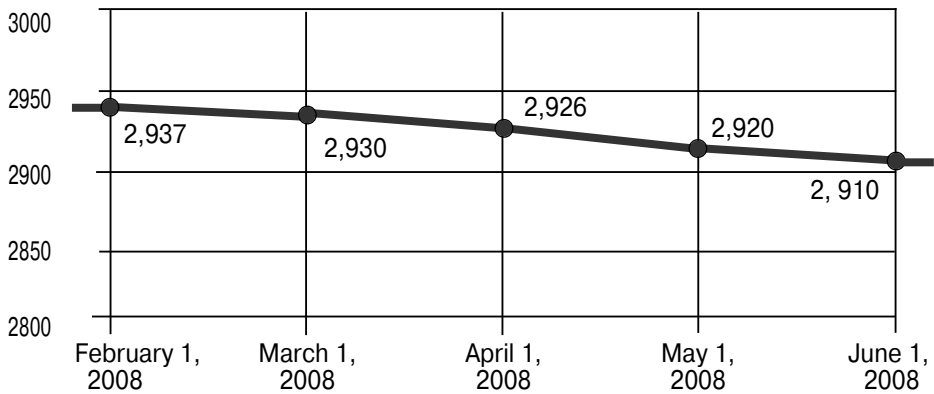


Figure 1. The *iSi* International Security Index (May–June 2008)



- ➔ **Albert Zulkharneev. THE *ISI* INDEX IN MAY–JUNE: DOWNWARD TREND CONTINUES.**
- ➔ **Yury Fedorov. A VIEW BY A RUSSIAN LIBERAL: “UNCERTAINTY GROWS.”**
- ➔ **Dmitry Evstafiev. A VIEW BY A RUSSIAN CONSERVATIVE: “ELECTRICITY TRICKS, OR MAGIC EXPOSED.”**
- ➔ **Konstantin Eggert, Dayan Jayatilleka, Andrey Kortunov, Abdulaziz Sager, and Yevgeny Satanovsky. COMMENTS BY MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERT GROUP**



The life, health, and wellbeing of people living on Earth, *citizens of the planet*, is the main criterion for assessing the state of the military, political, terrorist, environmental, and economic components of security, which form the basis of the universal *iSi* Index.<sup>1</sup> The success or failure of military action, diplomatic games, political campaigns, and economic projects is assessed precisely from the point of view of its effect on the safety of life and creative activity of people living in a specific region or the world as a whole. Military clashes, tests or deployment of new weapons, border closures or any other crises in international relations, economic destabilization – all result in a reduction of the Index, whereas any step towards resolving these issues or even just a proposal of a positive initiative improve the *iSi* by one or several points.

Growing food prices, an increased threat of hunger for millions of people, and the tragic consequences of the natural disasters in Myanmar and the Chinese province of Sichuan have if not overshadowed then considerably exacerbated political problems that normally contribute the most to the *iSi* figure. In the end of March the Index stood at **2,926** points, in April it dropped to **2,920** and by June 1 fell still further, down to **2,910**.

- **China.** The earthquake on May 12, whose epicenter was located 90 km from the capital city of the Sichuan province, killed over 62,000 people, with a further 23,000 people missing and over 350,000 injured. More than 14 million people have been evacuated from the affected area. Tremors continued for two weeks more after the quake. The situation was further complicated by torrential rains on May 27 and the danger of flooding posed by new lakes created by rivers clogged by landslides. Another problem that hit China was an enterovirus outbreak that affected over 27,500 children.

Despite these large-scale natural disasters, there has been no reduction in political activity in China and around it. At a meeting between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese authorities an agreement was reached to continue consultations. For the first time in the last 10 years the chairman of the People's Republic of China visited Japan, while on May 28 Chinese leader Hu Jintao had the first ever meeting with the chairman of the Taiwanese *Kuomintang* party, Wu Po-hsiung, who was visiting mainland China.

- **Myanmar.** On May 2 Myanmar was hit by a powerful tropical cyclone *Nargis*. Over 133,000 people were killed or went missing, with a total of 2.5 million people affected by the disaster. For the first two weeks the military authorities prevented foreign and international organizations from delivering relief aid to the affected population. One of the reasons for that was that they were wary of foreign influence over the referendum on the country's new constitution. Only on May 23 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, on a visit to Myanmar, managed to reach an agreement with the country's authorities to allow representatives of international humanitarian organizations access to the affected parts of the country. The referendum was held in two stages: on May 14 and May 24. Under the new constitution that came into effect on May 29, the country will hold a general election in 2010.
- **North Korea.** Following compromises reached at the April and May talks between North Korea and the United States in Singapore and Pyongyang, tension surrounding the North Korean nuclear program has reduced. North Korea supplied the U.S. side with documents on its plutonium production. The issue of resuming the six-way talks in July 2008 is continued to be discussed.
- **Iran.** No way out of the deadlock of the Iranian nuclear problem has yet been found. Tehran agreed to hold talks with the six countries without any preconditions, invited Japan to cooperate in the nuclear sphere but failed to agree with the IAEA over its assessment of Iran's nuclear activity. According to a report by IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei released in late May and presented at a session of the organization's board of governors on June 2, Iran did not disclose full information on its nuclear research.

- ❑ **Middle East.** At a meeting in Doha on May 21, Lebanese political forces reached a long-awaited compromise that resulted in the formation of a government of national unity, comprised of 30 ministers, including 11 representatives of the opposition *Hezbollah* movement. The opposition was given veto rights in the new government. After eight months of failed attempts to vote for a new president, on May 25 the country's parliament elected the former army chief, Michel Suleiman, as the new president. The country's population greeted the news of the political truce with celebrations. Fuad Siniora retained his post of prime minister.

The celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel in mid-May passed without any significant incidents, however Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is facing possible resignation over a corruption scandal. On May 21, peace talks between Israel and Syria resumed—under Turkish sponsorship—after an eight-year break.

- ❑ The signing on April 27 in Luxembourg of the **Serbia-EU** Stabilization and Association Agreement, marking Belgrade's first step towards EU membership, and the convincing victory in the parliamentary election of the *Boris Tadic-For European Serbia* coalition, with 38.4 percent of the vote over the 29.45 percent won by the *Serbian Radical Party* brought clarity as to the prevailing mood in Serbian society and reduced the risk of a possible escalation of tension over Kosovo. NATO built up its KFOR presence in the province ahead of the expected adoption on June 15 of the constitution of the self-proclaimed state.
- ❑ The crisis in relations between **Georgia** and Russia is becoming more tense. The UN observation mission in Georgia has concluded that it was a Russian fighter that on April 20 downed a Georgian UAV. Without casting doubt on the competence of UN experts, Moscow accused Tbilisi and *independent* experts of supplying «tendentious and biased materials».
- ❑ The problem of **growing food prices** is becoming more acute. On April 18, the head of the UN World Food Program, Josette Sheeran, announced that there was a shortage of humanitarian food aid, while on April 20 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that the current situation was threatening efforts to reduce poverty in the world.

**Albert Zulkharneev**

**Note**

<sup>1</sup> The index shows how much the current situation is different from *the ideal condition*, which in *iSi* terms stands at **4,210** points. The higher the threats to human life and activities are, the lower the Index is and vice versa. The chronology of events that have influenced the *iSi* Index, *the methodology for calculating the Index*, monthly *iSi* calculations, and experts' comments are published on the PIR-Center website at <http://isi.pircenter.org>. The publication of each *iSi* Index is accompanied by a survey among the International Expert Group that includes representatives from Russia, Kazakhstan, India, China, United States, France, Saudi Arabia, and other countries. The experts' comments, in no way affecting the calculated Index value, make it possible to see how changes in security are perceived in different parts of the world.



**A VIEW BY A RUSSIAN LIBERAL:  
UNCERTAINTY GROWS**

The last two months of spring 2008 did not see any dramatic international events of global scope, fierce confrontation on the world arena, or an unexpected truce between previously irreconcilable opponents. And yet it was a very interesting and important period. In May 2008 senior political leadership in Russia changed. However, by the beginning of summer neither competent analysts nor *professional coffee cup readers*, telling fortunes on coffee grounds stolen from Kremlin cafeterias, were able to come to a definitive conclusion as to the consequences of the handover of power in the Kremlin. Questions remain: will it be possible to



S  
S  
T  
T  
E  
E  
N  
N  
I  
I  
E  
E  
V  
V  
E  
E  
R  
R  
O  
O  
L  
L  
D  
D  
O  
O  
F  
F  
W  
W  
O  
O  
R  
R  
L  
L  
S