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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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KEY ISSUE: A short 75-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 focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed 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.

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KYRGYZ PARLIAMENT VOTES TO BAN FREEDOMS

Erica Marat

One year after Kyrgyzstan adopted a parliamentary system the question arises whether a strong parliament can really ensure freedoms better than a centralized presidential system. Introduced after the violent regime change in 2010, Kyrgyzstan's parliamentary system was to bring greater openness and equality after a decade of authoritarian leadership. However, in a recent resolution, the parliament has moved to oppress civic freedoms and freedom of the mass media in a manner more closely resembling the typical governance of post-Soviet authoritarian regimes. However, such moves have previously contributed to stirring social unrest in the country.

BACKGROUND: At a constitutional referendum last year, Kyrgyzstan's ethnic majority and minority groups both voted to support the transition from a presidential system to a parliamentary one. The referendum took place just two weeks after ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan claimed the lives of approximately 470 people and forced 400,000 to flee their homes. In spite of the uncertainty of the situation in post-conflict Kyrgyzstan, voters turned up at polling stations en masse. In return, the interim government pledged that the new constitution would move Kyrgyzstan away from the possibility of concentration of power in the hands of one person or a powerful elite. Thus, Kyrgyzstan sought to avoid excessive control over public life and make the political process more transparent.

While over the past year Kyrgyzstan indeed experienced greater freedom of speech and was able to conduct free and transparent parliamentary elections, the parliament's recent undemocratic decisions demonstrate that the country is still caught in the cycle of political oppression. On June 17, the parliament issued a decree aiming at regulating interethnic relations through controlling the media and restricting certain behavior. According to 95 of the total 120

MPs who voted for the decree, this would help sustain stability in the country.

Among other statutes of the decree, the parliament wants to ban the popular news website *Fergana.ru*, which has frequently published material exposing atrocities committed by Kyrgyz law-enforcement structures during and after the June violence. A number of MPs have also called for shutting down or imposing rigid moderation on the popular social networking site *Diesel.kg*. Furthermore, the parliament entrusts the Prosecutor General to prevent any inter-ethnic tensions by controlling the work of mass media.

Yet of all 35 statutes, the perhaps most alarming aspect of the parliament's recent resolution was to ban the "emergence of monoethnic" communities in ethnically mixed areas, as well as in places that have experienced interethnic conflict. The statute effectively seeks to control the freedom of movement for ethnic minorities inside the country and their right to preserve their ethnic identity and cultural heritage.

In a similar vote last month, the same number of MPs voted to ban the Finnish diplomat and leader of the Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission's (KIC) investigation Kimmo Kiljunen from



entering Kyrgyzstan. According to the MPs, Kiljunen's report inspires ethnic hatred in Kyrgyzstan and must be considered as a threat to national security. Kiljunen's report underscores the largely destructive role played by Kyrgyzstan's military officials during the conflict; the parliament argued that the report is biased and unfair.

Although President Roza Otunbayeva has criticized the parliament's decision by saying that Kyrgyzstan should no longer live in fear of oppression and persecution, she is taking a cautious stance on the issue. The president has also said that she wants the Kyrgyz language be mandatory in all schools. Furthermore, three major NGOs have spoken out against the parliament's decisions, calling on it to follow Kiljunen's recommendations. In an open letter to the president written on behalf of the International Federation of Human Rights, they asked Otunbayeva to prosecute all perpetrators of the ethnic violence. "The implementation of the KIC recommendations on conflict prevention and reconciliation, in particular on public safety and security, and on accountability is crucial. It should be central in the mandate of the national commission of

implementation which the Kyrgyz government announced", the statement argues.

IMPLICATIONS: Events of the past month have demonstrated that Kyrgyzstan's free and transparent parliamentary elections held in October 2010 did not promote democratic-minded politicians to power. Instead, ethnic nationalism and chauvinism mixed

with a lack of understanding of democratic values has seemingly driven the parliament's recent decisions, as it attempts to control public discussion and thus shield the ethnic majority from criticism of its control of the country's political space.

The Ata-Jurt party, which holds the largest number of seats in parliament, was previously known as the most nationalist of the five parties represented. The degree of intolerance, however, has spread also to other parties. Edil Baisalov, leader of the Aikol El party (that is not represented in parliament) recently posted on his Twitter account that it is presently mostly members of the Ar-Namys party who speak out in favor of controlling public discussion. "Ar-Namys came to power primarily through support from ethnic minorities. But its MPs are now the main advocates of xenophobic decisions", he wrote on June 16.

Despite the fact that one of the most conservative members of parliament, Tursunbay Bakir uulu from the Ar-Namys party, is himself an avid Twitter user, he was the first to act in favor of blocking websites.

According to Bakir uulu, he is not against the functioning of websites like *Diesel.kg*, but wants to prosecute and arrest anyone who inspires inter-ethnic hatred online. Bakir uulu has effectively demonstrated that most MPs prefer to be guided by their own judgment as to what is important for the population, rather than being accountable to the rule of law and demands of their constituencies.

By restricting the freedom of speech and seeking to regulate the media, the parliament has shown that it mostly comprises of MPs who are unfamiliar with the freedom of speech concept and are prepared to take unanimous illiberal decisions. Moreover, most Kyrgyz MPs are web-illiterate and some MPs are convinced that by blocking one web source they will be able to control the spread of unwanted information on the wider web.

A small group of moderates, mostly from the ranks of the opposition Ata-Meken party, has spoken out against the parliament's decisions. Especially younger MPs have shown a propensity to learn and to liberalize their views. Some of them have complained that their votes were used while they were away in favor of the resolution and now seek to change the voting procedures.

A number of NGO leaders warn that in the past, restrictions on the freedom of speech have increased tensions in Kyrgyz society. In 2004-2005, former President Askar Akayev sought to block media and shut down NGOs. In a similar manner Akayev's successor, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, moved to shut down independent and

foreign media in 2008-2010. Both were ousted as a result of popular protests.

Ousting the current parliament through popular support is nowhere in sight in Kyrgyzstan. However, NGOs and moderate politicians continue to play an important role in the public discourse and in resisting the urge of the parliamentary majority to impose more restrictions. The parliamentary system has played a role in exposing the views of individual politicians and political factions that were previously not as forthcoming. In the upcoming presidential elections scheduled for the end of this year, the struggle between hardliners and moderates will become ever more evident in the country.

CONCLUSIONS: With roughly 95 hardliners in the parliament, Kyrgyzstan has shown that it does not necessarily take an authoritarian leader to move rapidly to oppress civic freedoms. It took only one month for the parliament to shrink civic freedoms and replicate some of the authoritarian methods practiced by Kyrgyzstan's ousted presidents Akayev and Bakiyev. Yet, despite the parliament's recent decrees, Kyrgyzstan remains the most liberal state in the Central Asian region. The parliament's decrees on Kiljunen and the June violence have attracted extensive criticism, as well as some support from the population. The debate on what the parliament should and should not do continues in Kyrgyzstan.

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STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY IN UZBEKISTAN'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY

Farkhod Tolipov

Some years ago, Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov used the expression "strategic uncertainty" to describe the ambiguous geopolitical situation emerging in Central Asia due to the complex game played by great powers in and over the region. Recent trends in Uzbekistan's foreign policy, especially towards Afghanistan, reveal a strategic uncertainty in its own right due to Uzbekistan's recent controversial moves on the international arena. In turn, this perplexity reflects the ambiguity of geopolitical trends in the entire region. Uzbekistan is well positioned to play a role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, but needs to revise its foreign policy in line with emerging regional realities.

BACKGROUND: Uzbekistan has continuously sought to draw international attention to the problem of Afghanistan, and has put forward official statements and initiatives reflecting Uzbekistan's view of solutions to the conflict in several international fora over the years. The four key points in Uzbekistan's official position towards Afghanistan are that Afghanistan's territory has become a sanctuary for international terrorist organizations which pose threats to international security; a critical view of the international community's inadequate efforts to resolve Afghanistan's problems; a conviction that the UN should play a leading role in resolving the Afghan crisis; and that Uzbekistan has always been interested in establishing direct and positive ties with Afghanistan's authorities and contributing to the country's reconstruction. However, recent developments in the Afghanistan campaign, especially in the context of the anticipated withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops, have confused Uzbekistan's foreign policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

Since 2008, Uzbekistan has been obsessed with its initiative to establish a 6+3 format of negotiations, including six neighbors of

Afghanistan plus the U.S., the Russian Federation, and NATO. This was an attempt to consolidate the regional dimension of the Afghan problem. Already in the late 1990s, Uzbekistan initiated a 6+2 format, which existed until 2001 but was abandoned after 9/11. Both formats have revealed serious limitations of regional approaches.

The 6+3 format has suffered from insufficient support. While it is the only tangible regional proposal for the time being, it also has serious weaknesses. First, the proposal came late and largely serves as a means for engaging the U.S. in Afghanistan, while the U.S. plans to disengage. Second, NATO itself deals with each neighboring state separately on issues relating to Afghanistan and does not engage them on any regional basis. The same goes for the U.S. and Russia. Third, the format does not include Afghanistan, and also leaves out India which is an important actor in the region.

Fourth, one question to which there is no consensus either among the neighboring countries or among interested third parties, is whether to engage in negotiations with the Taliban. This certainly complicates the prospects for any regional approach.



IMPLICATIONS: The foreign policy steps Uzbekistan has recently taken are only partly the product of strategic calculations. They are simultaneously a result of larger geopolitical changes in the region.

The concept of regionalizing the Afghan process has its strengths and weaknesses. Its strength is obvious: a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the interest of regional countries. Therefore, a more extensive involvement in the Afghan process on their part is much needed and expected. But the concept's weakness is also obvious for two reasons. First, the strategic positions of regional states regarding Afghanistan are not always compatible, which contributes to strategic uncertainty. Second, the Afghan crisis itself is not so much a regional issue as a global one.

At the OSCE summit in Astana on December 1-2, 2010, Uzbekistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Norov made a speech containing two controversial statements. First, "Uzbekistan will construct its relations with Afghanistan only on a bilateral basis and will

not participate in any programs and projects adopted on a collective or block base". This statement contrasts with Uzbekistan's inclination to cooperate with NATO on Afghan affairs, which is reflected in the initiation of the 6+3 format – in any case a multilateral design. Second, "There is no military solution to the Afghan problem,

and the strategy of the coalition forces does not yield expected results". This statement was also controversial because the overall success of the coalition forces in Afghanistan since October 2001 is obvious.

On the other hand, in a speech given in Samarkand in December 2010, President Islam Karimov expressed serious concern with the perspective of U.S. troops withdrawing from Afghanistan. He said that after the withdrawal, Uzbekistan will have to stand face-to-face with Afghanistan, and should therefore do its best to maintain and develop traditional friendly relations with this country. He added that Uzbekistan will not pursue any pro- or anti-policy regarding its interactions with great powers over Afghanistan, but conduct its own independent policy based on national interests. This statement also seems to conceal strategic uncertainty because "conducting an independent policy based on national interests" can contradict the task of conducting a

coordinated policy based on the international agenda for Afghanistan.

In such conditions, Tashkent is eager to demonstrate that it actively participates in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Uzbekistan's assistance to Afghanistan includes providing its airspace and basing rights to international coalition forces for deliveries of humanitarian cargo; constructing electric transmission lines for electricity export; constructing the Khayraton – Mazar-i-Sharif railroad; reconstructing the Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul highway; building new schools, hospitals and other infrastructure in Afghanistan; and direct bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

However, economic relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan remain quite modest. Afghanistan's share in Uzbekistan's foreign trade is about 1.3 percent, while Uzbekistan's share in Afghanistan's foreign trade is about 3 percent. Afghanistan's trade turnover with the five neighboring countries constitutes about 8-10 percent of all its foreign trade.

In sum, regional economic cooperation has yet to develop and can become effective only with the successful reconstruction of Afghanistan. Understanding that in the short term perspective the current status quo in the neighboring country will hardly change for the better and that strategic uncertainty will protract in the entire region, especially in the context of the upcoming withdrawal of U.S. forces, Tashkent's policies vis-à-vis Afghanistan have become increasingly uncertain.

CONCLUSIONS: Two interrelated factors stemming from the Afghan question affect Tashkent's regional and international behavior. First, political and analytical circles in Uzbekistan are skeptical of U.S. plans to withdraw its forces. Second, the concept of a regional approach to resolving the Afghan crisis cannot be utilized practically because it contradicts the strategies chosen by the regional countries. Against this context, Uzbekistan's foreign policy posture towards Afghanistan appears ambivalent. Given its strategic controversies and the current confusion in its foreign policy towards Afghanistan, two issues need to be addressed from Uzbekistan's perspective: First, Uzbekistan is a key state north of Afghanistan and can both benefit and lose from the status quo in that country. It can benefit internationally but lose locally. The status quo helps Tashkent to position itself as an important strategic actor in Central and South Asian affairs and thereby boost its international credibility; however, the status quo poses permanent national security challenges which Tashkent needs to terminate or reduce. Second, Uzbekistan's foreign policy strategy needs to be updated in line with current geopolitical trends in the region. In particular, Tashkent should give up its obsolete 6+3 concept and replace it with other initiatives, more adequate to meeting the new situation in Afghanistan.

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SCO EXPANSION IMPASSE PERSISTS

Richard Weitz

For the sixth year, the annual Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) leadership summit declined to allow new countries to join the organization as full members or formal observers. There were strong expectations earlier this year that the June 15 gathering in Astana, which marked the institution's tenth anniversary, would see the SCO leaders finally overcoming their expansion impasse, but this was not to be. Instead of expanding the number of full members, the SCO has resorted to proliferating new categories of external association. While the memberships of applicants such as India, Pakistan and Iran are opposed by key SCO members, Turkmenistan continues to show disinterest in the organization.

BACKGROUND: In their declaration announcing the SCO's establishment in June 2001, the six founding governments announced that, "On the basis of consensus, it shall admit as its new members those countries which recognize the cooperation purposes and tasks within the framework of the organization ... and whose joining will facilitate the realization of cooperation". Despite this statement, the SCO has never invited another full member since its creation. The current roster of full SCO members includes only those six states that joined the organization at its founding in 2001: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

The SCO designated its first formal observer, Mongolia, in June 2004, after having finalized its regulations to govern the status of observers the previous April. India, Iran, and Pakistan obtained formal observer status at the July 2005 summit in Shanghai. Although other countries have subsequently expressed interest in becoming formal observers, the SCO has not designated any since 2005.

The governments of Iran, Pakistan, and most recently India have applied to become full members of the SCO. Until recently, the stated reason why the organization has not acted on

their applications or designated any other new members since its founding is that, despite several years of discussions and analysis, the SCO governments have been unable to define the legal basis for increasing the number of formal members. At their August 2008 summit, the SCO heads of state "set up a special expert group to consider a whole range of issues related to the expansion of the Organization". The 2009 summit attendees simply instructed the Special Expert Group to continue working on their draft document establishing the legal procedures for admitting new SCO members.

The June 2010 SCO summit formally agreed on the minimum eligibility criteria a country has to satisfy to apply for full membership: the state has to be located in Eurasia, already have observer or partnership status within the SCO, maintain diplomatic relations and active economic and humanitarian ties with all existing SCO members, and not be subject to UN sanctions or in a state of armed conflict with another country. Yet, the SCO governments claimed they needed another year to finalize a memorandum detailing the commitments states wishing to become full SCO members must make before the SCO can begin formal membership negotiations with them. They formally approved the



commitment memorandum at the Astana summit.

Despite these professed complexities, the real reason has been members' recognition that expanding the SCO further could prove problematic due to several underlying problems. The enormous disparities in these countries' populations, geographic size, economic resources, military power, and geopolitical orientation have already complicated the negotiation, approval, and implementation of SCO initiatives. Adding new full members could exacerbate these differences. For example, granting Iran that status would move the SCO more deeply into Middle Eastern issues. Promoting India and Pakistan could make the SCO an organization focused on South as well as Central Asia, which might disturb the four Central Asian states.

Furthermore, the entry of anti-Western Iran or Westward-leaning India could disrupt the SCO policy consensus on regional security issues such as the current position of supporting the continued deployment of NATO forces in Afghanistan, including by providing logistical assistance, but only until they restore much

greater security there. At that point, the SCO is on record as calling on Western troops to withdraw their military forces from the region. Membership expansion could also complicate the SCO's nonproliferation stance because several potential candidates for full membership possess nuclear weapons that were acquired outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or are likely seeking to acquire them. The SCO would find it harder to back Russian- and Chinese-supported

nonproliferation initiatives if India, Iran, or Pakistan were to become full members.

In addition, none of the existing observer countries is an obvious choice for full membership. The most enthusiastic aspirants for full membership, Iran and Pakistan, are the least desirable entrants. The potentially most valuable new member, Turkmenistan, has not shown any interest in joining the SCO.

IMPLICATIONS: The organization's consensus rule gives any member the right to block decisions, though Russia and China are clearly the most influential members in shaping SCO policies. Until now, while they have been able to agree which applications to reject, they have yet to concur in favor of any applicant. Beijing and Moscow have apparently accepted that neither Mongolia, a geographic outlier, nor Iran, a geopolitical pariah whose promotion to full membership would be seen as an anti-Western move, should become full members. In fact, Beijing and Moscow have sought to pressure Iran to moderate its nuclear behavior by adopting a rule that no country subject to

international sanctions can become a full SCO member.

But Beijing and Moscow have disagreed about the applications of India and Pakistan. Russian officials have set aside their traditional wariness of Pakistan and been open to allowing both states to become full members, but the Chinese reportedly vetoed India's application, even though this move effectively denied their regional ally Pakistan such a promotion since the consensus is that both countries need to be treated equally to avoid exacerbating their regional rivalry. At the summit, SCO leaders formally called on both countries to resolve their dispute over Kashmir to bolster their membership prospects. Yet, since the real problem is China's opposition to India's gaining international stature through full membership in the SCO (or on the UN Security Council), the likelihood is that New Delhi and Islamabad will be waiting in the wings for a long time.

The one country Beijing, Moscow, and the other four existing members would most likely welcome into their ranks, energy-rich Turkmenistan, has shown no interest in ending its long-standing policy of abstaining from joining regional blocs. Indeed, Turkmenistan is not even a formal SCO observer or dialogue partner. It would have to leapfrog over the existing observers in order to gain full membership, a step the other membership aspirants would not welcome.

The Astana summit attendees also deferred acting on Afghanistan's application to become a formal SCO observer, despite acknowledging the need to increase their engagement with that country given the impending NATO military withdrawal from Afghanistan. In fact, the SCO governments still seemed confused over what type of security structure they would like to construct to preserve regional security after

NATO reduces its military presence in Central Asia in a few years. Drawing closer to the Afghan government would help compensate for the NATO military withdrawal, but China appears reluctant to throw its weight behind Hamid Karzai for fear of antagonizing the Taliban, which could retaliate against the PRC's growing economic interests in Afghanistan. Karzai again had to attend the SCO summit in Astana as a special guest of the summit host government.

CONCLUSIONS: Instead of expanding the number of full members, the SCO has resorted to proliferating new categories of external association, producing a confusing mixture of affiliated countries arranged according to the four general categories of full members, formal observers, "guests" of the rotating hosting government of the annual SCO leadership summit, and most recently "dialogue partners". The existing SCO governments have resorted to proliferating new categories of external association because they have been unable to resolve their differences over which if any additional countries should be eligible for membership. In addition, the existing full members have sought to give other SCO affiliates, especially the observer countries, greater opportunities to participate in the organization's activities. This approach partly compensates those countries that have tried but failed to elevate their status within the SCO. But it also seeks to take advantage of their assets and resources by engaging them in SCO projects.

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TEHREEK-E-TALIBAN PAKISTAN STEPS UP ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING BIN LADIN'S DEATH

Rizwan Zeb

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has emerged as a clear and present danger to Pakistan's national security. It is gaining confidence and aiming to expand its area of operations. Since Osama bin Laden's death on May 2, TTP has killed at least 153 people and injured another 200 in various attacks to avenge bin Laden's death. Amongst the targets were paramilitary cadets, a U.S. consulate convoy, and Pakistan Navy's base PNS Mehran. TTP has global ambitions and has claimed responsibility for planning the attempted car bombing at Times Square in New York on July 7, 2010, and training the bomber Faisal Shahzad.

BACKGROUND: Although the term jihadi group was coined in recent times, the first jihadi group of the subcontinent was the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen led by Sayyid Ahmed of Bareili (1786–1831). Sayyid Ahmed was deeply influenced by the ideas of Muhammad Ibn-Abdul Wahhab. In south Asia, Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), produced a literature which divides the world into the Islamic and the un-Islamic. He also laid out a stage-by-stage strategy for Islamic revolution in his many speeches and writings. His book *Al-Jihad-fil-Islam* remains a comprehensive book on the subject. The Pakistani branch of the Deobandi School emphasizes the importance of Jihad. In recent years, a group of Deobandi ulema (scholars) have articulated jihad as a sacred right and obligation, encouraging their followers to go to any country to wage jihad to protect the Muslims of that country. These jihadi groups use various Quranic verses to justify their ideology. They have also produced extensive literature to explain and justify their struggle. In terms of producing literature, they are close to communist guerrillas of the past; this similarity has yet to become a subject of academic inquiry. Under the influence of the

Arab mujahedeen, most of the South Asian Jihadist elements have over the years also absorbed the ideology of takfir, according to which all Muslims who are not supporting such groups are partners of the Kafir (infidel) forces, and are hence legitimate targets.

The Taliban movement mostly comprises of fighters trained and financed by the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Pakistan during the joint jihad against the USSR in 1980s. These fighters came together from various Mujahedeen groups to form what later came to be known as the Taliban. It is widely believed that the Taliban sort under a number of commands: the southern, south-eastern and eastern Afghanistan and South Waziristan, in the tribal areas of Pakistan. However, these sections of the Taliban are not under any centralized command; they use different tactics and might also follow different ideologies. Most western Analysts believe that the Pakistani Taliban is basically part of the larger Taliban movement. However, a closer examination of the TTP puts this assertion into question.

IMPLICATIONS: Most of the jihadis in Pakistan, especially the splinter groups of various organizations, are now operating under the umbrella of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan



(Religious Students' Movement of Pakistan). TTP, a Deobandi Sunni organization, was established by Baitullah Mehsud in South Waziristan in December 2007. TTP's objectives include cleansing Pakistan of the foreign presence, meaning U.S. and overall Western presence, implementing Sharia and establishing a Caliphate. TTP is heavily influenced by the Mehsud tribe and militia. After the death of Baitullah Mehsud in a drone attack in August 2009, Hakimullah Mehsud, a confidant of Baitullah and the TTP commander for Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai became the Central Amir (leader) of the TTP. He is believed to be extremely sectarian and a cousin of Qari Hussain Ahmed Mehsud, who was reputed to have planned several suicide bombings before he was killed in a drone attack. The Central

Amir is in overall command of the organization and is assisted by a senior Naib Amir and a General Secretary. Decisions are taken by a Shura (consultative body) of 40 members.

A closer look at TTP's operational record since 2007 illustrates that it aims at creating chaos and fear in Pakistan through suicide bombings. By doing this, TTP believes that it can destabilize the state and force Islamabad to accept its demands. According to various experts and figures, TTP was responsible for at least 136 suicide bombings, 316 rocket attacks, 119 remote controlled bombs, 149 abductions, 69 beheadings, 12 missile attacks, 272 time bombings, 239 IEDs, 44 hand grenade attacks, 444 shootings and 142 other attacks between 2007 and 2009. It also attacked a number of

targets outside the tribal areas: the Federal Investigation Agency's Lahore office, the Naval War College in Lahore, the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, the Wah ordinance Factory, the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore, a police training school, and the GHQ Rawalpindi to name a few. TTP finances its activities from ransom money, bank robberies, forced taxes and drugs.

TTP claims to be the Pakistan chapter or branch of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. In fact, Baitullah Mehsud claimed that he was directly appointed by Mullah Omar at the time of the establishment of TTP. However, there are signs indicating otherwise. For instance, in January 2008, Taliban spokesman Zaibhullah Mujahid stated: "We have no concern with anybody joining or leaving the Taliban movement in Pakistan. We are an Afghan movement and Baitullah is a Pakistani and we as the Afghan Taliban have nothing to do with his appointment". TTP has also been involved in fighting with other jihadi groups, especially groups insisting on focusing their energy on Afghanistan. In one such clash, TTP killed Muslim Khan, also known as Shah Khalid along with his deputy, a veteran jihadi with links to the Afghan Taliban. TTP also killed Haji Namdar, a local warlord.

TTP also contains a non-pashtun group named the Punjabi Taliban, which mainly comprises of members of mainland Pakistani groups and splinters or break away factions from Kashmiri groups. These include Harkat-ul-Jihadi-e-Islami (HUJI), Jamiatul Furqan or Abdul Jabbar Group. The Punjabi Taliban is estimated to consist of about 2,000 people, mostly originating in Rahim Yar Khan, Lahore,

Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and other parts of Southern and Northern Punjab. It is claimed that 95 percent of the Punjabi Taliban speak fluent Pashtu and are more brutal than the Taliban of South Waziristan and other tribal regions.

TTP poses a long time threat to Pakistan's national security. Pakistan's interior minister considers it to be an extension of al Qaeda: "We have certain evidence that there is a close connection, and that there are similarities between al Qaeda and the TTP ... If al Qaeda is to move into the tribal areas, they have to look to the TTP for refuge ... The TTP is a host to al Qaeda and is their mouth piece".

CONCLUSIONS: It remains unclear whether TTP is a sub-group of the Afghanistan based Taliban movement or an independent terrorist group. However, one cannot ignore the fact that TTP cadre is much better trained and equipped than the Taliban in Afghanistan. The execution of six recent attacks on various airports and airbases in Afghanistan by the Taliban and the attack on PNS Mehran are illustrative in this regard. Whatever happens in Afghanistan, especially following the ongoing U.S. negotiations with the Taliban, the fact remains that the threat TTP poses to Pakistan's national security is increasing. The post May 2 wave of terror attacks are a clear indication of this.

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FIELD REPORTS

CHINA AND KAZAKHSTAN PRAISE STRATEGIC RELATIONS AND STRENGTHEN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Georgiy Voloshin

On June 13, Astana hosted the 25th high-level meeting of Kazakh and Chinese leaders since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev and his Chinese colleague Hu Jintao signed a declaration on strategic partnership, which provides for increased cooperation in a dozen areas, such as technological and scientific exchange, water management and culture. In his statement to the press, Hu referred to the joint plan of boosting bilateral trade expected to double by 2015, thus reaching the benchmark of US\$ 40 billion. Kazakhstan's leader also promised to start supplying China with nuclear tablets this year in order to better satisfy the ever-growing energy demand of Chinese industries.

Another important result of this bilateral meeting was the signing of an agreement between both countries' national oil companies stipulating in concrete terms the construction of a third branch of the Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline, operational since 2009. According to the plan unveiled by Kairgeldy Kabyldin, president of Kazakhstan's oil and gas flagship KazMunaiGaz, this branch will boost the overall throughput capacity of the pipeline. Another 25 billion cubic meters of gas will therefore be transported across thousands of kilometers starting in 2013.

The leaders of Kazakhstan and China were visibly generous in complimenting each other's efforts to build an area of peace and prosperity in Central Asia based on jointly shared interests and common values. As proof of the strong bilateral relationship existing between the two capitals, Astana and Beijing decided to start using exclusively their

national currencies for all kinds of transactions. This idea partly corresponds to Nazarbayev's idea of a new financial and monetary system untied from the U.S. dollar and, instead, abutted by regional currencies in closely integrated economic blocks.

Two days later, both presidents took part in the 10th anniversary session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization founded in 2001 for the purpose of tackling regional security issues and largely understood by most Western military experts as a counterweight to NATO. The other participating heads of state, namely the presidents of Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan as well as the leaders of observer states, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, were greeted at the Astana airport by Prime Minister Karim Massimov. Conversely, Nazarbayev personally welcomed his Chinese counterpart upon his arrival on Kazakh soil. According to some political commentators, this gesture confirms the importance of the Middle Kingdom for Kazakhstan's crisis-stricken economy, practically bailed out by the Chinese as a result of two massive loans.

In their final declaration, the SCO summit participants urged the NATO-led international coalition to cease all its military activities in Libya, because "international crises and conflicts should be settled in a peaceful manner through political dialogue". They also deplored the unilateral attempts of some nations to build up their missile defense systems "to the detriment of strategic stability and international security". This statement, presumably inspired by Russia in its

unresolved dispute with the U.S. over Washington's missile defense plans in Eastern Europe, followed lack of progress at the latest G8 summit in Deauville, where the issue was discussed. The anti-U.S. stance relating to the Bush administration-brokered "missile defense shield" is also a priority for Beijing keen on preserving the status quo and preempting any attempts at interference in whatever country's internal affairs.

Referring to the widespread use of electronic tools by organized crime and terrorist groups, Nazarbayev suggested ensuring an efficient cyber-security system with a view to prevent political destabilization at the national and regional levels. He also mentioned the U.S. experience in fighting cyber-terrorism and Internet-supported drug trafficking, but most observers believe that the president was actually responding to the recent string of popular revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa, dubbed the "Arab spring". The SCO may now be used by its member states to guarantee medium- and long-term stability by upholding

current regimes and depriving their opponents of powerful communication and mobilization tools. An independent decision to "shut off" from the outer world was recently taken in Belarus, which is considered a SCO partner and potential member.

Despite the expectations of a large number of political observers, the 10th SCO Summit did not produce any definitive decisions with regard to the membership of either India or Pakistan or Iran. The ever-present China-Russia rivalry is unlikely to permit a simultaneous rapprochement with New Delhi favored by Moscow and Islamabad supported by Beijing. The Iranian candidacy is all the more unlikely, given that Tehran is still under the pressure of international sanctions for its controversial nuclear program. As if to show their respect for the Iranian partner, Nazarbayev and Dmitry Medvedev had a special trilateral meeting with Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who had just denounced the "Western conspiracy" and proposed to oppose collaboration with the U.S.

TAJIKISTAN SUSPENDS ROGUN DAM RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

Alexander Sodiqov

On June 1, World Bank director of strategy and operations in Europe and Central Asia Theodore Ahlers announced that the Tajik government temporarily put a halt to a program for resettling tens of thousands of villagers from the projected reservoir area of the giant Rogun Dam. According to Ahlers, the resettlement was suspended until the results of two ongoing World Bank commissioned studies, which look at the dam's economic feasibility and its potential social and environmental impact, become available. These studies, expected to be completed in late 2012, will help the Tajik authorities to develop a proper resettlement framework based on the needs of the affected populations.

The effort to resettle people from the zone that will be flooded behind what is projected to become the world's tallest dam was launched in 2009. A special government regulation adopted in January 2009 envisaged the moving of more than 4,700 families, or about 30,000 people, from 63 villages in the districts of Rogun and Nurobod to Dangara, Tursunzade, and Darband. According to official reports, 600 families were resettled from the projected reservoir area in 2009, and about 1,000 families were relocated in 2010. These reports fail to mention, however, that many of the formally resettled families, particularly elderly family members, have continued living in their native villages.

Since its introduction in 2009, the Rogun Dam resettlement scheme has drawn intensive criticism from the resettlers, human rights organizations and some political analysts. Criticism from the affected populations and human rights watchdogs have mostly focused on the inadequate compensation for displaced communities. Tahmina Juraeva, coordinator of a project that monitors the Rogun Dam resettlement at the NGO Human Rights Bureau, says most resettlers are unhappy with the compensation they get for their houses and other property that they have to leave behind during relocation, finding it well below market rates.

“Whenever we meet with villagers in the Rogun Dam flooding zone, they complain that their houses and other property were evaluated many years ago, and prices have drastically increased since, while the value of the national currency has fallen,” says Juraeva. “If they are compensated for the lost property based on the old cost estimates, they will not be able to build new houses. Besides, many villagers suggest that officials responsible for evaluating their property often fail to do their job properly.”

According to Tajikistan’s deputy minister of labor and social protection Anvar Boboyev, most resettlers from the reservoir zone receive about 100,000 somoni (or about US\$ 20,000) in compensation for the property that they leave behind. Experts believe that this amount is sufficient to build a modest house. Anecdotal evidence suggests, however, that the actual compensation that most resettlers receive is often less than this amount. Besides, the money is paid in four installments, making it difficult for relocated families to purchase construction materials.

Monetary compensation alone does not guarantee that the resettlers will be able to effectively

reconstruct their livelihoods in the relocation areas. These areas often lack adequate social services and employment opportunities, except for hard and low-paid jobs on cotton-growing farms.

Some analysts have also cautioned the government that the resettlement might have unintended long-term political implications. The major reason for such warnings is the role that grievances generated by Soviet forced resettlement schemes played in the events leading up to the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992-1997 (see the 06/03/2009 issue of the CACI Analyst).

Although the resettlement program is formally suspended, the relocation of communities in the vicinity of the dam site will continue. According to Ahlers, the Tajik government and the World Bank have agreed that these communities have to be resettled because of the ongoing construction works at the site.

While Dushanbe and the international community wait for the results of the World Bank-led studies, it appears highly unlikely that any findings from these assessments will force Tajikistan to abandon the long cherished project. The Rogun Dam is regarded in Tajikistan as a way to meet its basic energy needs and boost foreign earnings through export of surplus electricity to neighboring Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, Uzbekistan’s fierce opposition to the Rogun project has turned it into a symbol of national pride for most Tajiks, who now see the dam as a way to boost Tajikistan’s regional influence. Therefore, it is likely that the Tajik government will push ahead with the resettlement program irrespective of the findings of the studies. The government should, however, use these findings at the very least to improve its resettlement program based on the needs of affected communities.

TBILISI THREATENS TO LEAVE GENEVA TALKS

Maka Gurgenzidze

The latest round of Geneva talks held on June 7 in Switzerland signaled Tbilisi's hesitation to participate in the multilateral format. Whereas previous rounds at least conveyed a "shared desire" to continue the talks, this discussion ultimately focused on reciprocal exchanges of blame between Moscow and Tbilisi and displayed the problematic dynamics of the negotiation format.

The talks, with the participation of senior representatives from Tbilisi, Moscow, Washington and the proxy Sokhumi and Tskhinvali regimes, were launched in Geneva shortly after August 2008 war. The discussions, mediated by the EU, OSCE and UN, aim to establish international security arrangements and provide a safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees to their homes. The Geneva talks have nevertheless failed to produce any tangible progress on their central topics; security and humanitarian issues.

On the eve of the sixteenth round of the Geneva meetings, the Georgian Interior Ministry accused Russia of "state-sponsored terrorism" against Georgia. "Incidents of potential terrorist nature" thus appeared to be the major topic for the last discussion.

Tbilisi insisted it possesses credible evidence on two terrorism attempts plotted by Russian officers who were deployed in the breakaway regions South Ossetia and Abkhazia. One of the explosions took place in a market and the other outside a NATO liaison office, according to the Georgian Interior Ministry. Tbilisi claimed that it had been successful in foiling a "bombing campaign", although it was not certain it would be able to thwart future terrorist acts provoked by Russia. "If terrorism attempts continue, Georgia will cease its participation in the Geneva talks" said Shota Utiashvili, the Georgian negotiator and a senior official of the Interior Ministry. Representatives from Tbilisi handed over a file containing

testimonies of detained citizens and other evidence to the Russian delegation.

Grigory Karasin, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, said the electronic evidence would be examined with great scrutiny. However, he also stated that allegations against Russian security officers were "Tbilisi's exercises in information-propaganda work". Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Aleksandr Lukashevich went one step further, blaming Georgia for carrying out twelve "raids" during this year in the Gali district of Abkhazia. The Georgian leadership has always been seeking for a "Russian trace" to justify its own failure in internal and external politics, Likashevich said.

The mediators of the Geneva talks voiced serious concern with the incidents taking place between the fifteenth and sixteenth rounds of negotiations. As a result of several shootings during the spring across the administrative borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two Georgians and one Russian FSB serviceman were killed and two other Georgian civilians wounded. The EU special representative Pierre Morel assessed the situation "as stable, but unpredictable with a potential for dangerous escalation" given the number of casualties in a short period, and especially after two and a half years' intensive work.

Not surprisingly, the hitherto unsuccessful consultations regarding non-use of force have created security setbacks, and have failed to lay the ground for humanitarian initiatives.

In particular, Tbilisi refused to sign a trilateral agreement on non-use of force with the proxy regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali, fearing that this would imply its indirect recognition of their independence. Russia, in turn, does not see itself as a party to the conflict and refused to sign a new security treaty with Georgia. As deliberations on security arrangements went into a deadlock,

Moscow alternatively proposed to commit unilaterally to non-use of force. The subsequent declaration on non-use of force made by President Mikheil Saakashvili at the European Parliament on November 23 did not change the overall picture, however, as the Kremlin required a declaration from Georgia in the form of written agreement.

Although Georgia proclaims incidents of terrorism to be the reason why it considers abandoning the Geneva talks, the argument has more fundamental causes. In fact, Tbilisi is losing its patience with perpetual talks on security mechanisms which do not change much for the country either in terms of stability guarantees or in terms of returning IDPs and refugees to their houses. Given Russia's unfulfilled implementation of the Sarkozy-Medvedev cease-fire agreement to withdraw forces from the conflict zones to pre-war positions, even Moscow's pledge not to use force might not make

much difference. What matters in this regard is a more vigorous engagement of international organizations, along with U.S. and EU diplomacy to counter the continued militarization of the breakaway regions.

Threatening to abandon the Geneva talks, Georgia likely seeks to push European and U.S. mediators to make Russia agree on increased transparency and humanitarian access to the administrative borders, which might eventually result in the presence of international monitoring forces across the territory. Whereas this task is truly challenging, it is an avenue for reducing the risk of dangerous escalation anticipated by the mediators at the last round of Geneva talks. The next round scheduled for October 4 might start approaching these questions in order to maintain the only venue for communication between Georgia and Russia.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VISITS UZBEKISTAN AHEAD OF THE SCO SUMMIT

Erkin Akhmadov

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Uzbekistan on June 14, 2011. Medvedev was invited by Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov to discuss some issues of regional and international politics as well as economic issues. Even though the visit lasted only four hours, both leaders stated it was quite fruitful. Since the negotiations took place behind closed doors, observers voiced several ideas about the possible issues on the meeting's agenda.

Sergey Prihodko, Assistant to the Russian President, reported that it was expected that the presidents would discuss the perspectives of bilateral economic cooperation including fuel and energy, expanding cooperation in combating international terrorism, extremism and organized crime, and coordinating efforts to fight the drug threat. During the meeting, President Medvedev noted that even though Russia and Uzbekistan have

quite different figures, there is a growth in the trade turnover between the two states by 35-40 percent. Thus, he concluded that relations between the two states are "strategically very important for both parties".

The two leaders also exchanged opinions about the events in the Middle East and North Africa and discussed the possible impact of these events on the situation in other regions of the world, including Central Asia. Karimov noted that the primary concern for Russia and Uzbekistan in relation to these events is the "elaboration of our common positions [and the] exchange of sincere opinions on the situation and issues that will need to be resolved in the nearest future". Medvedev agreed with Karimov, stating that the consequences of these events will most likely play out over a substantial period of time and therefore Russia is interested in

their development according to a clear and predictable scenario. He emphasized that they must discuss everything that happens in the closest neighborhood to guarantee the national interests of their countries. Furthermore, Medvedev underlined that Russia always maintains an open position on all key issues and has very close ties with Uzbekistan.

It is also speculated that the presidents may have touched upon one of the most controversial topics in the region – the usage of water. In this regard, Uzbekistan is unhappy about Tajikistan’s resumed plans to construct the Rogun hydropower station on the transboundary Vakhsh River. These concerns were raised after a working visit of Tajikistan’s President Emomali Rahmon to Brussels last week, which resulted in a loan of US\$ 21 million from the European Investment Bank for developing the energy sector in Tajikistan. Since Tajikistan has seemingly secured the EU’s support on this matter, Uzbekistan hopes that Russia will support its position as it did in January 2009. Then the Russian president stated that “Upstream and downstream Central Asian states should jointly coordinate such large projects”.

Finally, a delicate topic which was likely discussed is the domestic situation in Uzbekistan. The day before the Russian president’s visit, several Russian media outlets speculated that President Karimov may try to secure Moscow’s support in case the situation in Uzbekistan would destabilize. Several local experts also warn that in light of the recent

gains by the opposition, which has announced the organization of a united coordination front, it is possible that the situation in Uzbekistan will undergo some changes. These could find inspiration in the events in the Middle East and North Africa. Local analysts think that Karimov would request political and military support from Russia in case of mass protests, and that he would in exchange reorient Uzbekistan’s foreign policy towards Russia. Rumors about upcoming protests have circulated several times during the last few months, and have primarily originated from exiled opposition politician Muhammad Salih.

It is noteworthy that almost no authoritative representatives of the Russian media accompanied Medvedev to Tashkent. Exceptions were made only for the film crews of pro-Kremlin TV channels. Russian political observer Arkadiy Dubnov observed that there was not a single print journalist from the presidential pool in this crew. According to Dubnov, this was in accordance with a request from the accepting side, as Russian media supposedly initiated a recent disinformation campaign about mass protests in the cities of Uzbekistan. This information was, however, not confirmed.

Thus, there were seemingly several reasons for Karimov to meet with the Medvedev behind closed doors. The meeting also presented an opportunity for the Russian President to improve its relationship with Uzbekistan, which has otherwise sought to strengthen its connections to the West lately.



New Silk Road Paper:

Between Hesitation and Commitment: The EU and Georgia after the 2008 War
By Lili Di Pippo

This Silk Road Paper discusses the evolution of relations between Georgia and the EU after the 2008 war between Georgia and Russia.

The Silk Road Paper can be downloaded free at www.silkroadstudies.org. Hardcopy requests should be addressed to Paulette Fung at caciz@jhu.edu.

NEWS DIGEST

KYRGYZSTAN VIOLENCE: OSH UNREST REMEMBERED ONE YEAR ON

10 June

Kyrgyzstan has marked one year since sectarian violence ravaged the south of the country, leaving hundreds dead.

President Roza Otunbayeva, whose government has been criticised for not tackling ongoing tension, said she took moral responsibility for the unrest. But she told the BBC that Kyrgyzstan had achieved a lot in the past year - including holding a free election. Some 470 people died in four days of clashes between Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks in the south of the country. Hundreds of people were injured and thousands of homes destroyed in four days of violence, mainly around the cities of Osh and Jalalabad. The unrest followed weeks of turmoil after the ousting of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev in a mass uprising in April 2010. To mark the anniversary, Ms Otunbayeva unveiled a marble statue in Osh depicting two women weeping and embracing - one from the Uzbek community, the other an ethnic Kyrgyz. "We took the moral responsibility for the clashes, for all the tragic events of 2010. We're not going to run away from that," she told the BBC's Central Asian service. She said the country's major achievement had been holding a free and fair election for the first time in 20 years of independence from the Soviet Union. "Two days of debates in parliament have shown that we are not at war between clans - we have discussed under one roof all together those tragic, very bloody events," she said. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International both warned this week that Kyrgyzstan has not tackled the divisions between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. The groups said failure to deliver justice for the killings could spark more violence. Most of those killed were ethnic Uzbeks, but Amnesty says the authorities have targeted ethnic Uzbeks in their investigations. Elaman Myrzabek-uulu, an ethnic

Kyrgyz from Osh, told Reuters news agency relations between the groups "ought to be better". The 17-year-old volunteers in an unarmed vigilante team helping the police to keep order in Osh, but said he was concerned there were no Uzbeks among them. "Uzbeks are not open for contact. They do not trust us, although I aided Uzbeks during the June events," he said. (BBC)

AZERBAIJAN SEEKS DEFENSE INDUSTRY TRAINING

10 June

Azerbaijan is establishing a department at the Azerbaijan Technical University to train staff for industries overseen by the Ministry of Defense. Military specialist Azeri army Col.-Lt. Uzeir Jafarov said establishing a separate department for training cadres in the defense industry is an important step. "The Ministry of Defense Industry is a new structure and surely this structure will always need for capable specialists," Jafarov told the Trend news agency. "This ministry has already formed a definite opinion about itself. It represents Azerbaijan at international exhibitions and events. "We should think about the future of professional staff because today's professionals have been educated in Soviet times. Today, both the central office of the ministry and military enterprises in this field need modern technology specialists. If this potential of professionals is absent, in future we may face great difficulties."

Azeri military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, have said that Baku wants to become more self-reliant in terms of weaponry as Azeri military planners are greatly concerned that Russian and Western suppliers of military equipment could halt shipments if the Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia reignited. (UPI)

ROADSIDE BOMB KILLS 15 IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

11 June

Afghan authorities say a roadside bomb has hit a bus in southern Afghanistan, killing 15 people, including eight children, as a report from the United Nations said May was the deadliest month for civilians in the country since the UN mission began compiling statistics. The Interior Ministry says the attack took place today in the Arghandab district of Kandahar Province. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said it had documented 368 "conflict-related" civilian deaths in May this year and 593 civilian injuries. "More civilians were killed in May than in any other month since 2007 when UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties," said Georgette Gagnon, the UNAMA Director for Human Rights. "We are very concerned that civilian suffering will increase even more over the summer fighting season which historically brings the highest numbers of civilian casualties. Parties to the conflict must increase their efforts to protect civilians now," she said in a statement. (RFE/RL)

CHINA, KAZAKHSTAN EYE DOUBLING OF TRADE

13 June

China and Kazakhstan on Monday signed a strategic partnership deal and vowed to double trade as President Hu Jintao visited the energy-rich Central Asian state to tighten already close ties. Hu held talks with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on the first leg of a tour of three ex-Soviet states which China hopes will result in a slew of new energy deals and increase its influence in the region. "We are entering a new level of partnership and this is a solid basis. It completely meets the interests of our countries," Nazarbayev said after the strategic partnership agreement was signed. "Development of such relations is not a union and is not targeted against a third country," the text of the joint statement released later on Monday said, adding that the Sino-Kazakh partnership serves as a foreign policy priority for both countries. Nazarbayev said that last year trade volume exceeded \$20 billion and in the first quarter of this year turnover already exceeded \$5 billion. Hu said that by 2015 the two sides now planned to "increase trade turnover to \$40 billion". Kazakhstan's vast energy and metal reserves are hugely attractive for neighbouring energy-hungry China and Nazarbayev also said that a previous

accord to deliver Kazakh nuclear fuel to China would be implemented this year. China over the last years has also been pumping billions of dollars of investment into the Kazakh economy. Mining giant Kazakhmys signed a memorandum of understanding Monday with the China Development Bank for a \$1.5 billion credit to develop the Aktogay copper mine in the east of Kazakhstan. "This funding will allow us to develop Aktogay and yet retain full ownership of the asset," said Oleg Novachuk, chief executive of Kazakhmys. In a packed week-long programme, Hu will attend a regional summit here in the Kazakh capital Astana, visit Russia for talks with its leaders and a top economic forum and end with a stop in Ukraine. On Wednesday the Chinese president is due attend the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Group (SCO) -- a regional security group seen as a rival of NATO -- at a meeting that will also include the Russian and Iranian presidents, Dmitry Medvedev and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Hu is hoping his visit to Russia will see the signature of a massive contract for state-controlled giant Gazprom to deliver gas from western Siberia to China for the next 30 years. The two sides last year already signed an initial agreement for the deal, which would mark a breakthrough for Gazprom's goal of reducing its dependence on European customers for its supplies. Officials have expressed hope the deal could be signed at the Saint Petersburg Economic Forum this week, where Hu is to be the guest of honour. However the Interfax news agency quoted a source as saying last week that talks had reached a "critical stage" due to a last-minute dispute over pricing. In Ukraine, which is energy-poor compared with Kazakhstan and Russia, Hu will be looking to further bolster China's influence in the strategic nation which it has quietly but significantly cultivated in recent years. (AFP)

AZERBAIJANI FM VISITS GEORGIA

13 June

Georgia and Azerbaijan "have no problems" in bilateral relations, Grigol Vashadze, the Georgian foreign minister, said after meeting with his Azerbaijani counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov in Tbilisi on June 13. "Georgia and Azerbaijan, which are strategic partners, try to push already close ties to a new stage," he said at a joint news conference with the Azerbaijani counterpart. The Azerbaijani Foreign Minister, who pays a two-day visit to Georgia on June 13-14, said that there "are less and less controversial issues in our bilateral agenda" and

that relations were “more cooperative one in all spheres.” Elmar Mammadyarov also met with Georgian Parliamentary Chairman Davit Bakradze and plans a meeting with President Saakashvili. Georgia and Azerbaijan have yet to agree on border demarcation. Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister, Davit Jalagania, said in an interview with Tbilisi-based Russian-language Novosti Gruzya news agency in April that the two countries had agreed 66% of joint border. He said that it was “difficult process” and no immediate breakthrough was expected. He, however, also said that there was a political will from the both side to resolve the issue. (Civil Georgia)

KAZAKHSTAN'S PARLIAMENT REJECTS NATO DEAL ON AFGHANISTAN

15 June

Kazakhstan's parliament has decided to abstain from joining the NATO-led international coalition in Afghanistan, a member of the lower house said on Wednesday. Nurtai Sabilyanov said the parliament would not consider a bill on ratifying the agreement with NATO at its joint session. "Given the opinion of the senate and the public, the Majilis [lower house] will return the agreement to the government and it will have no legal effect because of the non-ratification by parliament," Sabilyanov said. Majilis ratified the agreement with NATO on May 18 but the upper house turned the bill down on June 9 pending a decision from a joint parliamentary session. "We must not send [our] military to Afghanistan, it is clear to all," he said. On May 22, the Taliban circulated a statement warning Kazakhstan that if it sends troops to support the NATO contingent in Afghanistan, it would bear serious consequences as it contradicts the interests of all countries in the region. The Kazakh Foreign Ministry then said that it was only going to send four officers into the International Security Assistance Force. The international coalition in Afghanistan includes 47 nations, with 19 of them not NATO members and six of them belonging to the Organization of the Islamic Conference. (RIA Novosti)

DAGESTAN IMAM IS LATEST MODERATE MUSLIM MURDER VICTIM

15 June

Concern is growing for prominent moderate Muslims in Russia's Dagestan region after an imam was shot dead days after the killing of an academic. Unidentified gunmen shot Ashurlav Kurbanov near

his mosque in the northern village of Mikheyevka, investigators said. Maksud Sadikov, rector of an Islamic college in the regional capital Makhachkala, was killed last week. Attacks on moderate clerics have been blamed on Islamist separatists. Two imams were also shot dead in April and between 13 and 50 Islamic religious leaders are said by observers to have been killed violently in the North Caucasus in recent years. Sadikov had been rector of the Institute of Theology and International Relations since 2003. He had sought to promote "good education" as a non-violent weapon in the fight against religious extremism. One of the Sufi Muslim's projects was a translation of the Koran into Russian. Regional analyst Alexei Malashenko told The Moscow News there was a civil war under way within Islam in the North Caucasus. "Islamic radicals' targets are the most powerful, the most influential, most educated people among traditional Islam," he said. Dagestan has been gripped by an Islamist insurgency since 1999, when militants backed by fighters from neighbouring Chechnya launched an offensive against Russian control. (BBC)

TAJIKISTAN UPSET BY 'US INVASION' VIDEO GAME

17 June

A video game depicting a fictional US and Chinese invasion of Tajikistan to prevent an Islamist takeover has upset the Central Asian nation after apparently touching a raw nerve. A member of parliament called the game creators on Friday "foes" with a "sick fantasy," as he urged parliament to ban sale of the videogame "Operation Flashpoint: Red River." "This computer game is a result of sick fantasy by Tajikistan's foes, who dream that our country will remain in the abyss of constant conflicts," said Davlatali Davlatzoda, a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party. "It is painful and horrible to watch how our villages and cities are being destroyed as a result of anti-extremist actions by the Chinese and the Americans," he said. "Our country will have presidential elections in 2013 and I am deeply convinced that certain forces cannot calmly watch how they will take place," he said. According to the plot of the game released in Europe in April, the US forces spill over from the neighbouring Afghanistan to prevent Islamic militants from taking power in Tajikistan in 2013. China's People's Liberation Army enters Tajikistan to battle American dominance, according to the fictional videogame plot. (AFP)

TAJIK RELIGIOUS FIGURE SLAMS BILL BANNING KIDS FROM MOSQUE

17 June

A prominent Tajik religious leader and former deputy prime minister has criticized a parental-responsibilities law as being "openly against the will of God," RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports. The legislation, which was submitted to parliament by President Emomali Rahmon and approved by the lower house of parliament on June 15, bans children under the age of 18 from attending prayers in mosques. It must still be approved by the upper house and signed by the president before going into effect. Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda told RFE/RL that under the legislation, parents whose underage children are caught attending prayers would be held legally responsible for allowing them to do so. Turajonzoda also criticized an amendment to Tajikistan's criminal code approved by parliament on June 15 that makes the opening of illegal religious schools punishable by between five and 12 years in jail. Previously, running such illegal schools incurred only an administrative punishment or a fine. During parliamentary debate on June 15, Education Minister Abdujabbor Rahmonov reminded deputies that the draft ban on kids in mosques proposed by Rahmon was published several months ago for public discussion. Only two parliament deputies -- both from the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan of which Turajonzoda is a former deputy chairman -- criticized the draft law and opposed it. The authorities are increasingly concerned about young people coming under the influence of religious extremists. More than 1,200 young Tajiks were constrained to abandon their studies at Islamic universities and madrasahs abroad after Rahmon "advised" their parents last summer that such students should return to Tajikistan to continue their education. (RFE/RL)

KAZMUNAYGAZ DISMISSES PROTESTORS AT ITS PRODUCTION UNIT

17 June

Exploration and Development KazMunayGaz announced about development of situation in connection with the protest action in its production unit OzenMunayGaz in Zhanozen Region. Part of OzenMunayGaz workers are striking. Meanwhile, the number of protestors is reducing. Loss in production has amounted to roughly 85,000 tons since the very beginning of protest actions. Major reason is that service and repair of wells and field

technique became complicated due to absence of part of the special technique. Impact on the company's annual production directly depends on term of rehabilitation of stable production activities here. The company thinks that the protesters' demands are unfounded. It was confirmed by the court decision on May 24, 2011. The protest was illegal. The company began dismissing protestors in accordance with the Labor Code for violation of labor discipline.

Exploration and Development KazMunayGaz stresses its readiness to review the dispute within the procedures provided by the legislation, including through participation of arbitration commission. However, it can be possible only after full cessation of illegal protests and rehabilitation work. Representatives of OzenMunayGaz Trades Union were informed of that in a meeting with the company's senior management in Astana on June 13. (Trend)

TAJIKISTAN CHARGES BBC REPORTER WITH EXTREMISM

18 June

Tajikistan on Saturday charged a BBC reporter with membership of a banned Islamist group, after his arrest sparked global concern that he was being persecuted merely for opposing the regime. Urunbay Usmonov, a correspondent for the BBC's Central Asia service, was arrested on suspicion of membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is outlawed in the secular Muslim states of ex-Soviet Central Asia. A criminal investigation has been opened against him "for participation in an extremist group," the Tajik state committee for national security told AFP in a statement. "The initial investigation, based on witness testimony and evidence, confirms Usmonov's membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir," it said. It added that Usmonov allegedly had long maintained contact with Hizb ut-Tahrir figures and distributed its materials with the aim of bringing about a "violent seizure of power and change in the constitutional makeup of Tajikistan." The BBC, which gives Usmonov's age as 59, has said it "has no reason to believe these allegations" and also noted that Usmonov's family has said he appeared to have been beaten up by the Tajik security services. The British embassy has urged Dushanbe to clarify the situation while the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has said his arrest "raises concerns about undue limitations on free expression." Global media rights watchdog

Reporters Without Borders said there is "little doubt" that Usmonov was arrested for his journalistic activities, noting that he has been unafraid to report on sensitive subjects like Tajikistan's controversial Rogun Dam project. "Using the fight against extremism in order to crack down on dissidents is standard practice in Tajikistan," it said in a statement. "So far, it is the police who have behaved illegally in this case." Freedom House meanwhile called for Usmonov's immediate release, saying the Tajik authorities "have a history of using the fight against extremism as an excuse to crack down on voices of dissent." Usmonov has worked for the last decade for the BBC's Uzbek-language operation. Turkic-speaking Uzbeks form the largest minority in Tajikistan, whose national language is derived from Persian. Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in the 1950s in the Middle East and advocates the establishment of an Islamic "caliphate" across Muslim Central Asia, although its members insist they believe this should be achieved by peaceful means. It appeared in Central Asia around a decade ago and its attempts to recruit new members and its distribution of anti-government literature has worried the authorities, particularly in Tajikistan, the poorest state of the former Soviet Union. In the past decade, Tajikistan has convicted some 500 men and women for membership of Hizb ut-Tahrir. This year alone, 40 have been jailed. (AFP)

U.S. CONDUCTING 'OUTREACH' TALKS WITH TALIBAN, GATES SAYS

19 June

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates says that the State Department, in tandem with other countries, has been conducting preliminary "outreach" talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Gates told CNN television that "these contacts are very preliminary at this point." He stressed it was crucial to determine "who really represents the Taliban" before jumping into talks with parties claiming to represent Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar. Earlier, Afghan President Hamid Karzai said the United States [was in contact with the Taliban](#) over a possible end to the nearly decade-long war in Afghanistan. (RFE/RL)

POLICE IN DAGESTAN KILL MILITANT INVOLVED IN NUMEROUS TERRORIST CRIMES

19 June

A militant involved in numerous terrorist crimes was killed on Sunday in Russia's North Caucasus republic of Dagestan, Russia's National Anti-Terrorism Committee (NAK) said. Shamil Payzullayev, nicknamed "Abdusalam", was killed in Reduktorniy village near to Dagestani capital of Makhachkala in one of an apartments blocked by police, when he was trying to put up armed resistance. "[Payzullayev] assisted in a transportation of potential suicide bombers, who were intended to conduct a terrorist attack on 2011 new year's night in Moscow," the NAK statement said. "'Abdusalam' was also involved in a number of terrorist crimes, extortion, killings of civilians [imams, businessmen] and the military." He was also a leader of the so-"izberbashskaya" subversive and terrorist group, NAK said. More that a decade after the end of a federal war against separatists in Russia's North Caucasus republic of Chechnya, Russian security forces continue to fight militants in other regions in the area, who stage frequent attacks on security forces, police and civilians. (RIA Novosti)

POLICE PREVENTS UNSANCTIONED RALLY OF AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION

19 June

Attempts of the so-called Public Chamber, which unites several opposition parties, to hold a rally at the square near the square in front of the Narimanov cinema on Sunday failed. At 17:30, a group of opposition leaders wanted to hold an unsanctioned rally, Trend correspondent reported from the scene. Police prevented the unsanctioned rally.

If the rally, scheduled for June 19, is held on the territory, allowed by executive power of Baku city, the police will provide security of participants. The executive power of Baku city proposes to hold a protest in the Bibi Heybat settlement, in a residential area on the 20th site. The coordinating council of the so-called Public Chamber decided to hold an unsanctioned rally June 19 on the square in front of the Narimanov cinema. (Trend)

PER CAPITA GDP IN KAZAKHSTAN TO REACH \$15,000

20 June

Per capita GDP in Kazakhstan will reach \$15,000 by 2016, the President Nursultan Nazarbayev said. "By 2016 Kazakhstan should enter the group of countries with high personal income levels. The per capita GDP should grow to \$15,000," Nazarbayev said at the Saint-Petersburg Economic Forum on Saturday. The transcript of the president's speech was circulated by his press office. He said that in 2010 Kazakhstan had adopted a Strategic Development Plan until 2020, which defined the key areas to be modernized during the decade. According to Nazarbayev, until 2015 the country plans to implement around 500 projects with a total cost of about \$80 billion and create 200,000 new permanent jobs. "We will make every effort to make Kazakhstan a regional trade, logistics and business hub as well as a Central Asian center of knowledge. This will enhance economic cooperation between countries and improve living standards in our country and the whole region," he said. (Interfax)

GEORGIA RECOGNIZES 'CIRCASSIAN GENOCIDE'

20 June

Georgia became the first country to recognize 19th century massacre and deportations of Circassians by the Tsarist Russia in the northwest Caucasus as "genocide". The Georgian Parliament passed on May 20 with 90 votes to 0 a resolution saying that "pre-planned" mass killings of the Circassians by the Tsarist Russia in second half of 19th century, accompanied by "deliberate famine and epidemics", should be recognized as "genocide" and those deported during those events from their homeland, should be recognized as "refugees." "This [decision] is not directed against the Russian people," Giorgi Gabashvili, a senior ruling party lawmaker, said during the discussion of the draft at the parliamentary session on May 20. "The Russian people should not be permanently living under the burden imposed on them by their leaders in the 19th century, 20th century and 21st century," he added. Another senior ruling party lawmaker Givi Targamadze said that the Parliament should also consider "situation surrounding other peoples" of the North Caucasus. "This process will lead us to a powerful and a significant Caucasian unity," MP Givi Targamadze, who chairs parliamentary committee for defense and security, said. The only lawmaker who spoke against the resolution during

the parliamentary debates on May 20 was MP Jondi Bagaturia, who said that although "it is impossible not to show solidarity towards the Circassian people," emotions should be put aside. "Will not it look unfair in respect of Armenians?" MP Bagaturia said, referring to multiple requests from Georgia's Armenian community to recognize the massacre of Armenians in Ottoman Empire as genocide. Such appeals, made by the Armenian community almost every year in April, remain unheeded by the Georgian lawmakers. A lawmaker from the ruling party, Nugzar Tsiklauri, who chairs parliamentary committee for diaspora and Caucasian issues, responded that linking these two issues was inappropriate. He said that Armenia and Turkey, "Georgia's two friendly nations", would address differences in the process of "a positive dialogue". He said that Georgia's meddling in this process would mean "playing unclear and unjustified role." Christian-Democratic Movement (CDM), which is a leading party in the parliamentary minority group, did not voice its position during the debates. MP Giorgi Akhvlediani of CDM told Civil.ge after the vote that his party abstained from voting because the decision was taken too hastily and the decision might be inappropriate from the political point of view. The ruling party lawmakers first announced about the intention to consider possibly of recognizing mass killings of Circassians as genocide in April, 2010. The announcement was made a month after Tbilisi hosted a conference, Hidden Nations, Enduring Crimes: The Circassians & the Peoples of the North Caucasus Between Past and Future. The conference was organized by Washington-based Jamestown Foundation and Tbilisi-based Ilia State University's International School for Caucasus Studies with the participants including, among others, representatives of Circassian diaspora. At the end of the conference, on March 21, 2010 participants made an appeal to the Georgian Parliament requesting to recognize deportations and massacre of Circassians more than a century ago as genocide. (Civil Georgia)

KAZAKH WOMAN DIES AFTER SELF-IMMOLATION

21 June

A Kazakh woman who set herself on fire in front of the ruling Nur-Otan party's headquarters in Astana on June 20 has died, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Interior Minister Qalmukhamet Qasymov told journalists on June 21 that the woman was hospitalized with burns over 95 percent of her body

and died later in an Astana clinic. Qasymov said the woman was protesting her son's 10-year imprisonment for a drugs-related crime. The woman disagreed with the verdict and had appealed to other courts and the presidential Nur-Otan party asking for help to mitigate her son's punishment. The woman's name has not been made public. Nur-Otan officials were not immediately available for comment. (RFE/RL)

CASPIAN LEGAL STATUS MAY BE COMPLETED NEXT YEAR

21 June

If some countries show flexibility, work on the preparation of the convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea will be completed next year, Iranian Presidential Adviser Mohammad Mehdi Akhundzadeh was quoted by the ISNA as saying. Akhundzadeh met with journalists and spoke about the agenda of the forthcoming round of negotiations on the convention. He said the meeting will be held in Moscow in a month and will focus on the work on the coordination of the legal status of the Caspian Sea. He added that significant progress was stressed at the last meeting. He thinks that the Moscow meeting will accelerate the development of decisions. As to finalizing the legal status of the Caspian Sea, Akhundzadeh expressed confidence that if some countries show a little flexibility, it will be possible next year. The consultations are under way on this issue. In November 2003, the Caspian countries signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Caspian Sea.

In July 1998 Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement on the delineation of the northern part of the Caspian Sea in order to exercise sovereign rights for subsoil use.

On Nov. 29, 2001, and Feb. 27, 2003, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan signed an agreement on the delineation of the Caspian Sea. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Russia signed an agreement on the delineation of adjacent sections of the Caspian Sea on May 14, 2003. (Trend)

GEORGIAN OPPOSITION LEADER CRITICIZING GEORGIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN OPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN

21 August

The Georgian opposition Labor Party has urged the parents of military servicemen not to let their sons go to Afghanistan as "mercenary invaders." "Many NATO countries do not send their servicemen to

Afghanistan. Moreover, the alliance members are withdrawing their troops from this country, but despot Saakashvili [Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili] is making up for the shortage by our sons," Labor Party leader Kakhaber Dzagania said at a news conference on Tuesday. Meeting with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden in Rome recently, President Saakashvili promised to double the number of Georgian troops in Afghanistan, he said. "We are calling on the NATO leadership to decline the sending of more servicemen to Afghanistan from Georgia and decline Georgia's services in this operation at all, so as not to increase the list of Georgians killed in that country. Nine Georgians have already died there, and it's time to stop this," Dzagania said. (Interfax)

TURKISH MINISTER: ARMENIAN-TURKISH BORDER TO BE OPENED AFTER AZERBAIJANI-ARMENIAN RELATIONS NORMALIZE

21 June

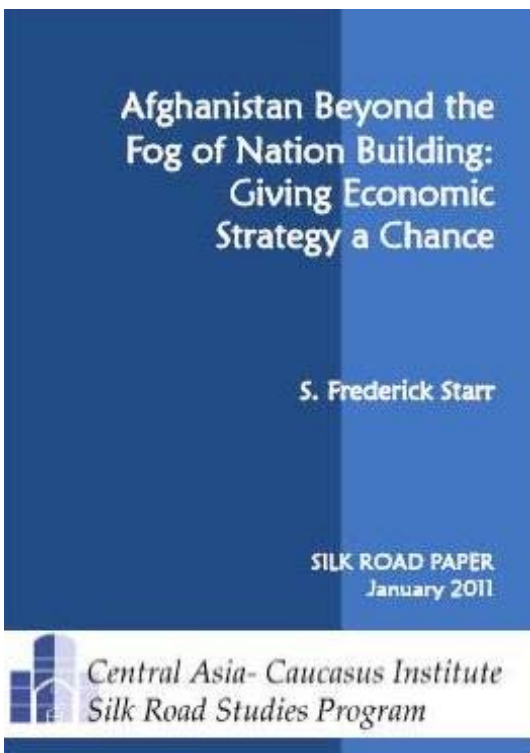
The border between Turkey and Armenia could be opened after Armenia and Azerbaijan shook hands, Turkish State Minister and chief negotiator for EU talks Egemen Bagis said. Bagis said on Tuesday that Turkey and Armenia had the chance to work together in order to prevent people, nations and countries from suffering more in the future, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported. Bagis said that Turkey wanted "zero problem" with its neighbors, adding that Turkey also wanted its neighbors to have "zero problem" with their own neighbors, too, he said. Turkish and Armenian foreign ministers Ahmet Davutoglu and Edward Nalbandian signed the Ankara-Yerevan protocols in Zurich Oct. 10. But the protocols were not ratified in the parliaments. Diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey were broken due to Armenian claims of an alleged genocide and its occupation of Azerbaijani lands. Their border closed in 1993. The conflict between the two South Caucasus countries began in 1988 when Armenia made territorial claims against Azerbaijan. Armenian armed forces have occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan since 1992, including the Nagorno-Karabakh region and seven surrounding districts. Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a ceasefire agreement in 1994. The co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group - Russia, France, and the U.S. - are currently holding peace negotiations. Armenia has not yet implemented the U.N. Security Council's four resolutions on the liberation

of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding regions. (Trend)

OBAMA TO ANNOUNCE AFGHANISTAN TROOP REDUCTION BY 30,000 BY 2012 END 22 June

President Barack Obama will hold an evening address Wednesday to lay out his plans for reducing the number of US troops in Afghanistan, the White House said, dpa reported. Media reports citing unnamed officials on Tuesday said Obama would reduce the troops by 10,000 by the end of the year, and by 30,000 by the end of next year, effectively ending the surge of troops he instituted earlier in his

presidency. Some 100,000 troops are currently in Afghanistan. White House spokesman Jay Carney dismissed those reports as "speculation," but declined to provide details of the president's plans or how the decision was reached. "This is the president's decision to announce," he said. In December 2009, Obama announced the buildup of US forces to combat rising violence in Afghanistan by adding some 30,000 troops. Carney said Wednesday's announcement would be consistent with the existing plan to begin the transition of security responsibility to the Afghan government and begin the possible withdrawal of US forces in July. (DPA)



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By S. Frederick Starr

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