

Central Asia

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ANALYST

BIWEEKLY BRIEFING

Wednesday, July 30, 2003

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BIWEEKLY BRIEFING

Wednesday/July 30, 2003

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EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

The Analyst is an English language global Web journal devoted to analysis of the current issues facing the Central Asia-Caucasus region. It serves to link the business, governmental, journalistic and scholarly communities and is the global voice of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. The Editor of the Analyst solicits most articles and field reports however authors may suggest topics for future issues or submit articles and field reports for consideration. Such articles and field reports cannot have been previously published in any form, must be written in English, and must correspond precisely to the format and style of articles and field reports published in *The Analyst* (www.cacianalyst.org) and described below.

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Analytical articles require a three to four sentence introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples.

Analytical article structure:

KEY ISSUE: A short three-line statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

BACKGROUND: 200-300 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

IMPLICATIONS: 200-300 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

CONCLUSIONS: 100'200 words that strongly state your conclusions about the impact of the event or issue.

Specifications for Field Reports:

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event, or about the work of an NGO. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed has for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 500'700 words.

Those interested in joining *The Analyst's* pool of authors to contribute articles, field reports, or contacts of potential writers, please send your CV to: svante.cornell@pcr.uu.se and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

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INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS HOLDS BOTH PROMISE AND THREATS

Jaba Devdariani

In 2003, the United States and the European organizations stepped up pressure on three South Caucasus countries to uphold democratic norms. Unprecedented and open diplomatic pressure, backed up by the conditionality of financial assistance will affect the actions of the governments and increases opposition influence on the eve of elections in Azerbaijan and, especially, Georgia. The consensus that seems to be emerging internationally is that the fragile stability achieved by the incumbent regimes in the South Caucasus is unsustainable, and thus counterproductive for the wider Middle East peace policy.

BACKGROUND: During the last years, speculations were mounting in academic and policy communities that the United States and the EU were turning a blind eye on apparent lack of progress in democratic development of the three South Caucasus countries. It was seen as symptomatic that the South Caucasus started to be increasingly viewed in the context of the broader Central Asia region, rather than as a part of Eastern Europe. This trend was dominant in U.S. policy materials, but also started to take root in Europe. Even though all three countries became members of the Council of Europe in 1999-2001, recent policy documents of the European Union do not list the counties under the "wider Europe" framework. As the concept of "Caucasus and Central Asia" became entrenched in policy documents, observers concluded that in terms of democracy these countries would be held to somewhat lesser standards than their counterparts to the west.

However, the tables seem to have turned, as this year both the U.S. and the European structures delivered an unprecedented degree of criticism of the ruling regimes in all three states. The parliamentary and presidential elections in Armenia have been criticized both by the EU, the OSCE and CoE observers. Most recently, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe delayed acknowledgement of the credentials of the new Armenian delegation, quoting election irregularities.

Heydar Aliyev's government in Azerbaijan was slammed in the U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices, which reads that "the government is dominated by incumbent President Heydar Aliyev, who was reelected in October 1998 in a controversial election marred by numerous, serious irregularities."

The pressure has been applied on Georgia as well. Ambassadors of 14 countries and international organizations have strongly urged the government to adopt viable election legislation, allowing for the holding of free and fair elections. In June, the U.S. State Department gave Georgia four months to take decisive steps to combat human trafficking, or face the prospect of sanctions and other consequences like U.S. opposition to funding from the International Monetary Fund.

IMPLICATIONS: Increased international attention to the democracy track record of the South Caucasus is associated with the need to create a "rim of democracy" along the new U.S.

plans for the new order in the Middle East, which seems to be endorsed both by European powers and Russia.

The timing of the pressure is crucial, as Azerbaijan is facing presidential elections this year, while Georgia is heading for the crucial parliamentary elections that will shape the course of the country beyond the term of President Eduard Shevardnadze, which ends in 2005. The recent elections in Armenia showed that even in the only regional country that has witnessed a peaceful transition of power, things are far from perfect when it comes to democratic practices. Unusually strong criticism of the election violations in Armenia delivers a message on strong possible international repercussions to both Azerbaijan and Georgia if the measures are not taken to ensure free and fair elections in these countries.

It is apparent that while both Aliyev and Shevardnadze have managed to restore a degree of stability in their countries in the mid-1990s, the last five years have shown stagnation and even backtracking as far as democratic development is concerned. None of these leaders are autocratic to the extent as to solidify the state system, however undemocratic, to the extent of it being capable to outlive their departure from active politics.

The deterioration of Heydar Aliyev's health has clearly demonstrated that time is short for achieving at least some sort of institutional predictability in Azerbaijan. In Georgia, polls show government approval rates falling below 10%, as the country is suffering persistent economic troubles. Only 20% of the planned budget revenues were collected in the first 6 months of 2003, largely due to economic inefficiency, corruption and dominance of the shadow economy.

Increased international pressure plays into the hands of the opposition in Azerbaijan and especially Georgia, while compelling Armenia to play to its strengths in democratization field. Strong opposition movements in these countries see their agendas for higher transparency, human rights and economic development legitimized by the powerful international institutions. At the same time, incumbent governments may feel restrained to excessively use their "administrative resources" – that is economic and political pressure on citizens to vote for the incumbents.

In Georgia, where the opposition movement is stronger than in Azerbaijan, the opposition may hence be given a very strong thrust to decisively win the elections. The opposition victory

carries minimal risks, as in the current political circumstances liberal-rightist movements with strong pro-western leanings are likely to succeed in both countries in the short term. However, if the stagnation of the economy and of democratization continues, a growth of protest votes may give a higher hand to pro-Islamic parties in Azerbaijan, and populist socialist movements in Georgia.

It is essential, however, to articulate tangible benefits to the population and political elites of the South Caucasus countries that will follow the compliance to the agenda of democratic development. Such benefits may include the improvement of prospects for membership to NATO (for Azerbaijan and Georgia), and possibly, the European Union. In the absence of positive incentives, pressures may induce the incumbent governments to react defensively and build "small iron curtains" resembling those of Belarus. Facing increasing international pressures, President Eduard Shevardnadze, one of the most

ardent supporters of the international institutions, has in the last two months spoken about the possibility of suspending cooperation with the Soros Foundation and the IMF.

CONCLUSIONS: A consensus seems to be emerging on the need to reinvigorate support towards sustainable democratic institutions in the South Caucasus. Recent international pressure has been instrumental in opening the field for open competition of political agendas, and it has also undeniably strengthened the case of the opposition movements in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Continued pressure is crucial for ensuring free and fair elections in the South Caucasus. However, western powers may need to develop a set of positive incentives for the nations of these countries to avert the possible meltdown of existing state institutions, or a U-turn to authoritarianism.

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KAZAKHSTAN PUTS DEMOCRATIC GLOSS ON LOCAL ELECTIONS

As elections to local parliaments (maslikhats) scheduled for September 20 draw closer, political parties and NGOs in Kazakhstan step up their demands for fair and open voting procedures. They have good reasons for doing so. Parliamentary elections of 1999 came under fire both from the opposition and international human rights organizations.

In the course of their endless talks with OSCE delegations over the last four years, Kazakh officials have repeatedly pledged to update the electoral regulations of the country. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, mildly but insistently, pointed out the most salient procedural flaws and violations of voters' rights reported by independent observers from regions during 1999 elections. They ranged from unwarranted interference of local authorities in electoral process to the falsification of voting results.

Just two months before this year's elections to local parliaments to be held in September 20, the government is taking another step to display its commitment to democracy, introducing amendments and additions to the existing law on elections which was adopted in May 1999. The newly drafted law, on the surface, eliminates most of the barriers for political parties aspiring to seats in local parliament and offers equal opportunities for all candidates. According to the draft law, political parties, self-governing bodies and civic organizations will have the right to propose members of the election committee, a delicate task which is currently trusted only to local governors.

Another positive side of the proposed law is that it does not limit the number of observers from each public organization or a political party to one, as is the case under the existing law. It also

stipulates that authorities must be prosecuted for any violation of electoral regulations. Earlier it was only election committee members who were held legally accountable for bending the rules.

To minimize election fraud, the draft law rules out the hitherto widespread practice of using the so-called additional voting lists and re-elections. Also, candidates for the Senate and local parliaments (maslikhats) are entitled to set up their own election funds.

The draft law was instantaneously dubbed by some officials as "a milestone recorded in the history of elections in Kazakhstan". But not all of them are too enthusiastic about the proposed reform of the election system. Talking to media people, the chairwoman of the Central Election Committee Zagipa Balieva said that the existing law was quite workable in terms of holding fair and transparent elections abiding by rules, and falls nothing short of western election codes. At the same time she disclosed her real anxiety, urging election officials not to take too much heed of criticism from political parties and observers. But she admitted that as soon as the nominations of candidates for local parliaments ended on July 20, reports of violations of electoral regulations were coming in from some regions. She said that this year's election campaign is likely to become "a too much politicized issue".

Her apprehensions seem to be justified. On July 23, at a press-conference in Almaty, leaders of the Communist Party, the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK), the Pokoleniyie movement and the organization of the Slavic community 'Lad' announced their decision to set up a joint Coordinating Center to work out a concerted strategy for the pre-election period. According to the activists of this motley coalition, they

already have numerous supporters on their side in different parts of Kazakhstan, such as the Democratic Movement of Atyrau, Citizens of Pavlodar and Red East from the city of Ust-Kamenogorsk, notorious for its long-standing communist traditions.

One of the unfathomable things about this alliance is that the registration of the DCK had been suspended for 4 months by a court ruling in July. Nevertheless, the Coordinating Center, as their activists claim, has fielded 470 candidates, of which 280 are DCK members. Reporters were stunned to hear from the DCK spokesman Asylbek Kozhakmetov, that the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan has successfully persuaded more than a hundred candidates from the pro-government Otan and Civic Party to come over to the DCK party as soon as they get seats in parliament. Such "disclosures" sound unconvincing, to say the least.

In reality, the government-supported Otan and Civic Party are the hardest nuts for any rival in the forthcoming elections. Privileged and groomed by authorities, these parties do not seek an alliance with other parties. Practically all governors of district levels or their subordinates belong to the all-powerful Otan. A breach of party loyalty is never tolerated in their ranks. A loss of party membership means a simultaneous loss of a high position in a local government office, as it was a case in Mamlyutka district of North Kazakhstan region recently. But the most reliable tool of the Otan party is its seemingly inexhaustible financial resources, which will play no small part in campaigning for seats in parliament.

Marat Yermukanov

PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN: WHAT LIES AHEAD?

Rizwan Zeb

On July 9, a 500-strong mob armed with a truckload of stones, sticks and weapons, attacked and ransacked the Pakistani embassy in Kabul and destroyed almost everything they could get hold of. Afghan Interior Minister Ali Ahmed Jalai traveled to Islamabad to hold "structured talks" with his Pakistani counterparts on the recent escalation in hostility between the two countries. This effort might prove fruitless if the distrust that is there between the two remains. For now, officials of both countries have tried to downplay the incident, but tensions remain high though neither country can afford an escalated conflict.

BACKGROUND: The growing distrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan rose to its peak on 9 July, when a mob attacked and destroyed the Pakistani embassy in Kabul. Kabul alleges Islamabad is supporting Taliban elements and that these Taliban remnants are crossing freely into sanctuaries on Pakistan's side of the tribal area. Recently Pakistani paramilitary personnel and an Afghan militia exchanged fire on the Mohmand Agency border, when the latter claimed that Pakistani forces had entered their territory.

Later an Afghan government official claimed that Pakistan Army troops deployed in the Mohmand Agency had penetrated 46 kilometers deep into Afghan territory.

Tensions were aflame further when President Hamid Karzai reacted to president Musharraf's remarks regarding the writ of his regime and the ethnic imbalance in the Afghan government. His reaction resulted in an anti-Pakistan demonstration. The Pakistani ambassador, realizing the worsening situation, asked the authorities to provide adequate security to the Pakistani embassy based in Kabul. On July 9, the fear turned into reality when a 500-strong mob, armed with a truckload of stones, sticks and weapons, attacked the embassy. They were in fact part of a protest led by the Afghan Millat Party leader and governor of the Central Bank, Anwar ul Haq, against alleged Pakistani incursions into Afghan territory. The staff at the embassy had to hide in the basement to save themselves. The mob attacked, ransacked and destroyed almost everything they could get hold of, including burning the Pakistani flag. The Pakistani Ambassador, soon after the incident, while talking to the journalists blamed the Afghan government and demanded an apology from Kabul. He stated that the mission would remain closed until the Afghan government compensates, apologizes, and gives concrete guarantees for its security. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, while reacting to the incident said that the host government was obliged under the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations to protect diplomatic missions, property and personnel. Later President Hamid Karzai, in an attempt at damage control, apologized to President Musharraf for the attack on the embassy. He also said, "I have never given any statement against you or Pakistan" and "I was misquoted". He also assured the Pakistani President that his government

would provide full protection and security to the Pakistan embassy and its staff in Kabul and other diplomatic staff in its consulates in other cities as well. Later, during a press conference he said, "I strongly, strongly, strongly condemn this action". "Those who committed this act are not the enemies of Pakistan, they are the enemies of Afghanistan, peace in Afghanistan, and they are enemies of friendship between Afghanistan and Pakistan."

IMPLICATIONS: The incident is most likely to have far-reaching implications not only for Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, but also for the American campaign against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in the region, if the souring of Pakistani-Afghan relations continues. Islamabad in fact chose to react moderately. The Pakistani foreign minister said that incidents like this are unhelpful to the efforts on both governments to have a model relationship, further adding that Pakistan attached great importance to its close relations with Afghanistan. "We support the Bonn process and the Karzai government. Pakistan's desire to maintain friendly relations with Afghanistan remain unimpaired", he declared. He also hoped that the Afghan government would take measures to punish those responsible and provide complete security to the staff of Pakistan embassy in future so that incidents like this would not occur again.

A tragic aspect is that this incident could have been easily prevented. The Kabul government could have done more especially when the Pakistani ambassador, alarmed at the July 6 speech by the Afghan President, notified the Afghan authorities that such a demonstration was expected and that adequate security measures must be taken, which was not done.

These recent developments are basically due to the distrust that exists between Islamabad and the Northern Alliance and the issue of the Durand Line. Pakistan army's operation in the Mohmand Agency was aimed at securing the area and sealing the border so that the so-called cross-border movements could be checked. This is exactly what Kabul has been demanding since the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda began. But now that it is done, those who have been profiting from the illicit cross-border traffic are claiming that Pakistan has intruded into Afghan territory. Islamabad has repeatedly denied the allegation and has said that it fully

respects the Pakistan-Afghan border and its troops have not violated Durand Line at any point. "Pakistan fully respects the Pak-Afghan border and its troops have nowhere violated the Durand Line", Major General Shaukat Sultan Khan said recently. One has to understand that the dominant power in Kabul, the Northern Alliance leadership, is staunchly anti-Pakistan.

CONCLUSIONS: It is high time that all parties involved realized the need to solve the problem. Most importantly, the issue of border demarcation has to be resolved. Afghanistan is a very important country for Pakistan and the people at the helm in Islamabad are fully aware of it. Islamabad has to engage the Northern Alliance leadership and work out a detailed strategy to protect its vital interests in Afghanistan. But Afghanistan also has to do its part, and understand that Pakistan is too important a country for the future development of Afghanistan to have bad relations with. Above all, as noted by many analysts, a great problem is the

Afghan commanders on the Pak-Afghan border who are known to have a stake in souring relations between the two countries and profiting from illicit cross-border traffic. As long as they are not replaced, tensions are unlikely to end. The United States is the only power that has significant influence over both Afghanistan and Pakistan to solve their problems through negotiation.

The reopening of the Pakistan embassy after two weeks and the visit of the Afghan Interior Minister Ali Ahmed Jalai to hold "structured talks" with his Pakistani counterparts on the recent hostility between the two countries was indeed a step in the right direction, but this effort will prove fruitless if the distrust which is there between the two remains. As Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee once remarked: "A country cannot change its neighbor."

AUTHOR'S BIO: Rizwan Zeb is an Islamabad-based Security Analyst and is currently working on a book on Pakistan-Central Asia Relations.

THE OSCE WILL HELP THE LAW ENFORCEMENT BODIES OF KYRGYZSTAN

On the initiative of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Interior and the OSCE, a program to support law enforcement bodies of Kyrgyzstan was worked out. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe is going to allocate 3.6 million euros to reform the law enforcement bodies of Kyrgyzstan. The plan prepared by the Kyrgyz side has been submitted to the OSCE and will be implemented as soon as the parties sign a memorandum.

According to the OSCE representative Richard Monk, Kyrgyz Minister of Internal Affairs Bakirdin Subanbekov a year ago asked the OSCE to consider the possibility of providing financial and technical support to the Kyrgyz law enforcement bodies. According to the Coordinator of this program from the Kyrgyz side Shamshibek Mamyrov, throughout the CIS region this is the only OSCE program meant to help law enforcement bodies. In his opinion, the Aksy event, at which six peaceful demonstrators were shot by militia in Jalal-Abad province last year, had a notable impact on the initiation of this program.

The program prepared by the OSCE is intended for 18 months and consists of 8 projects, which will deal with such issues as equipping the law enforcement bodies with radio wireless, through providing technical support improving the quality of investigation operations and drug trafficking efforts, strengthening the Academy of the MIA of the Kyrgyz Republic. The seventh project of the program, which envisages the strengthening the law enforcement bodies to prevent mass disorders in the country, has evoked concern and criticism in the country, in particular among some Kyrgyz human rights organizations and activists.

According to this controversial project, which is estimated to 900,000 euro, the Kyrgyz militia will be equipped with protection frames, rubber-bullet

guns, tear-gas, electro-shock weapons, batons, hydraulic jets, hard hats, flak jackets, handcuffs, modern audio systems and lights for temporary blinding and demoralization of demonstrators and also with modern buses with bullet-proof windows.

The human rights organizations and activists are concerned that strengthening the capabilities of the Kyrgyz law enforcement bodies to prevent mass disorders will lead to suppression of lawful demonstrations and will strengthen the pressure on the opposition in the country. In an interview to the Deutsche Welle, the Director of "National Development Fund" Sergei Ryspekov says that the very idea of strengthening the abilities of Kyrgyz militia after the Aksy event sounds blasphemous and those who shoot their own people cannot be called "law enforcement bodies". In the opinion of the leader of the non-governmental organization "Civil society against corruption" Tolokan Ismailova, providing the law enforcement bodies with modern equipments in an authoritarian state like Kyrgyzstan will only lead to the reinforcement of repression and persecution of dissent in the country. Therefore, as Ismailova says, this program is directed towards the suppression of civic initiatives in Kyrgyzstan. Another human rights activist, Natalia Ablova, who is the leader of the Kyrgyz-American Bureau on Human Rights, thinks that this project puts considerable restrictions on citizens' rights. And in order to express their discontent and opposition to this program on July 9, the day when the Acting Chairman of the OSCE and the Foreign Minister of Netherlands Jaap de Hoop Scheffer arrived in Kyrgyzstan, the representatives of a number of human rights and other public organizations even organized a protest action in front of the OSCE office in Bishkek.

But the OSCE leadership does not agree with the criticism of some Kyrgyz activists and is trying to dispel apprehensions. The OSCE Project Coordinator in Vienna Andrew Carpenter says that the program is being incorrectly interpreted.

According to him, accent is put made only on one aspect of the program while all 8 projects of the program are interrelated and complementary to each other, and as a result the public is being misinformed about the essence of the OSCE's support.

Meanwhile, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Askar Akaev during his meeting with Jaap de Hoop Scheffer promised that during the realization of the program a certain supervisory body from the NGO representatives will be formed, which will define the criteria of what mass disorder is. In other words, public supervision of the project is being promised.

The Assembly of the People's Representatives of the Jogorku Kenesh (Kyrgyzstan's Parliament) in its recent session declared the work of the law enforcement bodies as unsatisfactory and ineffective. The Aksy event and other events including the recent discreditable armed attack on the regional and city militia departments of the Jalal-Abad province by criminal gang members indicate the capabilities and the state of the Kyrgyz law enforcement bodies. Although certain parts of the OSCE program are being criticized, Kyrgyzstan would unlikely turn its back to outside support and assistance when its law enforcement system has for a long time been out crying for reform.

Gulzina Karim kyzy

CHINA'S WATER POLICIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR XINJIANG AND KAZAKHSTAN

Eric Hagt

China's plans to develop its arid northwestern region continue unabated, and entails the exploitation of water resources which could have a significant impact on Xinjiang and on relations with its Central Asian neighbors, especially Kazakhstan. The region's high water demand stems in large part from increased cotton farming and development of energy resources. However, these development goals may not be environmentally sustainable and could well lead to unrest among the region's ethnic population. Beijing has relied on the diversion of rivers that neighboring countries, especially Kazakhstan, depend on. Poor management of the region's water resources could have a negative long term impact both on the stability of Xinjiang and relations between China and Central Asia.

BACKGROUND: Beijing's White Paper on Xinjiang, released in May of this year, calls for a continuation of the ambitious 1999 strategic campaign to 'Develop the West'. Key implications of that policy include the continued expansion of cotton growing and energy exploitation. Both are vital industries for Xinjiang's development and yet both create a demand for water that is unsustainable in a region that already shows signs of environmental strain. Due to increasing demand, the ground water table level has gone down 60 meters in the past 30 years, a rate that exceeds almost every country. China's northwest also faces the chronic problem of desertification. Since 1994, annual net expansion of desertified land has averaged 10,400 square kilometers, causing an estimated direct loss of \$US7.7 billion to the economy each year.

Beijing has employed several approaches to satisfy this growing thirst for water. In the past two years, the Chinese government has invested U.S. \$5 million in prospecting for groundwater in the region. The effort paid dividends when in February, China discovered a reservoir beneath the Taklamakan desert floor (about the size of Portugal) with a capacity of 36 billion cubic meters. Exploiting this water supply will take time, however, and will only partly alleviate problems. Beijing has also sought to secure water resources by diverting rivers that its neighbors rely heavily upon. China's goals for the region and the assertive water policies they require may not only affect the stability of the province but could also jeopardize relations with its Central Asian neighbors, especially Kazakhstan.

IMPLICATIONS: China's determination to press ahead with its plans remains resolute. In the past two years alone, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has invested 2.1 billion yuan (U.S. \$250 million) in energy development projects in the region. However, developing the energy of the Tarim and Turpan oil fields will bring urbanization and increased population that intensifies the demand for water. In addition, cotton, an extremely water-intensive crop, currently takes up nearly 40% of Xinjiang's arable land, and will increase 13% by next year. Xinjiang's cotton output now plays a vital role in China's textile industry and has been identified as a strategic interest to the country's

economy. Such agricultural goals strain the region's scarce water resources.

Meeting these water demands will in part derive from diverting the Irtysh and Ili Rivers, both of which originate in China and eventually flow into Kazakhstan and Russia. The Chinese leadership hopes the river diversion project will lead to economic development and raise local standards of living and thereby erode support for Uyghur separatism. However, a recent assessment indicates that China's greatest stress from environmental degradation will occur in its north-west region, including Xinjiang. This could trigger ecological crisis if the issues of a rising population and increasing demands for water in the face of shrinking aquifers are not addressed. Irrigation schemes to supply water for industrial and agricultural needs over the long term could result in environmental, developmental and political consequences similar to those in Central Asia. A linkage between environmental degradation in China and the attrition of its political legitimacy may lead to an escalation of tensions between Beijing and ethnic inhabitants of Xinjiang.

China's water policies will also have a direct impact on Kazakhstan's economy and environment. The two main rivers that China proposes to divert, the Irtysh and the Ili, feed important agricultural and industrial regions in central and eastern Kazakhstan. The Irtysh begins in the Chinese Altay mountain range, flows west into Kazakhstan's Lake Zaysan before crossing into Russia, where it runs through the large city of Omsk and eventually joins the Ob River. The Ili flows into Kazakhstan near Almaty and terminates in Lake Balkash. As many as 23 other smaller rivers and tributaries are also being considered for diversion. Large industrial regions such as Karaganda and Pavlodar get most of their water from the Irtysh, which may also be increasingly used to supply Kazakhstan's new capital, Astana, thus placing additional pressure on water supplies in the region.

The planned diversion of up to 10% of the rivers' volume will impede economic growth in the region. Moreover, the shallowing of the rivers and shrinkage of the Balkash and Zaysan Lakes could have environmental repercussions such as salinization and micro-climate change—similar to the problems of the Aral Sea region. In addition, unregulated levels of fertilizers and chemicals are dumped into the rivers

by all parties, leading to high pollution levels. These have broader environmental security implications related to ecological, development, health and migration.

CONCLUSIONS: Although the region's transborder river issues are unlikely to lead to open conflict, the absence of equitable water management policies could have serious implications for the region. First, mismanagement of water and resulting environmental degradation could aggravate Uyghur grievances against Beijing, leading to instability. Second, there is the danger of friction between China and Kazakhstan. Thus far, China has been unwilling to expand water negotiations from bilateral to multilateral discussion (to include Russia) and negotiations have failed to incorporate international law. China has yet to show real willingness to engage in meaningful cooperation or compromise in pursuit of its water demands.

However, a more positive scenario is also possible. Bilateral talks between Kazakhstan and China put the weaker state, Kazakhstan, at a disadvantage. This problem may be best solved by switching to multilateral talks involving Russia, which is directly interested in fate of the Irtysh River, and

Kyrgyzstan, whose glaciers feed several Chinese rivers. Such a multilateral forum is found in the Shanghai Cooperative Organization, which has helped solve land border issues and may also serve to remedy transborder water disputes. Yet, it is noteworthy that despite the border treaties of 1996 and 1997, China seized 150 square miles of Kazakh territory in 2001 for control of a Black Irtysh River watershed.

China's assertive water policy is indicative of a trend in some Asian states, which are keen to ensure their national water supplies, often to the detriment of other states. With the acute scarcity and climbing competitive demands on water resources in the region, water management between states will be determined in the context of geopolitical concerns and domestic policies.

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AIDS WARNING IN KYRGYZSTAN

The Ministry of Health Care, international and non-governmental organizations in Kyrgyzstan has warned that the country is witnessing an unprecedented HIV epidemic. Statistics of the Republican "AIDS" center show that the number of registered carriers of the virus in Kyrgyzstan leaped up to 425, while the number of people contracting AIDS is 13. Ten of these have already died.

The most infected region is Osh, where there are 208 patients. Last year, Osh experienced an outbreak of HIV infection in the region, which grew dozens of times in comparison to the previous year. The capital, Bishkek, hosts 63 HIV victims. Most of the carriers, 304 people, are drug addicts.

However, specialists of the "AIDS" Osh office suppose that the real number of the carriers in Osh region is no less than 2000, and that all of them are injecting drug users. As the chief doctor of the regional center Tugelbay Mamaev informed, they are young and middle aged, and most of them do not have families or are divorced, jobless and former convicts. The general manager of the AIDS center, Boris Shapiro, thinks the true amount of infected throughout the country exceeds 7000. In Kyrgyzstan, there are up to 100,000 drug addicts.

Kyrgyz experts consider HIV and AIDS to be a threat to national security. They note that if the furious pace of the virus infection in the republic is not restrained, Kyrgyzstan may run into a demographic catastrophe in about twenty years.

Samat, 23, found out that he was ill three months ago, after he had passed an AIDS test. The boy is an injection drug user. He never paid attention to the fact that the syringes he used had 'served' someone else, nor did he care about their disinfection. "I

have only five or six years to live. It's really painful to know that. I feel like a convict sentenced to death. But I want to believe that before I die, doctors will find the way to cure AIDS," says Samat, trying to hide his tears.

"The outbreak of the HIV epidemic in southern Kyrgyzstan was caused by the increasing number of drug addicts," according to the deputy director of the "AIDS" center, Aynagul Osmonova. "As is well-known, the Osh region is located on the drug traffic route from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe. About ten percent of narcotics that are transited stay in Osh, where it is quite accessible and cheap," she says. Getting drugs in Osh city is not a problem. It is easy to buy dose of heroin for 20-25 soms (\$0,6 - 0,7) everywhere. As the local police department informs, policemen have discovered over 30 drug "dens" around the city.

Local experts predict a spread of the HIV epidemic from the south of the country to Bishkek, and then to all regions of the Kyrgyzstan, since the virus usually penetrates from drug users into the general population.

The Osh administration is implementing the state program of AIDS prevention in order to restrain the epidemic. It opened six aid posts around the region, where drug addicts can change used syringes to new ones free of charge. Everywhere in the south, there are medical centers providing free consultations and all kinds of contraceptives. Local TV shows a series of programs on the danger of HIV and AIDS. Nevertheless, as the deputy director of the "AIDS" center Aynagul Osmonova asserts, state structures experience serious financial

problems in dealing with the problem. The situation, however, could have been even worse if the preventive measures were not supported by NGOs and international organizations such as UNFPA, UNDP, USAID, Population Services International, the Soros Foundation in Kyrgyzstan, and others. "Lately, we observe that an increasing number of cases of HIV infection tend to come from sexual contacts," says Osmonova. In Osh, experts note a wave of prostitution. Every third woman addicted to drugs provides sexual services, periodically or regularly, to buy new doses. Many of them make their living this way. According to current assessments, 90 percent of commercial sexual contacts do not use contraceptives.

While AIDS prevention programs on the state and international levels exist, responsible officials complain of a lack of money and the insufficiency of educational work. Specialists and volunteers, when giving lectures in the southern districts of the country, have to deal with the specific mentality formed by religious traditions and superstitions. They are unable to talk openly with the population since southerners tend to shun "shameful" subjects.

The Osh region needs more attention of the government and the whole society. Preventive measures, education, publicity, and qualified medical services require significant assignments, and the support of international organizations. Otherwise, the possible consequences of the mortal epidemic may come at a much higher price for Kyrgyzstan.

Aziz Soltobaev

RADICAL ISLAMIZATION IN XINJIANG – LESSONS FROM CHECHNYA?

Matthew Oresman and Daniel Steingart

Both China and Russia have separatist movements in territories that are majority Muslim, China's Xinjiang and Russia's Chechnya. Chechnya has been through two brutal wars and suffered numerous acts of terrorism. The character of the Uyghur resistance in Xinjiang has become more violent since 1997, and the rise of militant radicalism in Chechnya offers the Chinese government an important lesson about its policies in Xinjiang.

BACKGROUND: Islam came to Chechnya only 300 years ago, as the Russian Empire was expanding south in the Caucasus Mountains, and spread quickly through Chechnya and Ingushetia. It was soon capitalized upon as a vehicle of mobilization against Russian rule. The Islam that took hold in Chechnya was primarily Sufi, a spiritual Islam that blended well with the Chechens' own native beliefs and not the austere Wahhabism primarily associated with Saudi Arabia and radical Islamist movements. The modern separatist movement that emerged from the ashes of the Soviet Union was not born of religious fervor, but instead reflected national aspirations of territorial separation that had existed since the first Russian invasion. But as happened two hundred years earlier, when the Russian stranglehold on Chechnya tightened, Chechen leaders and individual fighters seized upon Islam as a wellspring from which to draw the strength to fight.

Islam in Xinjiang has developed along similar lines, though a major influx of radical Islam has not yet encroached on the mainstream Uyghur population. The Uyghurs are predominately Sufi and rarely behave like conservative Muslims. Still, Islam has developed as a unifying societal bond that plays a major role in the life of Uyghurs. Historically, it has been one of the few avenues for Uyghurs to gather and discuss political and governance issues, underscoring its threat to Chinese control. Ethnic identity, however, remains the most prominent cohesive force and main driver of the Uyghur resistance movement. This movement is not an organized front, but composed of small, predominantly non-violent groups with divergent interests and no common plan for action. The list of Uyghur grievances against the Chinese government is extensive, including complaints about Han migration, environmental and agricultural degradation, a heavily biased job market, lack of employment opportunities, cultural assimilation, and the repression of Islam. This last factor could cause the radicalization of the Uyghur population. Since the early 1990s, almost every popular nationalistic uprising against Chinese rule in Xinjiang has begun as a religious protest. These clashes have left hundreds of Uyghurs dead, thousands injured and imprisoned, and a source of continued anger against Han authorities.

Uyghurs are generally not interested in Wahhabism, and many are afraid of the transformative force it can bring to their communities. However, as the Chinese continue their

brutally effective repression of the development of politically active Uyghur civil society, more and more Uyghurs are turning to radical Islam as a source of support. This explains the presence of between three and seven hundred Uyghurs in Afghanistan prior to September 11, 2001. Additionally, the quality of the Uyghur resistance has become increasingly violent in the last several years, beginning with bus bombing in Urumqi (1997) and Beijing (1999), and moving away from large-scale protests to directed attacks and assassination. China's repression, while efficient at undermining the organizing ability of the community, has driven many Uyghurs to seek outside support of a nature that could drastically reshape the current low-level resistance into a more violent and radical insurgency.

IMPLICATIONS: Above all, Beijing is interested in maintaining order in Xinjiang and preventing any large-scale uprising or revolution. Particularly worrying for the Chinese government would be a "Palestinization" of the resistance, which has already happened in Chechnya, as illustrated by four separate suicide attacks against Russian targets by Chechen *women* only in June and July 2003. Russia claims that the introduction of the suicide bomber—a phenomena that had not previously been popular in Chechnya—is the result of foreign, primarily Arab influence. However, blaming this facet of the Chechen resistance on Arab influence purports to absolve Russia of any responsibility for the radicalization of some segments within Chechen society. Moscow has further alienated the Chechens by refusing to negotiate with Aslan Maskhadov, the legitimate Chechen leader elected in OSCE-approved elections, and through the barbarous actions of the Russian military. The brutal military presence in Chechnya with widespread rape, torture, and indiscriminate killings during so-called "mop-up" operations have ravaged parts of the Chechen countryside. Furthermore, the wars have widowed thousands of Chechen women, providing each one of them with a personal reason for revenge. From the Chechen perspective, one could argue that Russia has "terrorized" Chechnya.

The presence of Arab volunteer fighters in Chechnya has been well documented and some of the most storied rebel field commanders are of Middle Eastern origin, indicating that at some point parts of the Chechen movement for independence took up the green banner of Islam. This has gradually shifted the movement from one of national independence to one with national *and* religious overtones.

By framing the Chechen struggle in terms of religion, the rebel Chechen movement was able to attract and use the help of Muslims abroad, effectively using radical Islam as a vehicle for nationalist separatism.

CONCLUSIONS: The Chechen example offers a clear warning for the Chinese government as more evidence of established ties between Central Asian radical groups, such as the IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir, and Uyghur resistance groups operating both in Central Asia and Xinjiang becomes apparent. Moreover, Xinjiang is the second most HIV/AIDS infected province in China with an infection rate of nearly 85% for injection drug users in some locales. With a healthcare system utterly failing to care for them and a deep hatred of Chinese domination, this infected population could become a potent force of suicide bombers. Beijing's total control of Xinjiang may very well be able to suppress the interaction of Uyghur groups and outside Islamic radicals, as well as the rise of suicide bombers, but this threat is very real and is growing as the Chinese governments continues to prosecute its own "war on terrorism" against non-violent political activists and fractures Uyghur civil society into

increasing despondent and divided factions – just as Moscow did in Chechnya.

While there are many similarities between the history of the Chechen conflict and the development of Chinese controlled Xinjiang, they are not mirror images. Xinjiang has not yet burst into the open conflict characterizing Chechnya, nor are the most visible elements of Uyghur resistance predominantly religious in nature. If China continues its present policies, though, what has been a very low-level conflict with the Uyghurs – one that has resulted in fewer than 200 Han deaths in over a decade – could become drastically more violent. China's continued repression of Islam could galvanize the Uyghur population against Beijing and, when combined with militant Islamist influences from abroad, lead to the radicalization of the resistance in Xinjiang.

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RECORD CURRENCY OUTFLOWS IN AZERBAIJAN: FINANCIAL BOOM OR INDICATION OF INSTABILITY?

Record currency sales in the BEST (Bourse E-system of trades) were registered at the Baku Interbank Currency Exchange (BBVB) on 24 July. The total operation on the USD/AZM T+0 tools was \$22.965 million at an exchange rate of 4.917 AZM per 1 USD. The average daily turnover of USD operations at BBVB has reached \$3.8 million since the beginning of July. The gross value of the exchange trades exceeded \$69 million by 24 July – in an index that only traded \$87 million between January and June. The sale volume was so impressive that it caused agitation among the population. Public opinion seemed to interpret it as a proof of that economic stability in the country is dependent on the health condition of the President. Experts at the National Bank of Azerbaijan (NBA), for their part, explain this sharp increase of currency trade with the fact that NBA operations usually held at the open Interbank currency market have been completely altered since 1 July. Besides that, the total demand for foreign currency has risen in July. However, the statement of NBA experts does not make sense, as the BEST system was launched in July of 2002 and in spite of that, average dollar sale in Azerbaijan per day was only 2-3 million dollars. If during the last 6 months the total sale of US dollars was \$87 million, then for the twenty-five first days of July, it amounted to \$69 million.

Some economists suppose that an objective reason for the large trade could be an increase of salaries by 50%, and accordingly attempts by the NBA to

accumulate national currency supplies for the payment of salaries. Salary increase, in its turn, resulted in rise of demand. However, NBA has the national currency reserves, making it dubious it would follow such a strategy. Secondly, the buyers' activity in the commodity market has not seen an increase that would justify the sale of such large amounts of foreign currency in matters of days or even hours.

There is a large amount of cash in circulation, which also complicates control over transfers, since the Baku Interbank Currency Exchange is not the only place where currency exchange occurs. There is also a large currency exchange between the National Bank of Azerbaijan (NBA) and commercial banks.

The final conclusion of most specialists is that the main reason of the large amount of dollar trade was the health condition of Heydar Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan. Heydar Aliyev was taken to Gulhane military hospital in Ankara, Turkey, on July 8. He was treated for heart insufficiency and edema of legs. On July 22, Aliyev was moved from general ward to intensive therapy. Information regarding the deterioration of his health condition became available on July 23, and the record sales in the Baku Interbank Currency Exchange were recorded the very next day, July 24.

Right after the news on the record currency sales reached the public, the opposition stated that state officials are exchanging national currency into dollars for the further wiring of funds to overseas

banks. Afterwards, people started buying dollars and euros spontaneously, worrying of inflation. The situation was cooled down after the return of Ilham Aliyev, the President's son, who was in Turkey visiting his father, and after an urgent transfer of foreign currency to the market.

This development indicates that Azerbaijani officials are unable to perform in extraordinary situations, including the absence of the President or his son in the country. Moreover, the financial situation in Azerbaijan is not so stable that the government can allow it to get out of hand. The external debt of Azerbaijan, comparing with the first quarter of this year, increased from \$1.385 billion to \$1.508 billion. The debt increased by 30%-35%, because the fluctuations in the values of dollars and euros in the international market. Besides that, the government has gotten new credits from IMF and World Bank for the prevention of poverty and economic development and for the Institution Building Technical Assistance.

This episode indicates a clear risk that the slightest political crisis will destabilize the economy and lead to the inflation of the national currency, the manat. In this case, Azerbaijan would be under pressure to service debts and prevent inflation simultaneously. This would leave the government with few options but to use the resources of the Oil Fund, which will aggravate relations with the IMF and other financial institutions.

Elshad Nuriyev

NEWS BITES

AZERBAIJANI OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON U.S. CONCERNS ABOUT APPROACHING ELECTION

17 July

Novruz Mammadov, the head of the foreign relations department of the Azerbaijani presidential staff, said on 17 July that a recent U.S. State Department statement expressing concern over the upcoming presidential election is "normal" and merely reflects an interest in Azerbaijani affairs. The U.S. State Department noted that although it does not hold "a position or support any particular candidate," it is concerned that the election be "conducted in accordance with the recently adopted unified election code, Azerbaijan's constitution, and with international standards," including "registering all qualified candidates, permitting public debate, providing equal access to the media, and ensuring that the balloting is free and fair." Mammadov added that the election will be free and fair, and pledged the government's commitment to meeting international electoral standards. (ANS)

CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION OFFICIALLY CERTIFIES AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT'S CANDIDACY

18 July

Azerbaijan's Central Election Commission met on 18 July and formally certified the candidacy of President Heidar Aliyev for re-election in the October presidential election. Commission officials dismissed 1,256 of the nearly 52,000 signed petitions in support of the candidacy before registering the incumbent president as the candidate of the "Yeni Azerbaijan" Party. (ANS)

PROMINENT INGUSH JOURNALIST KILLED IN MOSCOW

19 July

An unknown person killed Ingush journalist Alikhan Guliev on 18 July near his home in Moscow, Russian media reported. Guliev, who worked for a regional television station in Ingushetia and as a stringer for TV-Tsentr and "Kommersant-Daily," was well known for his analytical reports about Chechnya and Ingushetia. Guliev had also publicized critical materials about former Ingush Interior Minister Khamsat Gutseriev. In response to an appeal from Guliev, the Supreme Court of Ingushetia last year annulled the registration of Gutseriev as a candidate for republican president for violating campaign rules. Investigators are looking into possible political, personal, and economic motives for Guliev's killing. (gazeta.ru)

FORMER PRESIDENT REFUSED REGISTRATION FOR AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

21 July

By a vote of 10 against and five in favor, the Central Election Commission (CEC) rejected on 21 July former President Ayaz Mutalibov's application to register as a candidate in the 15

October presidential ballot. Commission Secretary Inqilab Nasirov said that Mutalibov's supporting documentation contained errors and that Mutalibov is registered as resident in Russia. Mutalibov was constrained to resign as president in March 1992 and after an abortive comeback attempt two months later he fled to Russia, where he has lived ever since. Also on 21 July, the CEC postponed a discussion of whether rejected would-be presidential candidates are legally entitled to submit a second registration application. (Interfax)

ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTER WEIGHS IN ON POSSIBLE OPENING OF BORDER WITH TURKEY

21 July

Vardan Oskanian stated on 19 July that recent speculation over possible negative economic effects from opening the Armenian-Turkish border is incorrect, Golos Armenii reported. "In principle, I do not suppose that the possible lifting of the blockade from the Armenian-Turkish border will have any negative consequences for our country's economy," Oskanian said. "I am absolutely sure the opening of the border is beneficial not only to the two countries, but also to the region as a whole." The comments follow recent statements by deputy parliament speaker Vahan Hovannisian warning that the opening of border trade will inflict serious damage on the Armenian economy. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZSTAN FORMALLY PROTESTS BORDER SHOOTING; UZBEKISTAN BLAMES

KYRGYZ

21 July

The Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry formally protested to Uzbekistan about the shooting of a Kyrgyz citizen by an Uzbek border guard on 16 July. On 19 July, the Uzbek Foreign Ministry announced that Kyrgyzstan was responsible for the incident. According to the Uzbek version of the incident, some 40 Kyrgyz citizens attempted to cross the border illegally and threw stones and bottles containing flammable substances at Uzbek border guards who tried to stop them. The Uzbek side asserts that the border guards only fired into the air, and a number of the guards were injured by the aggressive actions of the Kyrgyz. According to the Kyrgyz version, four young men crossed the border to talk to Uzbek border guards about building a bridge across the stream that forms the border, a quarrel broke out, and one Kyrgyz citizen, Adil Urkinbaev, was killed. (RFE/RL)

AMBASSADORS DISCUSS REPATRIATION OF GEORGIANS TO ABKHAZIA

22 JULY

Meeting in Geneva on 21-22 July, the members of the Friends of the UN Secretary-General for Georgia group of countries -- the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Russia -- agreed to recommend that the UN Security Council recruit 20 international specialists to train local police personnel

in Abkhazia to protect Georgian displaced persons who return to the homes they abandoned during the 1992-93 war, Caucasus Press reported. Georgian and Abkhaz government delegations participated in the talks for the first time. (Caucasus Press)

TBILISI ASKS MOSCOW TO SEVER TIES WITH ABKHAZIA

22 July

Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze said on Monday that he had sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin expressing Tbilisi's categorical rejection of double standards applied by Russian authorities and their lack of respect for the decision of the heads of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries of 1996, forbidding any unilateral economic and political contacts with Abkhazian separatists without coordination with Georgian leadership. Moscow has not yet reacted to this statement. But on the same day, on July 21, the Russian Defense Ministry's press service denied reports about possible supplies of S-300 missile system to Abkhazia, the Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper says. The Ministry of Defense does not send its forces to the territory of other countries, and Abkhazia is the territory of another country. I officially state that the General Staff of the Russian armed forces is not developing plans to place S-300 missile systems in Abkhazia, said Mr. Deryabin, head of the Defense Ministry's Press Service. This coincided with the beginning of a three-day official visit to Georgia by the State Duma's delegation, headed by Deputy Speaker Vladimir Lukin. Mr. Lukin said the Abkhazian problem was one of the most urgent issues scheduled for discussion at the talks, especially in view of the recent decisions by Georgia's Security Council and Parliament to appeal to the United Nations to coerce the breakaway autonomy to peace. This decision does not quite fit the spirit of the two presidents agreements reached at talks in Sochi, to Mr. Lukin. That is why, he said, it was desirable to clear up a number of issues to find out whether Georgia added new alerting elements to its position. The State Duma's delegation will meet with President Shevardnadze, Parliament Speaker Nino Burdzhnandze and other top Georgian officials. According to the newspaper, Zviad Mukbaniani, Chairman of the Georgian Parliament's External Relations Committee, believes that the conversation will be difficult. (RBC)

CHECHEN PRESIDENT SEEKS INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CONCEPT OF 'CONDITIONAL INDEPENDENCE'

22 July

In a 21 July statement posted on chechenpress.com, Aslan Maskhadov argued that in the light of the brutality inflicted on Chechens by Russian troops over the past two years and Russia's categorical rejection of his repeated offers of peace talks, only the involvement of the international community can bring about an end to the ongoing fighting. Maskhadov explained that independence for Chechnya is not an end in itself, but the only way of ending the past four centuries' standoff with Russia and of guaranteeing Chechnya's security. He said that the Chechen resistance is strong enough to win independence militarily if Russia continues to reject peace talks. Maskhadov said that Russian and European fears that an independent Chechnya would become a hotbed of Islamic terrorism are unfounded. He

argued that the proposal drafted at his behest by Foreign Minister Ilyas Akhmadov for ending the war by granting Chechnya "conditional independence" under international jurisdiction would guarantee stable democratic development in Chechnya and, by extension, stabilize the entire North Caucasus. (RFE/RL)

RUSSIAN AND OTHER CASPIAN SEA STATES MEET ON DELINEATION ROW.

22 July

Russia and the other four states that border the oil-rich Caspian Sea began three days of talks in Moscow on Tuesday on their long-standing dispute over how to divide it up. "There are still differences on a number of key problems regarding the status of the Caspian," Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said at the opening of the 10th meeting of a working group attended by deputy foreign ministers. Ivanov proposed holding at the end of this year or early next year a meeting of foreign ministers of the Caspian states to "stimulate the process of negotiation" on the sea's status. Talks on dividing the Caspian have proceeded slowly since the Soviet Union's break-up turned the four northern countries - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan - into separate entities in 1991. Agreement is seen as essential to attracting Western investment in the Caspian, whose oil reserves represent the world's largest oil discovery in at least a decade. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia agreed in May on how to divide the northern and central parts of the resource-rich sea among themselves, a move strongly criticized by their southern neighbours Iran and Turkmenistan. The three states calculated their shares in proportion to the length of the five Caspian countries' coastlines, giving Azerbaijan 18 percent, Russia 19 percent and Kazakhstan 27 percent. Iran and Turkmenistan have long been opposed to the median-line division of the sea, instead arguing that each country get an equal 20 percent share. Iran seems to have shifted its position on the issue recently, saying it was not entirely opposed to the median-line division. (AFP)

UZBEKISTAN CONDUCTS MILITARY EXERCISES ON TAJIK AND AFGHAN BORDERS

22 July

Uzbekistan is conducting major military exercises near its borders with Tajikistan and Afghanistan, said the head of the Uzbek Defense Ministry's press service, Lieutenant Colonel Kamil Djabarov. The exercises reportedly involve several thousand soldiers, including regular army units, Interior Ministry troops, and border guards. The mountainous location was selected because it was the site of attempts by Muslim militants to penetrate into Uzbek territory in 2001, according to Djabarov. He said that the exercises are intended to provide practice in coordinating the command of the various security agencies. The special services of the Defense and Interior ministries have been assigned to carry out raids in the mountains in conditions of extreme heat and without external support. The exercises are also intended to generate updates of the maps of the mountains, since the old maps predate the collapse of the USSR. (Deutsche Welle)

NUMBER OF TAJIK MIGRANT WORKERS DYING IN RUSSIA REPORTED TO BE RISING

22 July

Tajik prosecutor Kurbonali Mukhabatov said on 21 July that the number of Tajik migrant workers who die in Russia is rising. In 2002, Mukhabatov said, Russian authorities returned to Tajikistan 328 bodies of migrant workers. Seventy-eight of them had been killed, 118 died of illnesses, and the cause of death was unknown in 125 cases. In the first half of this year, 211 bodies of Tajik migrant workers have been returned to their homeland. According to information from the Society of Tajiks in Moscow, more than 40,000 Tajik citizens are in prison in Russia, hundreds of whom die there each year. In recent weeks, Russian media have been giving considerable attention to the plight of Tajik migrants in Russia, who are often deceived by labor-placement officials and employers, forced to live in substandard conditions, and are paid little, if at all. (centran.ru)

RUSSIA ALLOWS GEORGIA TO INSPECT ITS MILITARY BASE**23 July**

Russia has no objection to an inspection of its Gudauta military base in Georgia, said Alexander Yakovenko, the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Speaking about the Georgian Parliament's appeal to Russia to agree to the inspection of the military base, he said: (It is difficult to explain the motives of this appeal. Perhaps, Georgian parliamentarians have not been properly informed on the issue. Of course, we don't think that this move is aimed at putting additional pressure on bilateral relations. According to Mr. Yakovenko, there is no problem with the military base. Under the Russian-Georgian declaration of 17 November 1999 and the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), Russia withdrew its weapons and military equipment from Georgia in 2001, and dismantled its Gudauta military base. In July 2001, Russia officially informed all CFE countries about it. Thus, the Gudauta base, where some equipment is used to help the CIS collective forces support peace in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, was closed for inspections within the framework of the treaty. At the same time, Russia did not object to holding an inspection according to Section VIII of the Protocol on Inspections to the CFE Treaty, Mr. Yakovenko stressed. Meanwhile, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin expressing Tbilisi's (categorical rejection of double standards applied by Russian authorities and their lack of respect for the decision of the heads of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries of 1996, forbidding any unilateral economic and political contacts with Abkhazian separatists without coordination with Georgian leadership. Moscow has not yet reacted to this statement. (RBC)

AZERI FOREIGN MINISTER RULES OUT TALKS WITH ARMENIAN LEADER IN BAKU**23 July**

Armenia will be get satisfactory response. Foreign inister says Kocharyan's hands in blood" "Official Baku has appealed to the United Nations Organization over the recent cease-fire violations by Armenia," Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Vilayat Quliyev has said. The minister said that the Azerbaijani permanent representative to the UN had distributed a document on the truce violation by the Armenian troops. "We are now awaiting their reaction," Quliyev said and added that Armenia would be responded in kind. He also commented on Armenian

President Robert Kocharyan's statement in France. The minister said that Kocharyan's hands were in blood and that he played a role in murdering Azerbaijanis: "Therefore, a visit by the current Armenian leadership to Baku is out of the question." Let us recall that Kocharyan has given a hint that the presidents of France, Armenia and Azerbaijan may meet in Baku. (Yeni Musavat)

EU URGES KAZAKHSTAN TO OBSERVE HUMAN RIGHTS**23 July**

The EU has urged the Kazakhstani government to improve the observance of human rights, democracies and law in the country, and proposed to abolish the death penalty, the Kazakhstani Deputy Prime Minister reported. This announcement followed a meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council. The EU has made a list of requirements that should be met by Kazakhstan if it seeks to chair the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The list touches upon election legislation, freedom of press, freedom of political and non-government organizations as well as the independence of the judicial power. (RBC)

EU SATISFIED WITH KYRGYZ PROGRESS ON DEMOCRATIZATION**23 July**

The European Union Commission for Cooperation Between Kyrgyzstan and the EU met on 22 July to hear a Kyrgyz report on the progress of democratization. The 1999 EU-Kyrgyz cooperation agreement placed particular emphasis on democratization, human rights, and freedom of expression. A special group set up by the EU reported to the commission on improvements in the situation of nongovernmental and public organizations in Kyrgyzstan. At the end of the meeting, an EU representative told journalists that the commission is satisfied with Kyrgyzstan's human rights record, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported. The session also discussed press reports that the opening of a planned Russian air base in northern Kyrgyzstan is being held up by U.S. opposition. The EU is also interested in developing trade relations with Kyrgyzstan, particularly in the area of natural-resources processing. In a concluding statement, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fighting international terrorism and drug trafficking. (RFE/RL)

INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EXERCISES END IN KAZAKHSTAN**24 July**

Military exercises involving Kazakh, British, and U.S. troops ended in Almaty Oblast on 24 July, khabar.kz reported the same day. The exercises, known as "Steppe Eagle 2003," began on 17 July. Five hundred Kazakh airborne troops and the Kazakh peacekeeping battalion Kazbat were joined by U.S. Special Forces and Scots Guards to practice repelling an incursion into Kazakh territory by armed groups. Kazakh First Deputy Defense Minister Bulat Darbekov said that such international exercises are standard practice in coalitions. In August, Kazakhstan is scheduled to host large-scale exercises of troops from Shanghai Cooperation Organization member states. Assessing "Steppe Eagle 2003," a British warrant officer noted

that Kazakh servicemen will be serving in Iraq along with British forces, so it was very important for the Kazakhs to have a chance to learn how to work with their future partners. (khabar.kz)

SEX-EDUCATION BOOK WITHDRAWN FROM KYRGYZ SCHOOLS; AUTHOR SUED

24 July

The sex-education textbook that has been in use in Kyrgyz schools for several years has been withdrawn and its author is being sued in a Bishkek court by a group called the Public Committee for Defense of the Honor and Dignity of the Kyrgyz People. The suit was filed on 22 July against author Boris Shapiro, head of the national AIDS center and president of the Jewish Culture Society; two of his co-authors, Gulnara Kurmanova and Larisa Bashmakova; and the publishing house that produced the book. According to the plaintiff, who is demanding "compensation" of \$1 million, the book violates the mentality, traditions, and customs of the Kyrgyz people. Education Minister Ishenkul Boldzhurowa had already ordered that the book be withdrawn, supposedly because of numerous complaints from parents, though students who used the book said they found it very helpful because it dealt with issues that they felt unable to bring up with their parents, and that their parents were too shy to discuss with them. (akipress.org)

GASPROM TO BRANCH OUT IN ASHGABAD AND SUPPORT RUSSIAN CULTURE IN TURKMENISTAN

25 July

The Russian Gasprom will start its permanent office in Turkmenistan in the nearest future. The Gasprom chairman Alexei Miller announced it after the meeting with Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov. According to him the issues of purely technical nature are being settled at present time. As the correspondent of Turkmenistan.ru reports from Ashgabat there were discussed an Agreement on cooperation in the gas field between Russia and Turkmenistan and also undertaking priority steps to secure supply of the Turkmen gas to Russia during the meeting. In particular, the issues of implementation of the gas purchase contract for 2004 and agreeing on the mix of counter-deliveries of processing equipment and services as a payment for gas were considered. Replying to a question if Russia supports its compatriots in Turkmenistan, Alexei Miller stated that Gasprom intended to consider in the frame of its sponsorship and charitable activity budget for 2004 allocation of money to support Russian culture in Turkmenistan. We provide support to Russian culture in the states we work in and Russian people live in, and we are ready to provide assistance in this direction, Miller said. (Turkmenistan.ru)

CASPIAN STATES TO INK OFFSHORE ENVIRONMENT ACCORD IN NOVEMBER

25 July

The five countries surrounding the Caspian Sea plan to sign an offshore environment accord in November at a meeting in Tehran, Iran's deputy minister of foreign affairs Mehdi Safari said Thursday. Safari was speaking at the close of the latest round of negotiations of a new convention for the Caspian Sea attended by deputy ministers from Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran. The environmental

agreement will form part of the general convention which will also cover, offshore boundaries, resource management, fishing, shipping and security in the Caspian Sea. The legal status of the Caspian Sea has been uncertain since 1991 when the Soviet Union fell apart and a series of new, independent republics sprung up on the coast of the oil-rich area. Until then the Caspian was owned and managed by just two countries, the USSR and Iran. In the absence of a general consensus on how to divide up the Caspian, individual states have been signing bilateral and trilateral boundary agreements using median lines to create sovereign sectors offshore Russia, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. (Platts CommodityNews)

KYRGYZ OPPOSITION OFFICIAL DENIES EMBEZZLEMENT ALLEGATIONS

25 July

Emil Aliev, senior leader of the opposition Ar-Namys Party while party Chairman Feliks Kulov remains in prison, told journalists on 24 July that the accusations made against him the previous day by presidential administrator Bolot Djanuzakov were false, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported the same day. Djanuzakov, who heads the department of defense and security in the office of President Askar Akaev, told journalists that Aliev had embezzled \$80,000 from farmers in Batken Oblast. Djanuzakov used Aliev to illustrate his point that a wide range of political figures had been able to take part in a government-organized roundtable on 19 July. Aliev told the journalists that he had been involved in a case in Tajikistan in 1997 but had been exonerated by the court while the real culprits were punished. He added that Djanuzakov had apparently been given incomplete information. (RFE/RL)

OSCE MINORITIES OFFICIAL INVESTIGATES ETHNIC RELATIONS IN TAJIKISTAN

25 July

During a visit to Tajikistan on 22-24 July, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekeus met with senior government officials including President Imomali Rakhmonov, Tajik parliament upper house Chairman Makhmadsaid Ubaidulloev, and Education Minister Safarali Radzhabov, as well as with representatives of the country's national minorities and nongovernmental organizations, to assess the state of interethnic relations in the country. In accord with his office's mandate, Ekeus focused particularly on the availability of education for minorities, the use of minority languages, and the opportunities for non-Tajiks to participate in the country's political life. Rakhmonov sought to convince Ekeus that Tajikistan has made great progress in integrating ethnic minorities. Ekeus was quoted as saying he is pleased with Tajikistan's willingness to implement further reforms to ensure interethnic harmony. The reports indicated that the Tajik side is particularly interested in OSCE support for open and secure borders. (Asia Plus-Blitz)

DOCUMENTS ON COMMON ECONOMIC SPACE TO BE AVAILABLE BY SEPTEMBER

28 July

Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Khristenko said that experts are expected to finish drafting all documents on the establishment of a common economic space in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan

and Ukraine by the CIS summit in September. "There are still a lot of different opinions, approaches and disagreement. But everyone today has a similar vision of the structure of this single economic space," Khristenko said at a meeting with President Vladimir Putin on Friday. The deputy prime minister noted that experts "have agreed that integration within the single economic space will proceed at various levels and its pace will differ [for the four countries]. This will make it possible to avoid any inconsistencies with certain elements in the four nations' internal policy," he added. Khristenko said that the main goal of the single economic space, with which all its member nations agree, is "to ensure the free movement of goods, services, the workforce and capital." He noted that these processes will "follow a single procedure and be coordinated by a single national body." He added that "we have no intention of creating a stillborn non-national body before the legal framework needed for its functioning is available." Khristenko said that "it is necessary to sign about 50 treaties and agreements in order to implement certain decisions." "We are already negotiating the wording of the agreements and legislation," he added. (Interfax)

MORE CANDIDATES PLAN TO RUN FOR CHECHEN PRESIDENCY

28 July

Hussein Dzhabrailov, deputy director of Moscow's Rossiya Hotel, told ITAR-TASS on 25 July he will "soon" officially inform the Chechen Central Election Commission of his intention to contest the 5 October presidential ballot. He argued that the standoff between Chechnya and the federal center should be resolved exclusively by political means, through the consolidation of Chechen society. Four other prospective candidates have announced their own presidential bids: Said-Khamzat Gairbekov, retired officer Zaindi Mavlatov, Moscow-based businessman Malik Saidullaev, and Grozny university professor Avkhad Khachukaev. Presidential aide Yastrzhembskii said on 25 July the Kremlin "does not and cannot" support any specific candidate in the ballot. Unified Russia party Chairman and Interior Minister Gryzlov said the previous day that his party will support administration head Kadyrov's presidential bid, according to Interfax, but stopped short of saying the party will nominate Kadyrov. Speaking in Moscow on 25 July, President Maskhadov's representative in the Russian Federation, Salambek Maigov, said Maskhadov's leadership will not nominate a presidential candidate. Maigov said new elections should not be held until after a peace has been negotiated and the situation in Chechnya has returned to normal. (RFE/RL)

AZERBAIJANI JOURNALISTS TEMPORARILY DETAINED

28 July

Police in Baku detained the editors of several leading newspapers, news agencies, and journalism organizations on 26 July in what Press Club Chairman Aflatun Amashev termed "an act of psychological terrorism," and then released them 90 minutes later, Turan and Interfax reported. Police cited no reason for the detentions, in which the journalists' cars were flagged down and they were reportedly brutally manhandled. Meeting later the same day, the Editors' Council decided to request a formal meeting with Interior Minister Ramil Usubov and Prosecutor-General Zakir Garalov to discuss the incident.

Also on 26 July, Garalov told journalists the detained journalists have only themselves to blame. He said he supports a demand by the Justice Ministry that journalists refrain from printing what he termed "defamatory" articles about President Heidar Aliev at the behest of unnamed pro-Armenian international organizations in an attempt to demonstrate that the media in Azerbaijan are subjected to pressure. (Turan)

TAJIK EX-INTERIOR MINISTER MAY BE CHARGED WITH MURDER

28 July

Former Tajik Interior Minister Yakub Salimov may be charged with organizing several murders, an Interior Ministry source told Interfax on Saturday. Salimov is suspected of involvement in killing top officials and in an abduction in August 1997 in Uzbekistan. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) detained Salimov on June 30. The Prosecutor General's Office issued a pertinent instruction in line with a Tajik request made in 1997. The suspect is being held in the Lefortovo remand facility. Tajik law enforcement agencies launched a criminal case against Salimov under several articles of the Criminal Code, including attempted state coup and hostage-taking. During the 1992-1993 civil war, Salimov was in charge of a Popular Front unit. The Supreme Council appointed him interior minister in December 1993. Salimov was named ambassador to Turkey in 1995 and served there for over a year. Until 1997, Salimov headed the Customs Committee. Together with other Tajik officers, Salimov attempted a rebellion and fled after the coup failed. (Interfax)

US 'PREPARING AFGHAN AID'

29 July

US officials have confirmed reports that they are preparing an aid package for Afghanistan worth about \$1bn. The funds are reported to be for reconstruction projects, such as building roads and schools, police training and the development of the army. Foreign governments promised Afghanistan aid worth some \$4.5bn at a donors conference in Germany in December, 2001. But correspondents say that not much of that money has been channelled into reconstruction work. US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the figure of \$1bn in a recent Washington Post report was "more or less right". "We've provided a lot of support to Afghanistan, we're looking at programmes that can help accelerate the delivery of benefits from that support and expand the support that we give to Afghanistan to try to build on our successes there," Mr Boucher told journalists on Monday. According to the Washington Post, the US is hoping the money will be spent on projects that can be completed before elections scheduled in Afghanistan in October 2004. Last month, Afghan President Hamid Karzai renewed a plea for an additional \$15-20bn for reconstruction in Afghanistan. He said the money was necessary to help the country build its economy and begin generating its own revenues, as well as to fight the threat posed by former Taleban members. (BBC)

THIEVES MAKE OFF WITH MILLIONS FROM IRAQ'S MOSCOW EMBASSY

29 July

Three unidentified people broke into the Iraqi Embassy compound in Moscow in the early morning of 29 July and stole nearly \$3 million and 100,000 euros (\$115,000) in cash. The intruders reportedly forced an embassy guard to open a safe containing the money. The embassy declined to comment on the incident, except to confirm that police are conducting an investigation. The Iraqi Embassy's activities have been virtually frozen since former Ambassador Abbas Halaf and his senior staff were recalled to Baghdad for consultations in June. Interfax reported on 28 July that Halaf will retire from diplomatic service. An embassy spokesman told newsru.com that new instructions from Baghdad are expected within the next few months. (RIA-Novosti)

RUSSIA, ABKHAZIA RESUME SEA COMMUNICATION

29 July

The first tourist boat in the last ten years set off from Sukhumi, the capital of Georgia's breakaway province of Abkhazia, to a Russian city of Sochi on July 26. The Russian media sources reported representatives of the de facto Abkhaz government and different departments of Abkhazia were the first passengers. De facto Abkhaz Prime Minister Raul Khajimba said sea communication was resumed on the level of commercial structures, adding that the necessity for sea communication was caused by the great flow of tourists. Deputy Chairman of the Georgian Parliament Vakhtang Kolbaia proposed on July 27 to take drastic measures in response to the unilateral resumption of sea communication between Sochi and Sukhumi. He said Georgia must suspend the negotiations with Russia over implementation of the March 7 Sochi agreement between the Presidents of Russia and Georgia, considering the resumption of the railway link between Russia and Georgia via Abkhazia, restoration of power facilities in Abkhazia and safe return of IDPs to Abkhazia. Earlier on July 21 Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin expressing Tbilisi's categorical rejection of double standards applied by Russian authorities and their lack of respect for the decision of the heads of CIS in 1996, forbidding any

unilateral economic and political ties with Abkhazian separatists without notification Georgian leadership. (Civil Georgia)

FIRST CRACKS APPEAR IN AZERBAIJANI RULING PARTY

29 July

Addressing a 28 July meeting of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party (YAP), parliament deputy Musa Musaev claimed that many of his fellow deputies elected on the YAP ticket, together with an unspecified number of ministers and other senior officials, are betraying the party by conducting clandestine talks with opposition party representatives and forging contingency plans for the transition of power that will follow President Aliev's anticipated demise. Musaev did not name any of the individuals in question. The online newspaper also quoted parliament deputy Igbal Alizade of the opposition Umid party as confirming that he has contacts with some YAP members, whom he described as "people who once trusted Heidar Aliev, but are categorically against entrusting the destiny of Azerbaijan to his entourage. These people are devoted to their country." Alizade estimated the number of parliament deputies who have contacted him as over 50 percent of the total 120. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZSTAN'S UIGHURS HOLD CONGRESS

29 July

The fifth congress of Kyrgyzstan's Uighurs was held on 28 July. RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported the same day. A total of 350 delegates from around the country gathered in Bishkek to hear a report by the chairman of the Uighur Society, Ittipak Rozmukhambet Abdulkakiev, who was re-elected at the congress. Abdulkakiev noted that recent assertions in the Kyrgyz media that Uighurs have been involved in criminal activities connected with separatists who want to set up an independent Uighur state in China's Xinjiang Province have harmed the Uighur community in Kyrgyzstan. He said he has sent a letter to the authorities about this problem. Officially, the Uighur population of Kyrgyzstan is 50,000, but unofficial sources say the number is twice that. (RFE/RL)

