

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING
VOL. 8 NO. 15
26 JULY 2006

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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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The Central Asia-Caucasus 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 & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center. 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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Submission Guidelines:

Analytical Articles: Analytical articles require a three to four sentence Key Issue 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. The ideal length of analytical articles is between 1,000 and 1,300 words. The articles are structured as follows:

KEY ISSUE: A short 100-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

BACKGROUND: 300-450 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: 300-450 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.

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. 700-800 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: scornell@jhu.edu and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

Svante E. Cornell

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BEYOND AFGHANISTAN: THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN BASES IN CENTRAL ASIA

Stephen Blank

The U.S. has secured a right to keep its base in Kyrgyzstan, though at greatly increased cost. This ends a chapter in the struggle for influence in Central Asia, avoiding the total marginalization of America and the West. But the linkage between America's presence in Central Asia and the War in Afghanistan has been reaffirmed. This implies that America can expect to stay in Central Asia only if it fails to stabilize Afghanistan. This is clearly an unsatisfactory basis, something Washington will seriously need to address in order to safeguard its long-term interests in the region.

BACKGROUND: The recent announcement that the U.S. base will be able to stay at Manas in Kyrgyzstan ends a chapter, but by no means the whole story, in the saga of U.S. bases in Central Asia. Washington can now retain the base until the fighting in Afghanistan comes to an end. But the new bilateral agreement raises the annual rent that Washington must pay for use of the base to \$150 million. Washington will also transfer four helicopters to Kyrgyzstan to use in suppressing terrorist outbreaks. Although this figure does not quite match the original demands of Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev to raise the annual rent by 100 times to \$200 million per annum, it nonetheless represents a victory for Bakiyev who is under tremendous pressure at home and abroad, especially from Russia and China.

Whereas those governments are placing enormous pressure upon Kyrgyzstan to oust the United States from its base, he is also facing pressure from political rivals and their allies in the organized crime community and thus needs both cash and increased defense capability in order to ward them off. While the repercussions of this deal for Kyrgyzstan are very important, this deal also tells us a great deal about the pressures that now confront any American effort to restore its military presence in Central Asia even as the fighting in Afghanistan continues to rage.

Russia and China have been pressuring Washington and Central Asian regimes since 2002 to limit the scope and duration of the U.S. military presence in Central Asia regardless of the progress of the war in Afghanistan. In June 2005 they successfully persuaded the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to formally request that Washington give an answer as to when it would leave the bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and then, in July, they worked equally successfully with Uzbekistan to oust the U.S. forces from their base at Karshi-Khanabad. Since then they have continued to bring growing pressure to bear upon Kyrgyzstan to oust the U.S. forces from there.

Indeed, Russia's intelligence agencies evidently tried to scuttle the Kyrgyz-U.S. negotiations by leaking stories about U.S. diplomats allegedly spying on Kyrgyzstan. And they also sought to prevent any further U.S. base from materializing. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's recent trip to Tajikistan, according to the Russian press, had as one of its objectives, an effort to negotiate rights to a U.S. base there. But if this is the case, the Tajik government refused to make such a deal, no doubt with Russia's military and economic presence in Tajikistan in mind.

But beyond seeking to exclude the U.S. military from Central Asia, both Russia and China have sought to

enhance their military presence and capabilities there. China sought to gain the U.S. base in Uzbekistan but was checked by Moscow who promptly negotiated a deal with Uzbekistan allowing it to use that base if necessary. And Russia has simultaneously also expanded its forces at its base in Kant, Kyrgyzstan and its military presence in Tajikistan. It also is enhancing its capability for long-range power projection and trying to exclude Washington and U.S. military support to the Caspian littoral states of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

Apart from seeking more bases in Central Asia, China and Russia will continue rendering military assistance to Central Asian governments and undertaking more and more joint exercises with them either through the SCO or through Russia's Collective Security Treaty Organization, which seeks to expand its missions from anti-terrorist operations to air defense, to peace support operations.

IMPLICATIONS: Meanwhile, it is quite possible that this combined Sino-Russian pressure upon Kyrgyzstan would have succeeded if not for the fact that the U.S. has deep pockets, is willing to pay a lot to sustain its access to Afghanistan through Central Asia, and to help the Kyrgyz government ward off threats to its rule, and because of the personal intervention of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. But it also is highly likely that the outbreak of renewed fierce fighting in Afghanistan rebutted the Russo-Chinese argument that the war there was winding down and hence the base was becoming redundant. Equally, if not more importantly, this upsurge of fighting in Afghanistan brought home to the Kyrgyz, if not other local governments, that their security was still at considerable risk and that failure to support the American efforts was by no means a cost or risk free operation, especially as it is clear that Russia still does not have the forces, for all its efforts to develop them, with which to provide a real basis for repulsing such threats to Central Asia.

It still appears to be the case that if Afghanistan once again becomes a base for international terrorism that nobody can protect Central Asia better than the U.S. military. Presumably such considerations played no

small part in influencing the Kyrgyz government to find an acceptable basis for a mutually satisfactory solution.

But this record of events illustrates the fragility of the U.S. military position in Central Asia. Turkmenistan will accept no real foreign bases, neither will Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan is closed off to the West and the other two governments, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the two weakest in the region, are under tremendous pressure from Russia which seeks to diminish their sovereignty and free choices in defense policy. Moreover, the only basis for which a need for or desire to welcome the U.S. military presence has now become continued fighting in Afghanistan. Only to the extent that the West is unable to bring that war to a close will it be able to make a material contribution to Central Asia security and provide an alternative or counterweight to Russia and/or China. This fragile foundation for a U.S. presence in Central Asia is probably insufficient to satisfy American interests and desires, but it is all that Washington has at present. Therefore the need to establish a stronger foundation for enduring and mutually beneficial security relations with local governments becomes all the more urgent for Washington even as the Sino-Russian rivalry with it and the fighting in Afghanistan intensify.

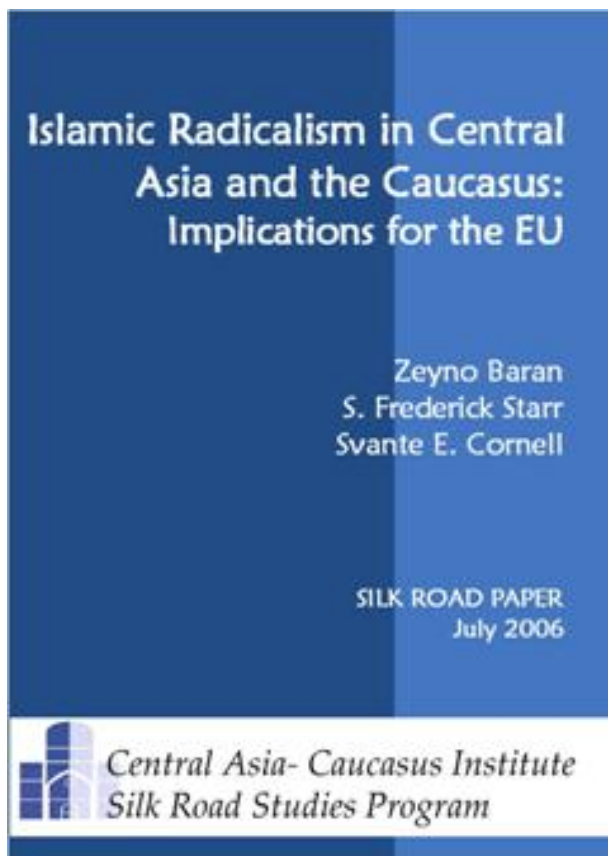
CONCLUSIONS: Even if some observers argue that there is no new great game or rivalry among the great powers for or over Central Asia, the fact remains that with regard to foreign bases, the most potent symbol of power projection capability, an intense rivalry is growing every day. But since it threatens to undermine allied capabilities with regard to the fighting in Afghanistan, the upsurge of that fighting to some degree gives Central Asian states room to maneuver among the giants seeking to limit their sovereignty. It is becoming an unintended irony that the durability of the American position in Central Asia depends on its being under continuous, if not growing pressure in Afghanistan, a war that it cannot afford to lose. But with victory comes the end of the established rationale for its continuing presence in Central Asia. If the U.S. government intends to preserve a future military accessibility to Central Asia it will have to work to develop new alternatives and bases or getting

that access that do not depend on the continuation of war in Afghanistan and the security threat that this war poses to the entire region.

In macro-strategic terms, the problem confronting Washington is converting its force in Central Asia into a presence that represents and constitutes part of an established, legitimate order. That is, Washington now faces one of the thorniest of eternal strategic questions, the necessity of converting force into legitimate order. And it must do so under conditions of intensifying pressure by interested great powers upon relatively weak smaller states who are in the geographical orbit of those great powers. Achieving a

positive result here will test all the capabilities of U.S. foreign and defense policy which is already under stress virtually everywhere else in the Islamic world if not throughout Asia. But not only does the success of U.S. policy depend on Washington's ability to find an effective answer to this problem. The security and independence of Central Asia depends upon it as well.

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New Silk Road Paper!

Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU

by Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante E. Cornell

This 55-page report analyzes Islamic radical movements in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the reasons for radicalization, and implications for Western and European interests in the region covering Central Asian republics, the North and South Caucasus.

This 55-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either www.cacianalyst.org or www.silkroadstudies.org.

PAKISTAN'S BID FOR SCO MEMBERSHIP: PROSPECTS AND PITFALLS

Rizwan Zeb

The recent SCO summit was a hallmark event and will have long-lasting implications. It has also set the future course for the organization and the member countries. Pakistan, in keeping with the geo-political and geo-economic reasons cannot ignore these developments, which are set to affect its future. President Musharraf has eloquently presented Pakistan's case for membership to the SCO. His offer of making Pakistan an energy corridor deserves deeper analysis and thought by all concerned.

BACKGROUND: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was created in June 2001, comprising China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan was the first country to apply for the status of 'Observer' in the SCO. However, Pakistan's entry was blocked because of its Afghan policy. The post-9/11 developments and the new posture and role of Islamabad in the ongoing war against terror has gradually changed the perception of the SCO's member states of Pakistan. At the time of Pakistan's admission into the SCO as an observer during the Astana summit of July 2005, the member states showed confidence in Islamabad's ability to cooperate in expanding the SCO's opportunities in terms of developing multilateral and mutually beneficial collaboration in various directions.

On June 15, 2006 the Shanghai Cooperation Organization celebrated its fifth anniversary. The heads of all member countries and observers participated in the celebrations. President Musharraf represented Pakistan in the summit. He was especially invited by his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao. During the summit, President Musharraf presented his case why Pakistan should be granted full membership and also expressed hope that his participation in the summit will help Islamabad's efforts to secure full membership in the organization.

Ten documents were signed during the summit. As reported in the CACI Analyst, [LINK] primary among them was a declaration on the SCO's fifth anniversary, a joint communiqué on closer SCO cooperation, a statement on international information security, an anti-terrorism resolution and an agreement on joint anti-terrorism actions among member countries.

Over the years, the SCO has emerged as an important regional organization which is now viewed by a number of western, and especially American scholars, as a challenge to American interests. They view it as a new "Warsaw Pact". What is more worrisome for this group of analysts is the dominant role of Russia and especially China in the SCO. Lately, the SCO has firmed its grip on Central Asia when it received Uzbekistan fully back into its fold, and its clear support for the regimes in the region and the vacation of American forces from its bases in the region. SCO policies regarding a number of regional issues, especially Iran and Palestine, (Russia's invitation to the Hamas Leadership) is also counter to America's agenda in the region. The invitation to the Iranian President to attend the summit resulted in sharp criticism from Washington. U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is on record for criticizing Russia and China for supporting and for drawing Iran closer to the SCO.

It seems that in the emerging geo-political fault lines in the region and in the world, the SCO is set to play a major role. Pakistan, which currently is an observer, can not remain aloof from such an important organization. A number of geo-political and geo-economical realities dictate that Islamabad should make every effort in joining this group. In this regard, the idea put forward by President Musharraf of Pakistan as an energy corridor for the SCO member countries merits serious analysis.

IMPLICATIONS: Since Pakistan reassessed its regional policy objectives, it has emerged as a responsible regional country which is a bridge between South and Central Asia. Its strategic location, thriving economy, and historical links with South and Central Asia make it an ideal candidate for membership in the SCO. Islamabad enjoys genial relation with the Central Asian states with which it shares civilizational and historical ties, Beijing is Islamabad's most trusted ally; Russia-Pakistan relations are also heading in a positive direction. It has signed a number of agreements with the Central Asian states. Central Asian leaders visit Pakistan frequently, the Almaty-Karachi road via Karakorum (Almaty-Bishkek-Kashgar-Karakorum-Islamabad-Karachi) is functioning, the Trans-Afghan Pipeline has been revived, and there are reports that Pakistan is ready to extend the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline to China. Recent reports point out that Pakistan's overall trade with the SCO is around US \$2 billion. This is not an encouraging figure as compared to its potential, illustrating that much needs to be done. As Aftab Kazi correctly asserts, "the geo-strategic location of Pakistan provides the most convenient modern rail and road facilities to Central Asia with relatively short distances. A comparative overview of distances between Islamabad and Karachi and the capital cities of Central Asia as well as existing Soviet-era Russian port facilities illustrates this point". However, the most significant factor in this regard is the Gwadar port. Primarily being built for economic and trade purposes, however, if viewed through the prism of any future geo-political competition in the Indian Ocean, its geo-strategic

location can not be overlooked. Interestingly, the Gwadar port and related connecting routes with Afghanistan actually further reduce these distances by approximately 500 km for Pakistan-Central Asia traffic.

Against this backdrop, addressing the SCO summit in Shanghai on June 15, President Musharraf accentuated Pakistan's strong credentials for securing full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: "Pakistan provides the natural link between the SCO states to connect the Eurasian heartland with the Arabian Sea and South Asia," he said, adding "We offer the critical overland routes and connectivity for mutually beneficial trade and energy transactions intra-regionally and inter-regionally."

Another significant development which recently took place is the agreement between Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for electricity supply to Pakistan to meet with the present shortage and manage future energy requirements. This supply of electricity could help improve the power supply situation in Pakistan. Another significant development is President Putin's announcement that Gazprom would be ready to participate in the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline.

It seems that Pakistan and Iran, who are key members of another regional economic grouping – the, which also includes the Central Asian states – can immensely contribute to the economic development of the region. In fact, there is an overlap between the ECO and the SCO. Economic cooperation between the two can positively contribute to all states and especially the linking of Central Asian economies with Iran and Pakistan, which will not only increase their economic development but also help resolve a number of problems which they might face when the WTO is enforced. Projects such as the electricity project mentioned above, the Trans-Afghan Pipeline, and the access provided to these states to the European and far eastern economies through Gwadar and Chabahar, can virtually change the economic and strategic outlook of this region.

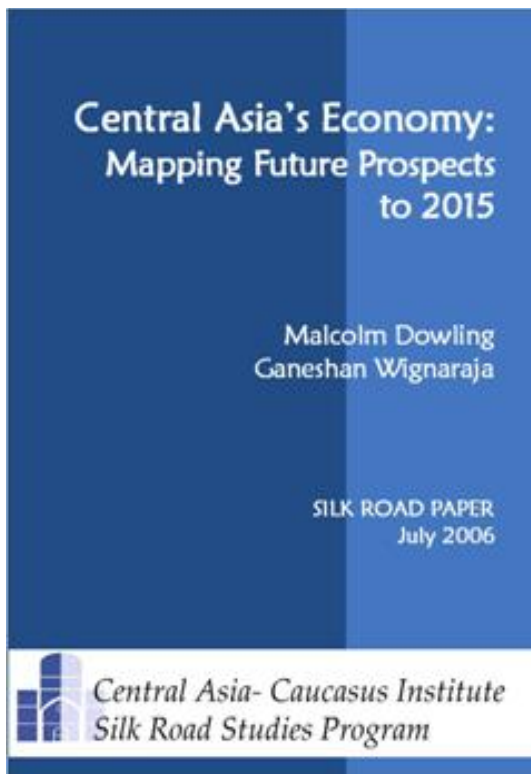
Other than economic development, Islamabad can immensely benefit from the SCO experience. Islamabad and New Delhi can use the SCO's experience in resolution of boundary disputes. Under the SCO banner, Islamabad can improve its defense and security relations with Russia and the SCO's regional anti-terrorism structure (RATS) will help Pakistan in institutionalizing anti-terrorism cooperation in a more comprehensive manner and at a wider scale.

One keen Pakistani observer of the regional and global developments has rightly pointed out that "there is no chance of militaristic NATO vs. SCO battle lines in the region. But inevitably there will be rivalry and competition for sources of energy and pipelines that carry it." This increases the need for Pakistan, a designated U.S. non-NATO ally, to make correct decisions.

CONCLUSIONS: The recent SCO summit is a hallmark event and will have long lasting

implications. It has also set the future course for the organization and the member countries. Pakistan, in keeping with the geo-political and geo-economic reasons, can not ignore these developments which will have an effect on it. President Musharraf has eloquently presented Pakistan's case for membership to SCO. His offer of Pakistan as an energy corridor deserves deeper analysis and thought by all concerns. However, the goal of membership may not be very close for Pakistan yet, as it has a lot to do on a number of fronts such as terrorism, human, economic and social development.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Rizwan Zeb, Institute for Regional Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan.



New Silk Road Paper!

Central Asia's Economy: Mapping Future Prospects to 2015

by Malcolm Dowling
and
Ganeshan Wignaraja

This is a comprehensive though concise analysis of the economic development scenarios of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. Written by two ADB experts, it provides guidance to understanding the evolution of Central Asian economies in coming years.

This 105-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either www.cacianalyst.org or www.silkroadstudies.org.

THE REHABILITATION OF “GREAT RUSSIAN CHAUVINISM”: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Kevin Daniel Leahy

The Kremlin’s recent attempt to merge Adygeya and Krasnodar Krai showed a disregard for local ethno-national sensitivities which smacked of what Lenin once called, “Great Russian Chauvinism.” In his haste to address the enduring political realities of the region, President Putin is evidently underestimating the formidable power of ethno-nationalism. This rashness is rooted in the mentality of Great Russian chauvinism. It threatens to provoke ethno-national bandwagoning across the North Caucasus, and lends encouragement to local political opportunists, themselves intent on realising their own political ambitions.

BACKGROUND: During his time as president, Boris Yeltsin pursued a distinctly asymmetrical policy toward Russia’s regions. This often entailed making compromises with certain regional leaders which might have seemed quite gratuitous when it came to dealing with other, less entrenched local elites. His successor, Vladimir Putin, has proven far less flexible in this regard, and clearly disapproves of the loose tactical bargaining which characterised Yeltsin’s tenure. Hence, Putin has sought to reassert the Kremlin’s authority vis-à-vis regional governments, particularly those in the North Caucasus. Over the past six years, this strategy has entailed the president parachuting his own loyalist cadres into positions of political prominence throughout the North Caucasus. At the outset of his term in office, many observers noted Putin’s preference for a stronger Russian state. This attitude alarmed proponents of an asymmetrical regional policy, and prompted Mikhail A. Alexseev to warn against the “ethnocentric consolidation of central government.” Ethnocentrism – generally defined as a positive set of attitudes toward one’s ethnic kin, allied with a correspondingly negative set of attitudes toward ethnic “out-groups” – is frequently cast as a latent mentality which, consciously or

otherwise, strongly influences President Putin’s policies toward Russia’s ethno-republics. Traditionally, however, academics have tended to categorise ethnocentrism as a reactive phenomenon, whereby increased contact between different ethnic groups tends to increase ethnocentrism within the “in-group.” This certainly rings true of Russian society in general, wherein peoples of non-Russian ethnicity – particularly Caucasians – are frequently treated with suspicion, if not outright hostility. But is the Russian leadership subject to broad ethnocentric dynamics of this type? Current indicators suggest that it is not. In fact, societal manifestations of ethnocentrism, like racially-motivated assaults, are consistently criticised by the ruling elite. But while the Russian leadership may be cognizant as to the socially detrimental effects of ethnocentrism, it is simultaneously rehabilitating a different phenomenon which, contemporaneously speaking, is more spontaneous, more intrinsic, and potentially just as provocative – Great Russian chauvinism. National chauvinism – the belief that one’s own country and its people are unique and superior – implies a low appraisal of ethno-national “out-groups”, as well as a certain disregard for their cultural sensitivities. A Leninist anathema, Great

Russian chauvinism is related to the age-old concept of the “Russian Idea” – a postulation which holds that Russian society can be greater integrated through communal sacrifice and the invocation of universalistic themes. Indeed, judging by the content of the recently floated bill on national identity, President Putin clearly foresees the perpetuation of classical Great Russian chauvinism as an important stake in realising the Russian Idea as he sees it; that is “providing the unity of the country and strengthening the vertical of power.”

IMPLICATIONS: Putin’s faith in the “consolidating role” of the Russian people, coupled with his perpetual desire to strengthen the state’s power vertical, have fundamentally shaped his policies toward the North Caucasus over the past six years. With respect to his choice of regional leaders, for example, Putin has tended to favour candidates who, although not necessarily Russian in an ethnic sense, are thoroughly steeped in the political culture of official Russia. Local populists like Ruslan Aushev, who owed their authority to clan affiliation rather than Moscow’s benign patronage, have, more often than not, been carefully manoeuvred out of office. Putin’s structural initiatives have followed a similar pattern. For instance, since the creation of the Southern Federal District, all three presidential representatives have been Russian functionaries, seemingly prized for their loyalty to Moscow rather than any specialist knowledge of the region.

Presently, however, there are indications that Moscow’s evident preoccupation with strengthening the state vertical is leading it to consider redrawing longstanding jurisdictional boundaries in the region. This was attested by Moscow’s rash, ill-considered approach toward the issue of Adygeya’s sovereignty. Recent efforts by the Presidential Representative to the Southern Federal District, Dimitri Kozak, to hasten the incorporation of Adygeya into neighbouring Krasnodar Krai provoked a farcical game of brinkmanship between Moscow and Maikop, from which the former emerged embarrassed, if hardly chastened.

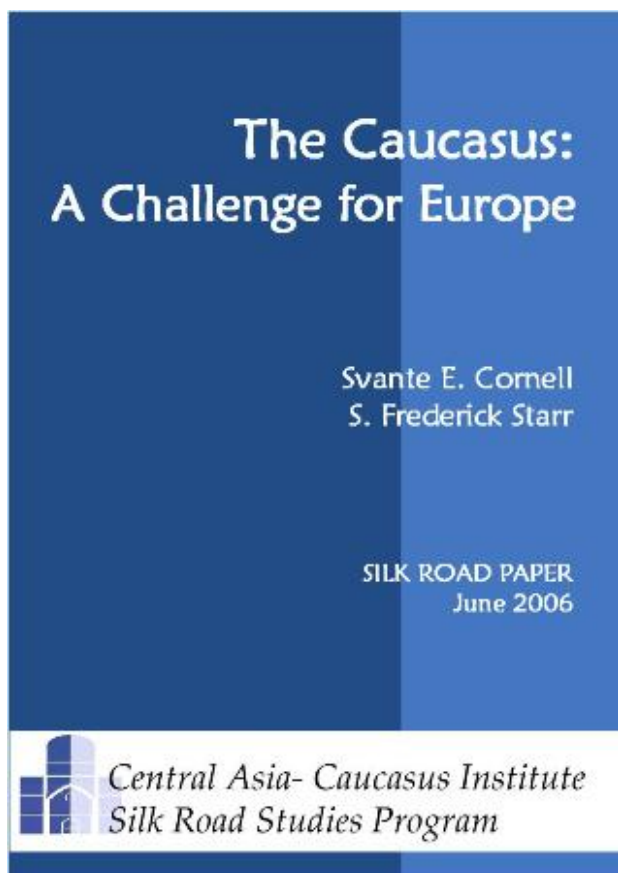
Importantly, this mini-crisis illustrated how a resourceful regional leader – in this case, Khazret Sovmen – can contrive an ethnocentric reaction among his own ethnic kin by appealing to national and ethnic sensitivities. In this case, Sovmen sought to conceal his own mounting professional travails behind the emotive, popular outcry regarding the proposed merger. He thus presented himself as the logical political fulcrum for incensed Circassian (Adygei) nationalists. Interestingly, the local branch of United Russia, the Kremlin’s party of power, saw fit to scramble aboard this nationalist bandwagon, perhaps showing a greater appreciation for local political sensitivities than either Putin or Kozak. The haphazard machinations of the latter two during this episode showed a disregard for non-Russian national sentiment verging on arrogance; in other words, they behaved chauvinistically. The Kremlin’s dalliance with jurisdictional revisionism has not gone unnoticed by other interested actors in the region. In late April, for example, the speaker of the pro-Moscow parliament in Chechnya, Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov, argued in favour of uniting Chechnya and Ingushetia (and possibly Dagestan) in a single jurisdictional entity. In making this case, Abdurakhmanov was generally believed to be speaking on behalf of Chechnya’s pro-Moscow Prime Minister, Ramzan Kadyrov. A subsequent proposal (this time from Kadyrov directly) that Chechen security forces be allowed to pursue militants into neighbouring jurisdictions all but confirmed that the increasingly ambitious Kadyrov is perfectly attuned to the prevailing mindset in Moscow.

CONCLUSIONS: Contemporarily speaking, it is significant that a political operator as ruthless as Lenin should have deemed it expedient to take account of the ethno-national sensitivities of non-Russian minorities. As a phenomenon, Lenin considered nationalism a mere temporal inconvenience. Despite this, he did acknowledge its existence, and impressed upon his colleagues the need to formulate a programmatic approach to this issue. Conversely, Putin’s recent initiatives in this sphere have shown scant, if any, appreciation for

ethno-national sensitivities. Indeed, the national identity bill, as well as the Adygeya controversy, betrayed marked chauvinistic tendencies on his part. Whereas Lenin foresaw the potential nationalist bandwagoning-effect associated with Great Russian chauvinism, Putin seemingly clings to the latter as a cure-all formula for Russia's crumbling political edifice. Potential for ethno-national bandwagoning in the North Caucasus stretches far beyond the as-yet-intact boundaries of Adygeya: Circassian nationalism is a broad, increasingly bellicose pan-republican phenomenon; tensions between Ingushetia and North Ossetia remain high; multi-

ethnic Dagestan is growing increasingly unstable. In any of these cases, tensions will hardly be alleviated by the prevalence of a discernable chauvinistic streak in Moscow's policies toward the region. Furthermore, political manifestations of this attitude only serve to encourage regional political opportunists like Ramzan Kadyrov. Thus, Moscow's chauvinistic mentality could yet have significant ramifications for the political situation in the North Caucasus.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Kevin Daniel Leahy holds a postgraduate degree in International Relations from University College Cork, Ireland.



New Silk Road Paper!

The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe

by Svante E. Cornell
and
S. Frederick Starr

As the EU moves in a southeastern direction, it moves closer to the Caucasus, North as well as South. This creates both opportunities and challenges. Increasing interest on the part of the EU in the South Caucasus has been noted. This paper discusses the challenges faced by Europe in the region and seeks to propose steps for the EU to take in the Caucasus.

This 85-page paper is available from the offices of the Joint Center cited on the inside cover of this issue, or freely downloadable in PDF format from either www.cacianalyst.org or www.silkroadstudies.org.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN TAJIKISTAN: NOT A STRUGGLE FOR REGIME SURVIVAL

Erica Marat

The victory of incumbent president Emomali Rakhmonov's in the upcoming Tajik presidential elections is predictable. Since the last elections in 1999, Rakhmonov eliminated most former warlords from the political scene and established firm control over the large businesses in Tajikistan. Rakhmonov has also been suppressing independent mass media outlets and civil society organizations. In such an environment, the Tajik opposition nevertheless chose to participate in the upcoming elections, though their participation will only contribute to Rakhmonov's attempts to build an image of a democratic regime. Unlike a few years ago, Rakhmonov today is not concerned with the survival of his regime, but with the continuity of his hold on power for the longest period.

BACKGROUND: Since 1991, every Central Asian leader managed to win presidential elections with at least 75% of popular support. The higher, the better, - with 99.9% being the record for the Turkmen president Saparmurat Niyazov in 1992. Even in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan with more open political systems, recent presidential elections were won with 90 and 96% of the vote in July 2005 and December 2005, respectively. In the 1999 presidential elections, Rakhmonov gained 97%. Presently, Rakhmonov enjoys strong support in the parliament, as its majority is represented by the pro-presidential Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). No other party was able to form a parliamentary bloc after the 2005 parliamentary elects. There are four representatives from the communist party and two from the Islamic Renaissance Party. However, since the head of the Islamic party Abdullo Said Nuri has been experiencing health problems, only Muhiddin Kabiri, the IRP's deputy chair, represents the religious opposition in parliament. There are also ten independent members of parliament from various law-enforcement agencies, who are generally pro-PDP. The PDP members also occupy most positions in the government. As noted by

some members of the Tajik parliament, the legislative power plays only a figurative role and most bills are prepared by the executive branch. In the 2005 parliamentary vote, parliamentary seats were in fact informally "distributed" among PDP members prior to the elections.

Rakhmonov has been maintaining cohesion inside the PDP by allocating economic opportunities to its members. All large businesses in the country are owned by government officials or people with political connections. Unlike in Kyrgyzstan, where ousted president Askar Akayev was deeply unpopular because of his corruption, the Tajik public retains high support for Rakhmonov despite the obvious corruption of his regime. Rakhmonov remains associated with stability brought with the end of the civil war in 1997. As one employee of an international organization put it, "people will rather support a government that is corrupt, than one that shoots". Almost a decade after its end, the memory of the civil war predetermines people's political behavior.

According to official records, the PDP has roughly 100,000 members. The IRP has 22,000 members, but party representatives claim the membership reaches

40,000. The communist party had over 40,000 members in the 1990s, but lost its popularity since then. Other parties have significantly lower membership. With the PDP's majority in the parliament and a weak opposition, the regime attains the necessary support for pursuing its own interests.

Rakhmonov has also succeeded in eliminating all major warlords who could challenge his political regime in a violent way. These warlords included both those from the ranks of the opposition and those who fought on the side of government. Yet Rakhmonov still strongly relies on the military. Almost a decade after the end of the civil conflict, there are still roughly 100,000 men under arms in Tajikistan: 40,000 are under the ministry of interior, 12,000 in the ministry of defense, and 8,000 border guards. In addition, there is a presidential guard, a drug control agency, and troops under the ministry of emergencies. For a country such as Tajikistan, where about 600,000 people of a seven-million population reside abroad as labor migrants, this is a high proportion. According to unofficial estimates, about 17% of GDP are spent annually on supporting the military. With nearly 40% of the population under age, the education and health sectors receive much less state support.

IMPLICATIONS: Despite the predictability of the upcoming elections, the IRP is determined to actively participate in the vote. Such political dynamics reflect Rakhmonov's attempts to create at least an image of political pluralism for international consumption. The Islamic party, unlike other political formations in Tajikistan or other Central Asian states, has quite an advanced internal structure. The mechanisms of its internal functioning suggest that it has a well-defined hierarchy fixed by the party's legal base. This year the party will likely carry primary elections before announcing a presidential candidate.

The Islamic party has conservative and liberal wings. On the one end of the spectrum, there are members who promote the establishment of a religious state. The party's conservatives are strongly against Rakhmonov's cooperation with the

west. Yet, on the other hand, there are leaders who think that religion should not influence the state, but that religious literacy among the population will build a shield against radical views and contribute to social cohesion. However, in order to preserve internal unity, the party's liberals refrain from contesting their conservative colleagues.

Rakhmonov's attempts to build at least a democratic veneer are driven by Tajikistan's strong dependence on international donors. However, the efforts to reinforce limited political pluralism have minimal impact on fostering civic engagement on a grassroots level. In fact, the Tajik government is disinterested in making the society politically active and economically independent. Governmental control over cotton production is one of the examples where the Tajik state hinders the evolution of entrepreneurial skills among the population. The dependence of Tajik agrarians on state directives allows the government to extract maximum benefits from cotton production and pursue its own political agenda among an impoverished population.

Though the Tajik opposition has a voice in the parliament, it has little leverage over the legislative process. In fact, representatives of the Tajik religious opposition in the parliament help the government to create a visibility of a political regime with features of a democratic governance. The opposition serves the role of "shirma" (cover) of the government's functioning, as one IRP member observes. The functioning of the president's party against the background of some political pluralism contributes to the international recognition of the Tajik government. As is widely noted by local experts, "the government has an outer shell, but internally functions according to informal relations". Although the Islamic party will likely announce a candidate for the upcoming elections, the party fully realizes that Rakhmonov will win with an absolute majority. As IRP representatives argue, it is in the regime's interests that the Islamic fraction acts as a counter-weight to the secular politics promulgated by Rakhmonov. It will help the president to illustrate that the only alternative to his

secular regime is a religious party. Some IRP members hence suggest boycotting the elections, thus making Rakhmonov the only candidate in the elections.

CONCLUSIONS: There is almost unanimous agreement among Tajikistan's population and political leaders that the Kyrgyz scenario of power transformation will not be replicated in Tajikistan. Rakhmonov's government is widely supported by the Tajik population because it was able to maintain stability after civil war ended. However, the upcoming presidential elections indicate that Rakhmonov is not so much concerned with

remaining in power, as with increasing his political dominance. His construct of the PDP and maneuverings with the IRP help to build the image of a façade democracy for international donors. Yet, this stability might well be just a short-term effect. High unemployment and impoverishment is not being tackled by Rakhmonov's government. Likewise, systemic corruption across all public institutions averts most efforts by international donors.

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THE CHINA AND EURASIA FORUM QUARTERLY

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program

Vol. 4 no. 2

May 2006

Terrorism

 Central Asia-Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program



New issue of the

China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly

The May 2006 issue of the China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, edited by Dr. Niklas Swanström, is online, with a theme focus on terrorism.

The issue contains articles by Michael Scheuer, Rensselaer Lee, Yitzhak Shichor, Stephen Blank, Michael Mihalka, and many others.

The issue is freely available online through www.silkroadstudies.org or www.cacianalyst.org

FIELD REPORTS

SLUM DWELLERS IN SOUTH KAZAKHSTAN DEFY GOVERNMENT RULING

Marat Yermukanov

To outside observers, the fierce clash between police forces and residents of the Almaty district Shanyrak which took place on July 14 may come as something surreal. Nevertheless, the incident, which carries some resemblance to Kyrgyz riots of March 2005, is symptomatic of one of the long-neglected social ills of the country.

The time-bomb which set in motion the spontaneous public outrage which escalated into mass disorder involving more than 1,500 residents of the Shanyrak residential area in the suburbs of Almaty was planted a year ago by a decision of the Almaty city government to rebuild the area, inhabited by more than 120,000 people. City officials announced their plans to demolish hundreds of privately owned houses in the area in order to make more space available for the construction of new roads and social facilities. It was a belated step to improve living conditions of the residents of the district.

Social unrest in the suburbs of Almaty and other overpopulated cities are not new, but the widespread discontent among the slum dwellers of poor outskirts has drowned in triumphant reports of macroeconomic achievements. In the years of economic crisis, hundreds of destitute families from rural areas settled in the suburbs of Almaty, hoping to get some subsistence. Having no money to buy a proper dwelling, many of them illegally appropriated land plots and built slum houses using available cheap construction materials. Over the last fifteen years, 28 settlements consisting mainly of

uninhabitable adobe houses appeared around Almaty, where only five schools were available for children from these disadvantaged families. For more than a decade, people got accustomed to living in ghettos without running water, electricity, schools or hospitals.

But the high-handed decision of the Almaty city government to bulldoze the slums in Shanyrak was the last straw that filled the cup of patience. When in the morning of July 14 a police unit and executives from the city court came to urge people to leave their homes, a violent riot broke out. Residents barricaded the streets and threw stones and Molotov cocktails at the policemen. When it was clear that the police was unable to cope with the outraged crowd, estimated at 1,500 people, they brought in extra reinforcements equipped with helmets, bullet-proof jackets and shields. But the ungovernable crowd burned down a fire-engine brought to the scene of the clash and police cars. Four policemen were taken hostage by vandalizing residents; later three of them were released, but one of the hostages was doused with petrol and set on fire. Heavily burned, he was rushed to a nearby hospital, but his condition is still critical.

The mass violence in Shanyrak was the first manifestation of long-brewing public protests against the neglect of the social needs of the blighted suburbs, replete with a host of unresolved problems of employment, medical care, education and social equality. It also reveals the profound imperfection of the judicial system and red-tape

among the governing bodies of Kazakhstan. The land plots in Shanyrak residential area have been seized illegally by migrants from rural districts since 1993. But the executive bodies were arguing for years over who in the government was in charge of these lands. The sudden decision of the Almaty city government to evict the squatters from their lands sparked these riots. This time police units were wise enough to refrain from using firearms to quell the unrest, and tragic mistakes such as those once committed by Kyrgyz law-enforcement bodies were avoided.

At the same time, the clashes in Shanyrak assumed an unprecedented scale, and about 600 policemen were needed to restore the order in the troubled area. On July 16, the city mayor Imangaly Tasmaganbetov held an emergency meeting behind closed doors. According to the Almaty police chief, fifteen policemen were injured during the rioting, and the authorities filed a lawsuit against the protesters who committed acts of vandalism. It is likely that some squatters will be brought to trial as the scene of the rioting was videotaped by the police. It is also likely that some members of the

city government will leave their posts following this incident, highlighted by the media. On the other hand, the mainstream opposition forces and non-government organizations try to use the growing discontent among the socially marginalized section of the population as a stalking horse to advance their own interests and to raise the profile of their leaders.

But the real danger to the upper echelons of power comes not from politically inert slum dwellers. The real threat to the governing system is posed by empty promises of the government to raise the living standards for all citizens and to provide them with cheap housing. Although housing construction is gathering pace in all regions of Kazakhstan, its scale is far short from meeting the huge demand resulting from the massive migration of people to urban areas. Experts believe that to ensure a long-term solution of the problem, Kazakhstan must adopt a law to regulate internal migration. But the most vital issue remains the eradication of corruption in government offices which reduces all good intentions and efforts.

ELECTRICITY TARIFFS RAISE SHARPLY IN GEORGIA

Kakha Jibladze

On June 1, electricity prices throughout Georgia rose as part of a three-tiered new tariff approved by the Georgian National Energy Regulatory Commission [GNERC]. While professionals in the energy field maintain the higher prices are needed to make the sector sustainable, the price hike puts new pressure on families already suffering from inflation and high unemployment, and could lead to more dissatisfaction with the Saakashvili administration.

The increase in electricity tariffs is part politics and part simple economics. One of the largest factors is the higher gas prices Georgia now pays Gazprom. This year the cost of natural gas nearly doubled to

over \$100 for 1000 cubic meters. But energy analysts also claim that regardless of Georgian-Russian politics, the low tariffs Georgians paid for electricity had to be increased. According to the leadership at the United Energy Distribution Company [UDC], even with 100% collection, which they have never achieved, the company was still facing losses of several million dollars.

However, even UDC argued against the tariff policy developed by the GNERC. According to the current policy, electricity customers are divided into three pay groups depending on the amount of electricity they consume. The break down, 0-100

kilowatts, 100-300, and over 300 kilowatts, is absolute – meaning if you use 101 kilowatts of electricity one month, the whole sum is calculated in the higher price bracket, not merely the 1 kilowatt that put you over the limit. The new tariff is particularly difficult for rural customers. While prior to June 1, they paid considerably less than urban customers, now the fees are relatively similar and depending on their usage, rural customers can be charged up to twice as much as they paid before.

At first glance, the prices don't seem that outrageous. Rural households used to pay eight tetri (cents) a kilowatt; now fares range from 12.98-17.4 tetri per kilowatt, or roughly \$0.07 - \$0.10. Urban customers are paying roughly half a cent to five cents per kilowatt more than the previous urban tariffs. However, with rampant unemployment in the rural areas – and lower collection rates even before the increase – rural families are bracing themselves for a return to life without electricity.

According to GNERC, the new tariff policy is the easiest way they could implement the needed changes. They maintain that electricity is a product that must be paid for – and if the price is high, that means it is up to customers to prioritize what appliances they use and how long they use them. But another problem is the fact that many villages depend on collective metering that monitors usage per street instead of per family. The pure volume of users now means that all families dependent on the meter will be forced to pay in the higher price bracket.

The billing practices of the distribution companies are also causing rural residents concern. A month ago, villagers in the Lanchkhuti region of Guria received bills claiming they all had back debts. This was in addition to the 'back debts' they had been forced to pay several months ago. Since their bills are hand delivered by a neighbor chosen by random by the distribution company instead of an actual representative of the company, there is no obvious path of recourse to reverse the charges or even a clear responsible party to explain the problem to.

While Georgians during the government of former president Eduard Shevardnadze found creative ways to receive their electricity and gas for free, now there is a general understanding that these utilities must be paid for. However, in light of the current economic crisis in the rural areas throughout the country, forcing customers to pay twice as much as they used for electricity is a huge burden for families who are already living in poverty.

One of the few things the new government has done for the regions outside of Tbilisi is to provide, at long last, 24 hours of electricity nearly every day all year long. President Saakashvili is facing mounting opposition in face of the difficult reforms the country must implement. If it is mandatory for the electricity sector to become sustainable immediately, a tariff system based on income and usage – or a subsidy for the poorest segment of the population – would be a generous gesture from the government during this painful period of transition.

ECONOMIC BOOM AMID UNEASE IN XINJIANG

Sureyya Yigit

Central Asian energy security has a knock-on effect in domestic society. The Uyghurs of China, enduring repression for several decades, do not receive the benefits of a booming economy. Ethnic division is rife in Xinjiang with the Chinese State effectively discriminating between the Han Chinese

and the Uyghurs. Continuation of such a policy can have dire consequences for the long-term territorial integrity of China.

This week witnessed both an agreement on Global Energy Security at the G8 Summit in St. Petersburg

as well as a plan by Russia and China to build a pipeline to transport natural gas from Russia to the developing areas of coastal China through the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. These recent developments add more weight to the importance of energy security, though perhaps equally importantly is how this affects the internal balancing within states.

China faces an interlinked problem: maintaining oppression toward the Uyghurs in Xinjiang and increasing energy imports from its western neighboring states. The 'west' in its many dimensions is a problem that China is tackling.

China, however, has played its 9/11 card wisely by receiving a quid pro quo from the U.S. State Department, in ensuring that Uyghur organizations were added to the terrorist list in return for providing support to the U.S.-led war on terror.

Uyghurs seem more concerned with the Han Chinese influx into their region than with international collaboration in energy matters. China desperately needs to develop its own energy potential which lies mainly in Xinjiang. Despite the fact that China allows for its minorities such as the Uyghurs an extra child, whereas Han Chinese couples are restricted to only one child, the demographics on the streets of Urumchi are obvious: many more Han Chinese than Uyghurs. Overall in the region, the Han Chinese form the majority but in cities such as Turpan and Kashgar the Uyghurs are noticeably numerous.

Whereas there is open and at times vehement criticism leveled at the Han by the Uyghurs, the reverse cannot be said. The Han Chinese do not on the whole look with disfavor toward the Uyghurs. Heightened economic activity is self-evident at the main Kashgar bazaars. This demand is not purely externally led; it also stems from internal demand by both the Han and the Uyghurs of the region. This takes on a new dimension when one ventures into Urumchi where it is difficult to walk in the sunshine in the capital of Xinjiang, with a population estimated to be over 3 million, due to the numerous skyscrapers peppered all across the city.

One local proudly pointed to a magnificent-looking new construction, telling this author that this was to be a new 64-storey office block. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Urumchi resembles not a provincial communist city but a North American boom town. It does not have the traditional characteristics of a western European city, as it is dominated by roads, preference being given to private individual cars rather than communal public transport.

In all the larger cities in Xinjiang, one finds the Xinhua state bookshops which are impressive. Despite the fact that one can find Uyghur books written in the Arabic script, the majority of the books are in Chinese, with pride of place given to the translated biographies of past and present Communist Party high officials. It is clear to see that the Chinese are pursuing a policy of limited concessions but these are not deemed to go far enough by most Uyghurs.

Another frequent observation is the old style political propaganda posters showing Mao, Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin, seeking to display continuity. Whilst this might have had a major impact years ago, it loses its clout when it is dwarfed by western advertisers highlighting their own brands.

Despite the police presence, economic activity is unperturbed. In terms of business, there seems to be little state intervention. When it comes to political matters, though, it is another story. Nearly all Uyghurs interviewed warned of agents of the state peddling information back to the police.

Even the centrally located historic city of Turpan shows economic dynamism. Walking on the streets after disembarking from the bus, one is accosted by teenagers speaking very good English and offering services as a personal guide. The tourism industry is developing rapidly in cities such as Turpan and this, similar to economic dynamism, is not all externally driven. Internal tourism is also gathering pace. In fact, most of the tourists in the region were Chinese rather than westerners.

The long arm of the Chinese state with a clenched iron fist under a velvet glove did, however, make its presence felt just outside Turpan. The tourist minibus in which this author was traveling pulled over to the side as a military convoy was traveling in the opposite direction. Two Chinese tourists took digital photos of the passing convoy. Within a minute, a jeep cut across the minibus, soldiers with machine guns surrounded it, and officers entered the vehicle, forcing the deletion of the photos. After

this incident, the tension disappeared as quickly as it had arisen. The net effect was that the Chinese tourists became further alienated from their own armed forces. The cleavage between the young educated and increasingly wealthy Chinese yearning for a western lifestyle and the old style authoritarian military guardians of the state could not have been more apparent. In that respect, those Han Chinese and the Uyghurs share a similar desire for greater freedom.

CRIMINAL GANG TRIAL SHEDS LIGHT ON THE MURDER OF AZERBAIJANI EDITOR

Alman Mir Ismail

The long expected trial of former top police officer Haji Mamedov and his criminal gang has finally opened this week and immediately resulted in a sensational statement. Speaking on the first day of the trial, Mamedov stated that his gang assumed responsibility for the murder of famous journalist and editor of *Monitor* journal Elmar Huseynov last year. Mamedov added that the murder was conducted at the order of former Minister of Economic Development Farhad Aliyev, currently under arrest for the attempt to organize a coup prior the Parliamentary election in November, 2005.

This revelation is very sensational and adds more spice to Mamedov's trial. He is accused of murdering and kidnapping famous Azerbaijani businessmen and politicians and their relatives for a period of more than seven years, while serving as the chief investigator of the Interior Ministry's Criminal Investigation Department with the rank of lieutenant colonel. Mamedov was arrested in March 2005 by the special services of the Ministry of National Security after kidnapping the wife of one of the leading bankers in the country.

Elmar Huseynov's murder brought much negative publicity to Azerbaijan and its authorities ahead of last year's parliamentary elections. Many analysts blamed the government for Huseynov's death, as

his articles against the ruling elite were often harsh and slanderous. Yet, a closer look at the situation showed that there was little interest on the side of authorities to worsen the already tense political situation in the country prior the critical elections, shedding doubt on the theory of a government-ordered murder.

It is noteworthy that last year, Turkish criminologists were the first to mention the possibility of Haji Mamedov's role in the murder of the *Monitor* editor, however not much attention was paid to those reports at the time. Even the official law enforcement bodies of Azerbaijan refuted that view. The investigation by the Ministry of National Security, which was responsible for the arrest of Haji Mamedov, did not provide any evidence of links between the two cases and came to the conclusion that Elmar Huseynov was murdered by two ethnic Azerbaijanis from Georgia, Tahir Khubanov and Teymuraz Aliyev. However, Mamedov did not mention these two individuals as members of his group.

At this moment, Haji Mamedov's statement leads local analysts in three different directions. First, it is possible that this criminal gang indeed committed the murder and that the investigation by the Ministry of National Security led to the wrong

suspects. This scenario is unlikely, because it is difficult to believe that Ministry of National Security did not know about Haji Mamedov's role in this crime while investigating both cases at the same time.

Second, it is possible that Haji Mamedov mentioned the name of former Minister of Economic Development Farhad Aliyev in order to win favors from the government. Aliyev (no relation to President Ilham Aliyev) has been in detention for ten months already and yet refuses to give testimony and admit that he was guilty of funding opposition parties and preparing a coup d'etat. Farhad Aliyev claims that all these accusations are fabricated against him by his political opponents. Thus, adding Elmar Huseynov's murder to the case of Farhad Aliyev could put more pressure against the former minister. Aliyev's lawyer Elton Guliyev agrees with this. "Mamedov's confession was merely words, we need proof. There is a presumption of innocence, and they should prove

what Mamedov says. We are convinced that they have no evidence. Their goal is to create pressure on Farhad Aliyev. For the past nine months the prosecution has been unable to find anything illegal about Aliyev's deeds, and now people try to slander Aliyev through such shady methods," Guliyev told reporters.

Finally, it is possible that Haji Mamedov was pressured to take the responsibility for the murder of the editor, since many foreign organizations and local media outlets still accuse the government for concealing or not doing enough to find the murderers and solve the crime.

Time will tell which of these scenarios is right. Yet, doubts remain whether Haji Mamedov is being sincere or not. Meanwhile, the founders of the Elmar Huseynov Foundation decided to urgently hold a meeting to discuss the statement.



Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program

NEWS DIGEST

CHECHEN FOREIGN MINISTER AFFIRMS READINESS FOR PEACE TALKS

14 July

Meeting in Berlin on July 5, diplomatic representatives abroad of the Chechen Republic Ichkeria (ChRI) drafted a manifesto addressed to participants of the G8 summit in St. Petersburg reaffirming the readiness of the Chechen resistance to embark on immediate and unconditional peace talks to end the ongoing war and stabilize the situation across the North Caucasus. The manifesto, signed by ChRI Foreign Minister Akhmed Zakayev and posted on July 13 on the resistance website chechenpress.org, stresses that while the Chechen people regard independence as the most fundamental guarantee of their security, they would agree to talks on an unspecified alternative solution in line with international law. It stresses the Chechen leadership's rejection of "all forms of violence" against civilians, including acts of terrorism. Former Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov issued a similar appeal for peace talks on the eve of the G8 summit in Canada in June 2002. (RFE/RL)

DAGHESTAN'S INTERIOR MINISTRY REJECTS CHECHEN ALLEGATIONS

14 July

Daghestan's Interior Ministry issued a statement on July 14 rejecting as untrue Chechen Prime Minister Kadyrov's claim that most of the 13 militants killed during fighting the previous day in Mesketi in southeastern Chechnya close to the border with Daghestan were Avars dispatched to Chechnya to commit acts of terrorism there. The Daghestan Interior Ministry claimed that six of those killed were ethnic Chechens from Daghestan's Khasavyurt and Novo-Lak districts. It said five more militants were apprehended, all of them aged between 14-19. The statement appealed to "sisters, mothers, and wives" to do all in their power to deter their menfolk from joining the resistance.(regnum.ru)

NORTH CAUCASUS GROUPS APPEAL TO GEORGIA

14 July

National movements representing the Cherkess, Russian, Karachai, Abazin, Nogai, and Ossetian communities in the Karachayevo-Cherkessia Republic adopted a joint appeal to the Georgian leadership not to undertake any military action against the breakaway Republic of South Ossetia. The groups also appealed to the international community to exert pressure on the Georgian leadership. North Ossetian President Mamsurov warned on July 15 that in the event of a new aggression by Georgia against South Ossetia, volunteers from North Ossetia would flock to South Ossetia to help their co-ethnics there. In Adygeya, the chairman of the republic's Union of Abkhaz Veterans, Amin Zekhov, said that in line with pledges given to that republic's leaders in 2003, his organization is ready to help defend South Ossetia in the event that tensions erupt into violence. (regnum.ru)

KYRGYZSTAN, U.S. REACH NEW BASE AGREEMENT

14 July

Kyrgyz and U.S. negotiators reached a deal on July 14 for a U.S. air base at Manas Airport to remain in Kyrgyzstan. A joint statement released by the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan said that Kyrgyzstan will receive \$150 million "in total assistance and compensation over the next year," pending U.S. congressional approval. The statement did not specify exactly how much the United States will pay to lease the base, noting only that the U.S. government will "compensate equitably the Kyrgyz government and Kyrgyz business for goods, services, and support of U.S. operations." Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiev said in an interview in early 2006 that Kyrgyzstan wanted to raise annual lease payments for the base from \$2.7 million to \$207 million. (AP)

KAZAKH POLICE STORM ILLEGAL DEVELOPMENT OUTSIDE ALMATY, DOZENS INJURED

15 July

Nearly 40 people were injured in Almaty on July 14 in clashes between police and the residents of Shanyrak -- a settlement outside Almaty that the authorities have deemed illegal -- when at least 150 police attempted to enforce a court order for the demolition of 114 houses, Channel 31 and news agencies reported. Medical authorities in Almaty said 37 people sought treatment after the clash, including a policeman with burns over 70 percent of his body. Residents fought off police with stones and Molotov cocktails. Community activist Marzhan Aspandiyarova told Regnum that residents took three policemen hostage but later released them. Channel 31 reported that police withdrew from Shanyrak after the clash, although they have opened a criminal case and plan to use video evidence to identify the instigators of the violence. Interior Minister Baurzhan Mukhametzhonov is in Almaty to investigate the situation. The authorities recently dismantled a similar settlement in the Almaty suburb of Bakai. (regnum.ru)

FSB HEAD ISSUES ULTIMATUM TO CHECHEN RESISTANCE

17 July

Speaking in the name of the National Antiterrorism Center, Federal Security Service (FSB) Director Nikolai Patrushev called upon Chechen resistance fighters on July 15 to lay down their arms and begin talks with the federal or pro-Moscow Chechen authorities. He pledged that those who do surrender will be guaranteed "a fair and objective appraisal" of their activities as members of "illegal armed formations." Patrushev claimed that the majority of resistance fighters have already capitulated, and that some have joined the Chechen police force while others have been elected to the pro-Moscow Chechen parliament. He said nothing and no one can prevent the ongoing strengthening of stability and security in Chechnya and the North Caucasus as a whole. Ingushetian President Murat Zyazikov hailed Patrushev's initiative later on July 15, saying it will expedite the "consolidation of society." Also on July 15, pro-Moscow Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov told journalists in Gudermes that he would have extended the deadline for militants to surrender until September 1. Kadyrov said that the

resistance leaders have been "practically destroyed" and that only "young men who have been duped by international terrorists" remain. (RFE/RL)

TAJIKISTAN ANNOUNCES ARREST OF 10 IMU MEMBERS

18 July

Tajik Interior Minister Humdin Sharifov told a briefing in Dushanbe on July 17 that 10 members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan were detained in a special operation in the northern city of Khujand last week. Sharifov said that three of the 10 were Uzbek citizens. Sharifov blamed IMU members for a string of violent attacks in Tajikistan, including two bomb blasts in Dushanbe in 2005, an attack on an Interior Ministry facility in Qayroqqum in January 2006, and the murder of a Defense Ministry official, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported. Sharipov also noted that police have arrested 42 suspected members of the banned extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, including 20 women, in the first half of 2006. (RFE/RL)

UZBEKISTAN REPORTS RETURN OF 12 ANDIJON REFUGEES

18 July

Twelve Uzbek refugees who fled after violence in Andijon in 2005 and received asylum in the United States have returned to Uzbekistan, Press-uz.info reported on July 17, citing a source in the Uzbek Foreign Ministry. The source said the refugees appealed to the Uzbek government for help in returning home. The Foreign Ministry granted their request after determining that "they had no involvement in the terrorist acts committed in Andijon in May 2005. It was confirmed that they had been misled and taken out of the country by means of deception." RFE/RL's Uzbek Service was able to confirm that nine Uzbek citizens who had been residing in the United States as refugees from Andijon returned to Uzbekistan. The Uzbek Embassy in Washington told RFE/RL that it purchased tickets for them to return. (RFE/RL)

SAKASHVILI'S REFUSAL TO ATTEND SUMMIT PROOF HE INTENDS TO FUEL TENSIONS - KOSACHYOV

21 July

Konstantin Kosachyov, chairman of the State Duma Foreign Affairs Committee, has said that Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's refusal attend the informal CIS summit starting on Friday in Moscow shows Tbilisi's intention to let tensions in Russian-Georgian relations further escalate.

"The participation in the summit offers possibilities to state the positions dear to Tbilisi both in formal and informal settings and to be heard. However, Saakashvili chose to pass over the opportunity, which proves that Georgia has a stake in a confrontation with Russia, which may lay the basis for a military resolution of the Georgian-South Ossetian and Georgian-Abkhaz conflicts," he told journalists. Saakashvili's refusal to attend the informal CIS summit is another proof of the fact that "Tbilisi keeps betting on loud-voice diplomacy, when claims and reproaches are presented unilaterally as public statements for the media," he said. "Tbilisi needs a small victorious war, and unfortunately everything is moving into that direction," the Russian senator said. (Interfax)

DUDAYEV'S WIDOW LIKELY TO BE GRANTED ESTONIAN CITIZENSHIP

21 July

The Estonian Population Ministry secretariat has received an application for citizenship from Alla Dudayeva, the widow of Dzhokhar Dudayev, the former president of so-called Ichkeria. An identical application came from Alla Dudayeva's younger son, Tegi Dudayev, 23, the secretariat told Interfax on Friday. Aarne Veedla, an advisor to the population minister, told Interfax Thursday that the Estonian government was prepared to consider granting citizenship to Dudayeva and other family members. (Interfax)

NO STATE IN CIS MUST FEEL ITS INTERESTS INFRINGED - NAZARBAYEV

22 July

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed to discuss ways to develop the CIS for no one state to feel its interests are infringed. Nazarbayev said he sent out the draft of the proposals for discussion through the embassies on Friday. "I hope you received it and could look over it," he said.

Nazarbayev is currently presiding over the CIS. The Kazakh president noted that each of the leaders could add proposals to the draft. The aim is to come to the parameters satisfying all and for states not to feel their interests are infringed, he said. (Itar-Tass)

CIS PRESIDENT DISCUSS COMMONWEALTH REFORMS

22 July

Presidents of CIS countries discussed the reform of the Commonwealth at their informal summit in Moscow on Saturday. After the meeting, Kazakh

President Nursultan Nazarbayev told journalists, "Basing on the experts' analysis of the 15-year-long activity of the CIS I exposed my vision and a new programme of the CIS reform." "It is necessary to take such decisions, which will meet the interests of everyone. There must be no states, which disagree or refuse to sign any documents, and it's natural that they don't comply with them. Decisions should be taken on the base of consensus and should be implemented by all," Nazarbayev said. In his words, it is necessary to find such schemes, which would meet the demands of everyone. "Studying and analysing different mechanisms I want to rivet attention to five key topics – migration policy, transport, education, the fight against today's challenges and humanitarian problems." "During discussions, the participants in the meeting put forth their own proposals," the Kazakh president said. Among them, he named common approaches towards international issues and a common defence policy. Nazarbayev said he proposed to reorganise the CIS due to his ideas. In his view, the vice-premiers of every country should work out a programme. "They should play the role of sherpa like as at the G-8 summit," he added. "We agreed to discuss concrete problems and take concrete decisions by the November CIS summit in Minsk," Nazarbayev stressed. (Itar-Tass)

CHECHEN ENVOY AND REFUGEES CLEARED FOR ENTRY TO RUSSIA

23 July

Chechen parliamentary deputy Magomed Khambiyev and two Chechen refugees who have returned to Russia from Azerbaijan have left the Derbent police department and proceeded to Chechnya. Following the intervention by commanders of the regional operations headquarters and of the combined force in the North Caucasus, and by Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov, the two refugees, who were returning with me to Russia from Azerbaijan were cleared," Khambiyev told Interfax by phone on Sunday. Khambiyev said he had been entrusted "to hold talks with representatives of the Chechen communities in Azerbaijan, Turkey and other countries, and to persuade them to come back to Russia." "The Chechen authorities' swift moves will facilitate the mission," he added. Khambiyev earlier told Interfax that when he was returning from Azerbaijan, he and his two companions - a man and a woman, were detained on the Russian side of the border and were moved to the Derbent

police department. Khambiyev said he had had "a series of meetings with forced migrants in Azerbaijan, who proposed repatriating [Khambiyev's] relatives first, and said they would decide, judging from their example, whether to return to Chechnya or whether to stay in Azerbaijan." Speaker of the lower house of the Chechen parliament Dukvakha Abdurakhmanov told Interfax that "the incident was immediately reported to the command of the combined forces and of the regional operations headquarters, and to Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov, who got in touch with law enforcement services in Dagestan and settled the incident," Abdurakhmanov said. "Khambiyev's mission is very important and no one will be allowed to hamper it," he said. "Khambiyev was instructed to meet with people who, for political, military or other reasons, left Chechnya and Russia during the counter-terror operation, and who call themselves representatives of "non-existent Ichkeria," Abdurakhmanov told Interfax on Sunday. Khambiyev received the mandate to hold relevant talks from Chechen Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov, he said. Khambiyev's mission is to "make it clear, that all those who did not slur themselves with crime and blood, can freely return to their families in Russia and Chechnya, with all appropriate security guarantees provided," Abdurakhmanov said. "The length of Khambiyev's mission is not limited to a week or a month. He will remain abroad as long as he needs to fulfill his assignment. He is expected to do a great deal of work in Turkey, in Azerbaijan and in other countries, where these people reside, including those who have never held weapons, and who don't see any radical change in Chechnya and still hope for Ichkeria revival," he said. Those who return to Russia "will be given an opportunity to engage in public activities, start a business, work in their chosen field on condition that they will observe the constitution and law, he added. "The step taken by Kadyrov demonstrates that the Chechen government is strong and that the federal authorities have opted for a clear-cut course to settle the situation in the region finally, and to do away with the criminal armed groups and, what's more, to consolidate Chechen society," the Chechen parliamentary speaker said. Abdurakhmanov did not say who will be the first Ichkerian representatives Khambiyev will meet with, saying the premature release of this information could hinder his mission. (Interfax)

INDIA'S SPENTEX BUYS UZBEK FIRM FOR \$81 MLN

24 July

Indian yarn maker Spentex Industries Ltd. has bought Uzbekistan's state-run Toshkent-To'ytepa Tekstil LLC for \$81 million to boost its overseas production capacity, the company said on Monday. The company will be a wholly-owned subsidiary and will be known as Spentex Tashkent Toytepa LLC. The deal will give Spentex a factory in each of the Uzbek cities of Tashkent and Toytepa with a combined total of 220,000 spindles and 236 looms, bringing the parent's overall capacity to 570,000 spindles. All of the Uzbek cotton will be exported to Europe, South America, the United States and Asia, excluding India. "Uzbekistan has cheap power, cheap labour, cheap cotton -- what else do you want?" said Mukund Choudhary, managing director at Spentex, adding the Uzbek government had offered tax concessions and a 15 percent discount on raw cotton. The company also said it would be moving into the woven cotton fabric business for the first time with its newly-acquired Uzbek looms. Spentex shares rose as much as 4.3 percent after the company's announcement, and closed up 3.64 percent in a firm Mumbai market. Choudhary also said the firm was negotiating to buy a 100,000-spindle state-run yarn factory in Egypt. (Reuters)

SOUTH OSSETIA CALLS FOR NON-AGGRESSION MEMORANDUM

25 July

It is necessary to sign a non-aggression memorandum between Georgia and South Ossetia, said Eduard Kokoity, president of the unrecognised republic of South Ossetia, at his meeting on Tuesday with a group of ambassador-leaders of delegations of countries to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "The achievement of these goals can bring the process of settlement of the Georgian-South Ossetian conflict to a new qualitative level," Kokoity said. "There are two moments, the fulfilment of which can be assessed as a proof of peaceful intentions of Georgian authorities: the first is the fulfilment of the proposal of the OSCE and the signing of a memorandum on non-aggression and non-use of force between Georgia and South Ossetia, the second is preparation and conduction of a four-party meeting of top political leaders of Russia, Georgia, North and South Ossetia," he said. He stressed that the actions of official Tbilisi like the "regular

rotation to the peacekeeping battalion, massive violations of South Ossetia's air space by planes of the Georgian air force, the construction of barracks and hospitals, the blocking of remote South Ossetian villages, the rocking of the very format of the peacekeeping operation facilitate only a further escalation of the conflict". Ambassadors of Belgium, Britain, Switzerland, Canada, Slovenia, Kazakhstan, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, Georgia, Turkey, as well as representatives of Norway, Russia and the US attended the meeting. Belgian Ambassador Bertrand de Crombrughe, who leads the country's delegation to the OSCE, expressed the hope that a donor conference that was held in Brussels would prove an important stage in conflict settlement and establishment of trust between the sides. (Itar-Tass)

SKIRMISH REPORTED IN KODORI GORGE - PEACEKEEPING HEADQUARTERS

25 July

A battle is likely underway in the upper part of the Kodori Gorge in Georgia, a source from the headquarters of the joint peacekeeping forces in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict area told Interfax from Sukhumi on Tuesday. "The personnel of the 107th observation outpost of the joint peacekeeping forces recorded an intensive exchange of fire to the east of its location," the source said. "The skirmish is heard about four kilometers away from the outpost," he said. "The command of the joint peacekeeping forces will notify the UN mission in Abkhazia and the Georgian leadership about the skirmish," he said. (Interfax-AVN)

RUSSIAN-KAZAKH NUCLEAR VENTURES WORTH \$10 BLN - NUCLEAR CHIEF

25 July

The total cost of three Russian-Kazakh joint nuclear ventures will be \$10 billion, Russia's nuclear top official said Tuesday. During a session of a working group on the development of Kazakhstan's nuclear energy earlier on Tuesday, Russia's top nuclear official Sergei Kiriyyenko and Kazakh Prime Minister Danial Akhmetov signed documents on the establishment of the three ventures. "Together with the program on the nuclear development, which we [Russia] worked out, the establishment of the joint ventures with Kazakhstan will solve the issue of uranium provision for nuclear energy,"

Kiriyyenko said. Kiriyyenko added that the new project would produce 5-6,000 metric tons of uranium a year while Russia's annual output at the moment totaled slightly over 3,000 tons. He said the ventures should be registered by September 30, and working groups should present their feasibility studies by November 30. Techsnabexport, Russia's state-controlled uranium supplier and provider of uranium enrichment services, already holds a 49.33% stake in a joint venture set up in 2004 in the south of mineral-rich Kazakhstan. It is exploring a uranium ore deposit with estimated reserves of 19,000 metric tons of uranium in Zarechnoye near the border with Central-Asian neighbors Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. (RIA Novosti)

RUSSIAN PEACEKEEPERS STAY AWAY FROM OPERATION IN KODORI GORGE

26 July

Russian peacekeepers in the zone of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict do not interfere in the military operation in the upper part of the Kodori gorge, Deputy Commander of Russia's Land Forces for Peacekeeping Operations, Lieutenant-General Valery Yevnevich said. He told journalists on Wednesday that "it's not a police operation, as Tbilisi has announced, but a real military operation." "Two more army convoys of Georgian troops were sent to the zone of engagement. At 11:30 Moscow time, personnel at the Russian peacekeepers' observation post No. 312 registered the passage of four Mi-24 and Mi-8 helicopters," the general said. Yevnevich expressed concern that the situation in the Kodori gorge may lead to "a resumption of full-scale hostilities between Georgia and Abkhazia because Sukhumi is already redeploying troops to the combat area." Russia has no information about casualties on either side, but they have been reported by refugees. "Peacekeepers are not intervening in the conflict. Their task is not to participate but to prevent bloodshed and, jointly with the U.N. mission, bring Georgia back to the negotiating table," Yevnevich said. In his words, "Tensions are growing fast in another conflict zone, South Ossetia, as well." On Tuesday, Georgia, in violation of the agreed-upon schedule, rotated its battalion in the joint peacekeeping force in the zone of the South Ossetian conflict. On Wednesday morning, Russian peacekeepers registered the passage of Georgian Su-25 attack planes in this zone. (Itar-Tass)

COURT IN UZBEKISTAN ORDERS ANOTHER U.S. NGO OUT

26 July

A court in the capital of Uzbekistan on Wednesday banned another U.S. nongovernmental organization from operating in the post-Soviet Central Asian country for pursuing activities inconsistent with its charter. The ruling upheld a motion from the Justice Ministry, which claimed that Arkansas-based Winrock International, registered in Uzbekistan as an organization helping farmers boost their crops, had been supporting local NGOs and working to raise the legal awareness of women. The ministry said that instead of concentrating on agricultural projects, Winrock had launched the production of video and print materials misrepresenting the status of women in Uzbekistan and creating a "negative and distorted" image of gender relations in traditional Uzbek households. Dozens of foreign NGOs and media outlets have been forced out of Uzbekistan since the West harshly condemned the Uzbek government's suppression of a revolt in the eastern city of Andijan last May. In April 2006, the American Bar Association had its Tashkent office shut down for alleged abuse of the republic's laws and funding of local NGOs. (RIA Novosti)

TAJIKISTAN ANZAB TUNNEL OFFICIALLY INAUGURATED

26 July

Tajikistan's Anzab tunnel was officially inaugurated Wednesday in presence of the visiting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Tajik counterpart Imomali Rakhmonov. The 5-km tunnel, constructed by Iranian experts, links northern and southern parts of Tajikistan. It also connects Dushanbe and capitals of the Central Asian states via land. Presidents Ahmadinejad and Rakhmonov attended the inaugural ceremony of the Anzab tunnel, built 80km northwest of Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe and on a transit route between Dushanbe

and Uzbekistan's Tashkent. Based on an agreement between Iran's Ministry of Road and Transportation and Tajikistan's Ministry of Transport two years ago, an Iranian company, Sabir, took over construction of the tunnel. The tunnel is built at a cost of dlrs 40 million, dlrs 21 million of which has been financed by Iran. (IRNA)

IRAN PRESIDENT PROPOSES SETTING UP PERSIAN LANGUAGE TV NETWORK IRAN, TAJIK, AFGHAN PEOPLE

26 July

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proposed establishment of a Persian language television network for Iranian, Tajik and Afghan people. In a joint press conference with Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov late on Tuesday, President Ahmadinejad said "Tajik officials have welcomed the initiative so it should be discussed with Afghan authorities." "Iran and Tajikistan can also have cooperation in television and radio sector by producing and using joint programs," he said. President Ahmadinejad further called for the development of a software in Persian language for the nations of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Pointing out the common historical and cultural grounds between Iran and Tajikistan, he said they can set up joint schools for promoting and exchange of knowledge on Persian language and literature. "Iran is ready to cooperate with Tajikistan in publishing its textbooks for different educational levels," he said. He added Iran has offered 100 scholarships to the students of Tajikistan consistent with necessity of Tajik education sector. "We have very strong cultural bonds so we need no translator for communicating with each other," he said. President Ahmadinejad called for developing cooperation between the two Muslim nations with implementing memoranda of understanding concluded during his trip to Tajikistan. (IRNA)