and Georgia. The alliance decided in 2008 that the two countries would eventually become members, though it refused to fast-track their applications.

The base agreement won't alter NATO's commitment to Ukrainian membership, Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said yesterday.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said yesterday that the decision to extend gas subsidies to Ukraine after years of insisting on a move to market prices had been "difficult because it's expensive." Russia may lose 100 billion rubles (\$3.4 billion) in revenue from customs duties this year because of the agreement, Interfax reported, citing Deputy Finance Minister Tatyana Nesterenko.

'Long-Term Guarantee'

The gas and fleet agreements "ensure that deals will be put in place in such a way that, even if there's another political change in Ukraine, Russia's principal position will no longer be put in jeopardy," said Chris Weafer, chief strategist with UralSib Financial Corp.

“That’s why it’s so expensive,” he said in an e-mailed response to questions. “It’s the cost of a long-term guarantee. Moscow clearly doesn’t want to risk a repeat of the conflicts that not only caused problems with Ukraine, but also jeopardized relations with the U.S. and European Union.”

The next few years should bring a “series” of public- and private-sector deals between Russia and Ukraine, Weafer said. “Gazprom will inevitably increase ownership of assets in Ukraine,” he said, adding that Ukraine may also join a customs union that currently links Russia and two other former Soviet republics, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

‘Major Conflicts’

The cost of the deal for Russia is mitigated by the likelihood that Ukraine wouldn’t have been able to pay its gas bills at current prices, Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of Russia in Global Affairs magazine, said by telephone.

“Russia gave up money it would never get anyway,” Lukyanov said. “And trying to collect would have provoked major conflicts not so much with Ukraine as with Europe, where Ukraine would have done everything possible to drum up support. In this sense, it’s a good deal and the price isn’t as high as it might seem.”

Russia’s State Duma, the lower house of parliament, will consider ratification of the Black Sea Fleet lease agreement on April 27, RIA Novosti reported. Ukraine’s parliament will vote on the accord at the same time, the Russian state-run news service reported.

UPDATE 1-Russia's MTS outsources some ops to Nokia Siemens

Signs five-year contract with Nokia Siemens Networks

Telecoms operators globally are aiming to slash costs and focus more on consumers and services, so outsourcing their network operations is an increasingly popular scheme.

Ericsson ([ERICb.ST](#)) and Nokia Siemens recently signed deals to operate the mobile telecoms networks of Vodafone ([VOD.L](#)) and Orange ([FTE.PA](#)) in Britain. [ID:nLI513682]

MTS, part of services conglomerate Sistema ([SSAq.L](#)), said on Friday that under a five-year deal Nokia Siemens will operate and service its mobile networks in 16 central Russia regions. A source close to MTS said the 16 regions accounted for 10 percent of the company's overall Russian business.

The deal also includes the transfer of 250 employees to the Finnish company's staff, MTS said in a statement.

Rival Vimpelcom ([VIP.N](#)) is studying the possibility of outsourcing the operation of its telecoms network, the company said in emailed comments on Friday, adding it has already outsourced some functions requiring additional licences.

MTS had about 102 million subscribers at the end of March, including 69 million in Russia, according to AC&M consultancy

Ukraine Woos Russia With Lease Deal

The decision by the Ukrainian president, [Viktor F. Yanukovich](#), represented a sharp reversal in policy and a victory for the Kremlin, which had feared that its military readiness would be undermined if the base were closed.

“We have opened a new page in relations,” Mr. Yanukovich said at a [news conference](#) in Kharkiv, in Russian-speaking eastern [Ukraine](#), where the agreement was signed.

But the lease extension drew criticism from Ukrainian opposition leaders, who view the base as a symbol of Russian interference in Ukrainian affairs and want their country to have a closer alliance with the West.

The base is located on the Crimean Peninsula on the Black Sea, a place of historic resonance for Russia, which has headquartered its fleet there since czarist times. Mr. Yanukovich’s predecessor, [Viktor A. Yushchenko](#), who left office in February, was hostile to the Kremlin and had vowed that the lease would not be renewed after it expired in 2017.

The accord reached Wednesday, which Mr. Yanukovich negotiated with Russia’s president, [Dmitri A. Medvedev](#), will add 25 years to the lease on the base, which is in the city of Sevastopol. In return, Russia said it would cut the price of natural gas that it sold to Ukraine by roughly 30 percent, helping to bolster [Ukraine’s shaky finances](#).

Ukraine has been under pressure from the [International Monetary Fund](#) to reduce subsidies to domestic gas consumers to pare its budget and qualify for a bailout package. To raise money, Mr. Yanukovich had [considered selling](#) part of Ukraine’s gas pipeline network to Russia, but he appears to have shelved that idea.

Russia has been paying roughly \$100 million a year in rent on the base for its Black Sea Fleet, but it was not immediately clear from the announcement on Wednesday whether that price would change.

Mr. Yanukovich has long had a strong rapport with the Kremlin, and during the presidential campaign he declared that Mr. Yushchenko had recklessly alienated Moscow by seeking [NATO](#) membership for Ukraine and putting pressure on the Russian military over the fate of the Crimea naval base.

Mr. Yanukovich has said Ukraine should not join any military pacts and should instead act as a bridge between Russia and the West.

The meeting on Wednesday reflected how the formerly icy relations between Kiev and Moscow have changed under Mr. Yanukovich. Mr. Medvedev flew to Ukraine for the talks, having all but boycotted Mr. Yushchenko toward the end of his tenure.

“People in Ukraine and in Russia want us to build warm, neighborly, traditional relations, which have always led our nations to success,” Mr. Yanukovich said.

The agreement on the naval base and gas supplies is expected to calm tensions that [flared in recent years](#) and had ramifications across Europe. [Disputes over gas pricing](#) grew so acrimonious that supplies of Russian gas that were supposed to be transported through Ukraine to Europe [were halted in winter](#), leaving homes without heat.

Residents of Crimea hailed the base agreement as well, pleased that it promised to solidify the Russian presence there. The peninsula was once part of Russia, but was transferred to Ukraine in 1954 when both were part of the Soviet Union. The local population is more loyal to Moscow than Kiev. Under Mr. Yushchenko, Crimea was seen as a potential flash point for a military conflict between the countries.

By contrast, opposition parties in Kiev and the Western parts of the country said the lease extension was a betrayal of Ukrainian sovereignty.

Arseniy Yatsenyuk, a former Ukrainian foreign minister, said Mr. Yanukovich had no right under Ukraine’s Constitution to extend the lease. “For now, it’s just paper,” Mr. Yatsenyuk said of the deal. “The fact of its signing has no legal significance.”

The Russian side, though, seemed relieved to have a friend in the Ukrainian president. After the meeting, Mr. Medvedev and Mr. Yanukovich strolled together through the civic center in Kharkiv and greeted passers-by.

“I haven’t been a guest here for a long time,” Mr. Medvedev told them. “It’s nice that it has taken place at last. We have just signed documents that are very important for both Ukraine and Russia. They will strengthen our friendship and our brotherhood for a long time to come.”

Russia and Ukraine Sign Gas Agreement

Russia agreed to cut the [gas prices](#) it charges Ukraine by 30 percent, saving the former Soviet republic about \$40 billion over the next decade. At the same time, Ukraine extended Russia’s lease on the Crimean port of Sevastopol, home to the Black Sea Fleet, until 2042, *Bloomberg* reports.

The agreement, signed on Wednesday by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, extends the lease on the Russian base in the port

of Sevastopol for 25 years after the current lease expires in 2017, and may be further extended by another five years.

"As far as Russia is concerned, it is not only a question of the redeployment of the Black Sea Fleet or the construction of new coastal infrastructure, but also a broad array of issues related to understanding how friendly our neighbor is," Mikhail Zurabov said, according to *RIA Novosti*.

INTERVIEW: Building BRICs

If anything the crisis has only catalysed the catch-up process the BRIC countries have been enjoying. Six years ago, O'Neill suggested that the BRIC economies would equal the G7 in size by 2040 or so. With the group having contributed 45% of global growth since the start of the crisis in 2007, he now projects that meeting point could now come as early as 2032. "What does seem clear," says O'Neill in an interview broadcast on the bank's website, "is that the global credit crisis and its aftermath have caused more damage to the major developed economies than to the BRICs."

"If there's one big eye-catching surprise, it's the speed of the development of size of the BRIC economies," says O'Neill. "Collectively, they now make up 16% of global GDP. Each of them has reached a level of dollar-GDP value that we didn't think possible until 2015."

China has been the undisputed winner for the global meltdown, but O'Neill says that Brazil and India have also been big winners, exceeding all expectations. Russia's poor performance since start of the crisis has "disappointed," but he says it has performed better than most realise: Russia's average GDP growth since 2003 – and including the 7%-plus contraction in 2009 - has been only slightly below the average 5% a year O'Neill forecast in 2003. "Although Russia has struggled through the crisis, we see little reason why it should not still be regarded as a BRIC, and we still believe that Russia could become bigger than Japan," says O'Neill.

BRIC consumer to the rescue

Ironically, the crisis has probably been good for China, he suggests, as it's made the needed shift from export-led growth to concentrating on developing its domestic consumption as a driver for further growth. Although not on the same level, he says the same is true of Brazil and India. "Thinking about the populations of those countries, the fact of the matter is that close to 3bn people around the world, which is half of the world's population, haven't really been touched by this crisis in the way that most people talk about."

That 50% of the globe is providing much needed growth to replace dwindling demand in developed economies for sectors across the board, whether it be cars, mobile phones or commodities. O'Neill points at the average monthly subscription rate for mobile phones in just India and China as one example where 32m people per month are signing up in

those two countries alone. That's the equivalent of the entire UK signing up every two months. "It's a relief for the world," says O'Neill in his thick, northern English accent, "because in many ways the BRIC consumer is taking over the mantle of key marginal driver from the US."

Despite his enormous expectations for the BRIC economies, O'Neill sounds a note of caution to those looking to invest in stocks in the four countries this year, except for Russia. The recovery of equity prices in Brazil, India and China were so strong in 2009 that valuations are no longer as compelling as they were last year. On the other hand, anticipation of monetary tightening to reduce liquidity in the economies could make investment in equities risky.

Russia, however, stands apart from the others here. Having taken a far harder hit in the crisis, and with sluggish economic recovery to date, there's a lot more scope for appreciation. The earlier stage of recovery in the Russian economy also means that monetary tightening is not on the agenda. It's for these reasons that O'Neill says that the one BRIC he likes best, "for 2010 is the one people keep saying we should exclude from the group – Russia."

Challenges

ahead

Despite this, O'Neill says Russia is the BRIC that has the most fundamental issues to address. "As has been illustrated in the crisis, Russia is too dependent on commodities prices, still has corporate governance issues and has weak demographics."

Elsewhere, he sees Brazil's challenge as simply getting used to people being in love with it. "It's managed to keep inflation relatively low and stable. It's attracting a lot of capital flow, but has introduced controls to reduce the attraction."

Meanwhile, for India the issue is tough, but straightforward: infrastructure. "The new government is talking big about rapidly increasing road building," he points out. "If they manage it, then that would be a fantastically positive development. But as very often with the Indian government, you have to ask how serious they are about what they say."

BRICs

by

numbers

- It is now possible that China could become as big as the US by 2027 - in less than 18 years.
- The BRICs could become as big as the G7 by 2032, about seven years earlier than originally believed possible.
- Between 2000 and 2008, the BRICs contributed almost 30% to global growth in dollar terms, compared with around 16% in the previous decade.
- Since the start of the financial crisis in 2007, some 45% of global growth has come

from the BRICs, up from 24% in the first six years of the decade.

- Long-term projections suggest that the BRICs could account for almost 50% of global equity markets by 2050.
- BRIC economies will likely account for more than 70% of global car sales growth in the next decade, with China expected to account for almost 42% of this increase.

Russia, Austria sign deal on South Stream project

Russia and Austria signed a deal in Vienna on Saturday on Austria joining the South Stream gas project.

The deal was signed by Russia's Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko and Austria's Economy Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner in the presence of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann.

The agreement is the last deal necessary for the start of the project.

The pipeline is expected to go into operation in 2015, its capacity eventually reaching 63 bcm, or some 35% of Russian gas supplies to Europe.

Russia has already signed intergovernmental agreements with Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia to implement the onshore part of the project.

The project is part of Russia's efforts to reduce dependence on transit nations, particularly Ukraine. It is widely seen as a rival project to the EU-backed Nabucco, which would also transport Caspian and Central Asian gas to Europe but would bypass Russia.

Russia returns to global capital markets with \$5.5 bln Eurobond issue

Russia sold Eurobonds worth \$5.5 billion for the first time since the country defaulted on its obligations in 1998, banking sources told RIA Novosti on Thursday.

The \$2 billion Eurobond tranche offers yields at 125 basis points over similar U.S. Treasuries and the \$3.5 billion issue is priced at 135 basis points over Treasuries.

Russia is returning to world capital markets in the capacity of a sovereign borrower to bridge its budget deficit, which is projected at more than 6% of GDP in 2010.

Social:**[Russia's parliament to consider celebrating Russia's baptism day July 28](#)**

The lower house of Russia's parliament will on Wednesday consider in the first reading a government-submitted draft law proposing the establishment of a new memorable date — the Baptism of Rus Day.

The draft law was initiated by the Russian Culture Ministry. Earlier the Russian Orthodox Church proposed making the date a public holiday, as it has been in Ukraine for several years.

Orthodox Christianity is Russia's dominant religion, with over half of the country's residents considering themselves Russian Orthodox. However, a much smaller proportion are practicing Christians.

An Encyclopedia Of Extremism

A Prestigious Encyclopedia Is the Latest Publication to Fall Foul of Russia's Anti-Extremism Laws

At Nukhazhiev's request, Chechen prosecutors investigated the Great Russian Encyclopedia – a huge 62 volume work by the Terra Publishing group – for its entry on the Chechen Republic, which the ombudsman claimed “deliberately gathered the whole range of anti-Chechen stereotypes ever to appear in print, starting with the era of Tsarist colonization.”

“It's impossible to read with normal emotions,” Nukhazhiev told the Echo of Moscow radio station on Tuesday morning. “From beginning to end it is permeated with the idea that Chechens are bandits on the genetic level.”

To Nukhazhiev's satisfaction Grozny's Zavodsky District Court agreed with him, and on Monday formally deemed the work “extremist.” In the absence of a successful appeal, that means the text will be added to Russia's list of proscribed extremist literature, and all copies of it – the article appears in the 58th volume of the encyclopedia - will be confiscated. But can a Great Russian Encyclopedia really be as bad as Mein Kampf, which was itself recently proscribed? And should Lermontov also be proscribed?

“Not at all. That's just the genre of poetry,” Nukhazhiev told the radio station. “He crawled on the bank of his own river, not someone else's.”

Nukhazhiev insists the question is not about art or opinion, but the distortion of history. While Russia Profile has not yet seen a copy of the article in question, and so is unable to verify the veracity of such allegations (for those interested in looking it up for themselves, the offending entry apparently appears on page 15 of volume 58), if true they are pretty damning.

The specific stereotypes concern the supposed Chechen penchant for raiding their neighbors, their collaboration with the Germans during the Second World War (on which pretext Stalin deported the entire nation to Kazakhstan), and the idea, current in much nationalist Russian literature in the 1990s, that the period before the first Chechen war saw a “genocide of the Russian speaking population of Chechnya.” And though lawyer Murad Musaev, who represented one of the sides in the Grozny court, told Echo of Moscow that the article doesn’t actually contain any phrase about a genetic predisposition to violence as such, he did say it could be inferred from the emphasis on violence in its account of Chechen history. Musaev added that the article claims in the 19th century “practically every Chechen family had Slavic slaves.”

“If that’s true, it’s right that this was deemed extremist,” said Yuri Borisyonuk, editor in chief of the Rodina historical magazine, who has not yet read the article. “It sounds like pure political journalism of the kind that could be published anywhere. But an encyclopedia should only reflect opinions that are very well established in society. It’s no place for opinions like these.”

In that case, how could such opinions surface in such a prestigious publication? Musaev theorized the editors had simply contracted the article out to some deeply prejudiced author, and had failed to check the material properly. But until Terra breaks its silence – the publisher has only said that it has not received any notification from the Grozny court, and Chief Editor of Terra Sergei Kondratov did not return repeated requests for a comment Tuesday – that will be a matter of speculation.

Of more concern is whether the writer is alone in his opinions or representative of something bigger. It is no secret that North Caucasians, and Chechens in particular, are, have been, and for the foreseeable future will be subject to widespread prejudice and suspicion. “It looks to me like it reflects the personal opinion of the writer,” said Semyon Charney of the Moscow Bureau for Human Rights, which monitors xenophobia in Russian, “but unfortunately, the fact is that people from the Northern Caucasus are the most disliked ethnic group in Russia.” And thanks to the legacy of two wars and an on-going insurgency, rumors about the recent suicide attacks on the Moscow metro (though it has since emerged that the bombers were from Dagestan) and what he called the “not always elegant” behavior of Chechens in Moscow, “that’s not going to go away.”

Perhaps so, but professional historians have now joined Nukhzhiev’s assault on Terra’s encyclopedia. The Russian Academy of Science’s Institute of Oriental Studies has released a “Scientific Expert Opinion” on the article in question, which found that “the article not only contains numerous factual inaccuracies and distortions, but also deliberate falsification, sometimes provocative, of the history of one of Russia’s peoples.”

The opinion, which appears on the institute’s Web site, is undated but signed by Institute Director Vitaly Naumkin. It attacks everything from the author’s sloppy grasp of pre history (the first signs of settlement in Chechnya date not from the Neolithic but the mid-Paleolithic, we are told), and his “not quite correct” account of the relations between the inhabitants of what is now Chechnya with the ancient Georgian kingdoms in the fourth

century B.C., to a misleading account of the development of religion in the Middle Ages (the historians say the Islamization of Chechnya was not connected with the fall of Byzantium, was completed only in recent centuries, and replaced local forms of paganism - not Christianity). But more pertinent to the current discussion is their finding that “the image of Chechens as robbers and bandits is formed purposefully.”

And, argue the historians, misleadingly. “In thirteen pages agriculture and handicrafts are mentioned only a few times, even though for many centuries about 80 percent of the population was employed in these fields,” they wrote. “The result is to present an image of Chechens as a people unable to engage in creative work. According to the article's author, the Chechens have lived only by robbery.”

So, added to the charge that the as-yet anonymous contributor wrote a deliberately misleading article with the malicious intent of inciting hatred against ethnic Chechens, is the professional fault of being a singularly incompetent historian. Terra has not yet had its say, but it will have to come up with something convincing to answer the assault on both fronts.

Shenderovich Caught in Sex Video

The clip, which also purported to show two other opposition figures having sex with the same woman, is the latest in a series of hidden-camera stings to target prominent critics of the government.

"I recognized this multipurpose girl Katya from photos published by Novaya Gazeta and understood that this movie is also out there and that the premiere is coming soon," Shenderovich [wrote on his blog](#) at 3 a.m. on Thursday. He said some "kind folks" tipped him off that it would be released.

Several hours later, RuNet was roaring over the low-resolution video, which included individually shot clips showing Shenderovich; [Alexander Potkin](#), the leader of the nationalist Movement Against Illegal Migrants; and a man who looked very much like writer and Other Russia opposition leader [Eduard Limonov](#).

All were having sex with a person who appeared to be the same woman, although she could not be identified because her face was covered by a black spot.

Shenderovich, who is married and has a daughter, wrote that he had sex with the woman but without any particular pleasure. He also joked that security officials had shortchanged him by offering only one woman.

The woman, he said, was also featured in a compromising video circulated last month showing Russian Newsweek editor [Mikhail Fishman](#). In the video he appeared to be snorting cocaine while a naked woman walked around the apartment.

[Ilya Yashin](#), a leader of the [Solidarity](#) opposition movement, said at the time that he had spent a night with a woman at the same apartment, whom he now believes was an agent for the security services. He said he left when he was offered cocaine.

Yashin accused [Nashi](#) of being behind the videos, after the pro-Kremlin youth group posted a film earlier in March that appeared to show him, Fishman and liberal political analyst [Dmitry Oreshkin](#) giving bribes to traffic police.

Nashi denied involvement.

On his blog, Shenderovich called the video revenge from Putin's retinue for accusing the prime minister of killings, corruption and seizing power.

"Putin's administration was listening to [these allegations] with enormous cool, and without denying any of it, they answered with their typical, illegal filth," he said.

Speaking later on Ekho Moskvyy radio, where he works, Shenderovich said "federal authorities" were involved in making the video. "It was done by authorities with two purposes: discrediting and blackmailing."

Putin's press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, told The Moscow Times that he was not aware of the incident.

"We'd like it if he faced his problems alone," Peskov said.

Potkin, reached by phone Thursday, also confirmed that he was in the video.

"It was me," he said calmly. "Now you see that there are no guarantees of having your private life protected."

Limonov told The Moscow Times that he had not seen the clip and could not comment. Shenderovich could not be reached for comment.

The woman whom Shenderovich mentioned is Yekaterina Gerasimova, an amateur model who works for the Progress modeling firm in Moscow and provides services to security service officials, Yashin said. He and other prominent bloggers have said they recognized her and the apartment where the clips were filmed.

The flat, located on Orlikov Pereulok in downtown Moscow, is listed in online realty databases and can be rented for \$2,500 a month.

A spokeswoman for the Progress modeling agency denied that Gerasimova was ever employed there.

"We didn't have any working agreement with her. She is not in our database," she said, adding that anyone interested in working for the agency can register a profile on its web site. "We don't know what these people do in their free time."

Extremism Cases Call Experts Into Question

For more than 20 years, the works of [L. Ron Hubbard](#), the controversial founding father of the Church of Scientology, have been widely available for purchase in Russia.

But following a recent ruling by a court in the Siberian city of Surgut, all of his works related to Scientology have been banned as extremist. Prosecutors said the writings undermined the "traditional spiritual values" of the country's citizens, citing the opinions of "psychiatrists, psychologists and sociologists." A local court agreed.

Irina Shiryayeva, a spokeswoman for the Surgut transport prosecutor's office — which initiated the case along with local customs officials — told The Moscow Times on Thursday that prosecutors used a "number of experts" to identify the works as extremist, though she declined to identify them.

"It would be good if they were to remain behind the scenes," she said.

The ruling appeared to be just the latest strike against nontraditional religious movements in Russia. Scientologists from Surgut and Nizhnekamsk won rulings against Russia last year in the European Court of Human Rights for refusing to recognize their organization as a religion.

But a spate of similar decisions in recent months has raised concerns among extremism scholars and rights experts about the competence and independence of those who are invited by prosecutors to offer their testimony.

A series of changes to the law on extremism signed by then-President [Vladimir Putin](#) in 2006 and 2007 expanded it considerably, introducing harsher punishments and allowing local courts to add works to a federal list of extremist materials.

If caught with titles on the list, an individual faces a fine of up to 3,000 rubles (\$100) and up to 15 days in jail, while a legal entity could be fined up to 100,000 rubles (\$3,400) and closed for up to 90 days.

No criminal charges apply, although possession of extremist materials can make punishment for other crimes more severe.

The changes have sparked a series of contentious and often bizarre rulings, prompting even the experts who are asked to testify on extremism to question the law's merits.

For example, a court in the Rostov region decided to ban a local branch of Jehovah's Witnesses in September 2009 for extremism, citing, among other things, an expert opinion on a passage written by [Leo Tolstoy](#).

A magazine published by the group had quoted a passage written more than 100 years earlier by Tolstoy, one of Russia's most beloved authors, in which he railed against the Russian Orthodox Church's growing influence.

A panel of invited experts labeled the comments extremist — to the bewilderment of Jehovah's Witnesses and literary scholars alike.

“By considering this text extremist, the court has considered Leo Tolstoy an [extremist],” Grigory Martynov, a spokesman for Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia, told The Moscow Times.

Courts are hearing more and more extremism cases that require expert testimony on a slogan, article, book or message, but the quality of their assessments is becoming increasingly dubious, said Mikhail Gorbanevsky, a Moscow linguistics professor whose GLADIS center is sometimes asked for expert testimony on extremism.

One of the most astonishing examples, he said, was from Yelena Kiryukhina, a specialist with the state-run Center for Forensic Expertise in St. Petersburg.

Kiryukhina was asked to testify in a criminal case against a gang of skinheads charged in the brutal beating of St. Petersburg ninth-grader Tagir Kerimov in February 2009. Witnesses said the men were shouting racist slogans, such as "Death to Khachs," a derogatory name for natives of the Caucasus.

Kiryukhina told the court that the slogans “might have been or might have not been xenophobic.” The attackers were later convicted of hooliganism, a lesser charge than a racially motivated attack, drawing a major public outcry.

She also was the expert who found an episode of "South Park" extremist in 2008, although rulings against the U.S. cartoon and the television network 2x2 were later overturned.

Kiryukhina, who now works for the St. Petersburg branch of the Investigative Committee, was not available for comment on this article.

In another recent case, director Pavel Bardin's anti-skinhead mockumentary "Russia 88" was accused of being extremist by Samara prosecutors, who asked a court to ban it.

They cited the opinion of Shamil Makhmudov, a Russian language professor at Samara State University, who said he thought hateful remarks by the film's characters were the position of the film's makers.

“He has turned everything upside down,” Bardin said at the time.

Samara prosecutors called off the case in January after the Prosecutor General's Office said it needed additional opinions before a final decision could be made.

People employed by state institutions or private companies may be called on for testimony, and their findings should be considered equally by the court, according to a 2006 arbitration court ruling.

An author whose work is accused of extremism is also allowed to invite experts to testify. They can be paid up to 600 euros (\$800) for their services, although typically the sum is far less.

Yelena Golyashina, a law professor at Moscow State Law Academy and an authority on extremism in Russia, said experts are required to be independent.

Those working for the Justice Ministry and Federal Security Service are often more professional than private analysts, because studying extremism is their only job, she said. Testimony from independent analysts is more frequently biased or made under pressure from local law enforcement, particularly in the regions.

"Often a dean of some provincial university is asked by a local law enforcement agency to order some of his scholars to provide the expert opinion that's needed," said Gorbanevsky, from GLADIS.

Private experts in high-profile extremism cases are often found seemingly at random.

Tatyana Shulga, a psychology professor at Moscow Region State University, said she was stunned when the Moscow City Prosecutor's Office asked her to do a linguistic assessment of a book by liberal political commentator Andrei Piontkovsky in 2007.

Shulga told the prosecutors that she could provide only a psychological opinion.

“They didn’t even care, they just wanted to have something,” she told The Moscow Times.

One of the most controversial cases was the 2002 libel suit of veteran Boris Stambler against Viktor Korchagin, publisher of the far-right Rusich magazine.

Although the magazine was openly calling for the deportation of Jews from Russia and criticizing Orthodox Christianity, Maria Krutova, a specialist in Russian Orthodox studies, said told the court that she did not see signs of hate speech.

"I just didn’t want the old man to be imprisoned. I felt sorry for him," Krutova told The Moscow Times, recalling her decision.

The Justice Ministry's list of [extremist materials](#) had 592 items as of Thursday, mainly pieces from anti-Semitic newspapers, radical Islamist articles and even leaflets critical of the authorities.

Hubbard's texts have not yet appeared on the federal list, a process that sometimes can take months. Once on the list, a book or film can be removed only by court order.

Although it maintains the list, the Justice Ministry cannot add or remove items. Justice Minister Alexander Kononov told The Moscow Times in February that the ministry's expert council, which provides opinions on extremist materials, should be allowed to seek changes to the list in court.

The list contains a number of oddly specific items, such as "a poster with a grinning Winnie the Pooh and a swastika armband," which is part of entry No. 414.

Part of the problem is that the process is not treated seriously by many of the experts, said Golyashina, the Moscow State Law Academy professor.

While expert witnesses often play an important role in the legal process in the United States, a court in Russia might ignore them altogether, she said.

"For Western experts, their professional reputation is the most important, but our experts are not afraid to lose their jobs. In Russia, any person from the street can be an expert," she said.

Investigators often call in specialists to avoid making a tricky decision themselves, said Galina Kozhevnikova, an analyst at Moscow-based extremism watchdog Sova.

"Since extremist articles are usually political, investigators don't want to deal with them. So they leave this work to experts," she said.

The problem is exacerbated by ambiguities in the law, analysts contacted for this article said.

"The Russian law on extremism gives a very random definition of extremist activity, allowing authorities to use it against dissent," Gorbanevsky said, from GLADIS.

Being a principled witness in extremism cases can be risky, especially since the death of professor Nikolai Girenko, whose assessments played a crucial role in a number of high-profile cases against far-right nationalists.

Death threats began appearing on nationalist web sites, and he was gunned down in his St. Petersburg apartment in June 2004 — a killing that remains unsolved.

Gorbanevsky said an expert working with his team recently found a note in her mailbox reading: "Remember Girenko."

Leader of Morgue Gang Convicted of Murder

A former St. Petersburg pathologist was convicted Thursday of ordering several murders as the leader of a gang of morgue workers who went into business hiding the bodies of people killed in organized crime disputes.

Valery Burykin was found guilty of three murders and banditry, for which he could face up to life in prison. The court will hear arguments from prosecutors and the defense during the sentencing phase on Monday.

A jury found that Burykin began recruiting colleagues at the City Pathological Bureau in May 1995 to help him take over the city's morgues to profit from disposing of bodies, St. Petersburg prosecutors said in a statement.

At the time, mob violence was rife in St. Petersburg, with contract killings a regular occurrence.

The group managed to remain in the shadows until September 2001, when Burykin ordered the killing of pathologist and co-conspirator Sergei Yefimov. He was gunned down in the entryway of his apartment building for trying to leave the group, prosecutors said.

Shortly before his death, however, Yefimov made a recording detailing the group's activities, claiming that they had killed at least 10 people while building their morgue empire, the local Fontanka.ru news portal reported. Yefimov identified Burykin — known among the group as Vasilich — as its leader.

The majority of the group's members were arrested after another morgue worker, Larisa Artyukovskaya, was killed in a bomb blast in her apartment's entryway in August 2004. Burykin fled abroad.

Five of his co-conspirators received sentences of up to 15 years in prison in October 2006. Burykin was detained a year later in Hungary and subsequently was extradited to Russia.

"On the main points, the jury found Burykin guilty, and that he did not deserve leniency," city prosecutors said in a statement.

A lawyer for Burykin said he would appeal the verdict to the Supreme Court, citing unspecified procedural violations, Fontanka.ru reported.

Nestle's Baby Food Denied Entry to Russia

The Federal Consumer Protection Service has returned import application documents to [Nestle](#), Lyubov Voropayeva, a spokeswoman for the agency, said Thursday.

Voropayeva declined to comment further on why the documents were returned. Gennady Onishchenko, head of the watchdog, said Nestle would not be allowed to import baby food products to Russia because of “low production standards,” RIA-Novosti reported late Wednesday.

“Nestle meticulously inspects all the raw materials to ensure its products meet the company’s high quality standards and food safety regulations,” Nestle said in an e-mailed statement.

Bad girls are fun in parties and sex, but boring in family life

Millions of girls that live on planet Earth and make men's lives better, brighter and healthier, can generally be divided into two major categories: good girls and bad girls. Of course, if a man meets one of the girls from the second of the two categories, his life will get nerve-racking, dull and sick. An evaluation criterion is quite simple. It has to do with a stranger asking a girl for favors. A good girl will say a quick and categorical "no" while a bad one will ask the man "when". There is a set of virtues and shortcomings both types of the girls are bestowed with.

Let us talk about the [bad girls](#) first and make a list of their unquestionable virtues.

Bad girls have an optimistic attitude to life. They are full of energy. They do not indulge in self-analysis. They do not tend to fall into a period of depression. Life is a never-ending show for them.

[This is definitely one of the bad, bad, bad girls - picture gallery](#)

Bad girls are hungry for sex. They enjoy sexual experimentation. They will do anything they want and maybe more than you want them to when having sex with you. Their screams of joy will make you think you are really hung like a stud.

However, despite obvious advantages, [bad girls](#) are really bad when it comes to certain things.

First, they can not be trusted. Indeed, these vultures are serial flirts and were made to seduce anything that moves. How the hell can they be trusted?

Second, they can be dangerous if they happen to be behind the wheel. They can be as wild and reckless driving a car as they are when making love. These girls are always unpredictable, they often end up in a company of [junkies](#) or rummies.

You can not build a solid relationship with this kind of girl. Soon you will find out that she is very selfish and simply does not give a damn about her potential partner. Girls like that enjoy being extravagant. They love going on a shopping spree if money is at hand. They will make lousy wives and mothers, their life is a string of divorce.

So you had better court the good ones. The good ones can vary as well but this is the truth: you can experience the precious moments of inner peace and comfort only when a good girl looks after you. She will take care of you when you fall ill, she will miss you when you are out somewhere. [Sex](#) is not the top priority for good girls so you do not have to be a super lover.

A girl like that is unlikely to cheat on you. Stop worrying even if she is exceptionally pretty. Remember how she told you to beat it on the first date when you tried to make out with her after having a few drinks. She can discourage any guy in a similar way. Good girls are mostly stick to monogamous relationships.

Dirty Technologies for Respectable Publications

How a Russian partner of The Financial Times and The Wall Street Journal uses porn technologies

Some Russian publications, which position themselves on the market of mass media as “[business](#)” and “respectable”, do not feel shy to use so-called porn technologies for their own promotion. They use advertising, the content of which targets the most primitive human feelings and can in no way be correlated with the editorial policy of this or that publication.

For example, on the main page of *News.Mail.Ru* project one can see ad banners of one of Russia’s “leading business publications,” the *Vedomosti* newspaper, which is published in association with *The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. The headlines on the banners say things like: “The shag room and more fun (video). Never seen before!”

The *Vedomosti* has been accused of the use of the so-called porn technologies before too, *Politonline.ru* website said. In addition, many experts, bloggers, and other journalists have repeatedly criticized the materials of the newspaper for being biased and unreliable.

It goes without saying that such deliberate or incidental provocations always raise immediate interest. However, they can only demonstrate either journalists’ unprofessionalism or their attitude to readers, since editors prefer not to apologize to them for their yet another mistake.

Needless to say that such mistakes cost a lot for a newspaper, which informs its potential readers and advertisers of its primary goal – to present the efficient, detailed and objective information. The same goes to the attempts to attract audience with the use of sensationalist headlines. Making a decision to place advertising in a “business publication”, spokespeople for restaurant, insurance or car business hopes to reach the audience of highly educated specialists with their income higher than the average, rather than students or the unemployed. They do not even think that “expert” media will market their economic and political forecasts with the use of such dirty tricks as sensationalist headlines and porn banners, *Politonline.ru* concludes.

Patriarch Kirill to attend religious summit in Azerbaijan

The forum will be attended by Christian, Muslim, Judaic, Buddhist and Hindu leaders. The agenda includes discussions of globalization and the way it affects religion and traditional values, the problems of terrorism and extremism as well as the global economic crisis.

Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin said Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia will meet with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his spouse Mehriban. On Sunday Kirill will serve a liturgy in a Baku cathedral.

Russian rocket puts U.S. satellite into space

Russia's space forces launched on Saturday a Proton-M rocket carrying a U.S. satellite, the Defense Ministry said.

The 2.6-ton satellite belongs to SES World Skies and has a service life of some 15 years.

The telecommunications satellite will provide digital television services for customers in the United States and the Caribbean regions.

This was the fifth Proton-M launch Russia has carried out since the start of the year.