

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

BI-WEEKLY BRIEFING
VOL. 6 NO. 9
4 MAY 2005

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EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

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

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

Analytical article structure: Ideal length between 1000 and 1200 words.

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

BACKGROUND: 300-400 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: 300-400 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

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

Specifications for Field Reports:

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event, or about the work of an NGO. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed has for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 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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AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE: KYRGYZSTAN'S REVOLUTION AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

Stephen Blank

Only a month or so after Kyrgyzstan's revolution, that event's repercussions are making themselves felt in both the domestic policies of neighboring states and in the foreign policies of the major international actors in Central Asia, namely Russia and China. While all three of these revolutions originated in each country's domestic reaction to the government's efforts to rig elections and continue regimes based on systematic corruption and plunder of the national economy; it is already clear that neighboring governments are drawing rather sharp conclusions from the events of these revolutions. Undoubtedly the Kyrgyz revolution shattered the complacency of those who believed that revolution could not happen in Central Asia.

BACKGROUND: While it is true that Georgia's Rose Revolution of November, 2003 inspired opposition groups in Central Asia, it is more accurate to say that it really was the stimulus provided by Ukraine's orange revolution of November-December, 2004 that galvanized sufficient domestic opposition in Kyrgyzstan to then overthrow the Akayev regime. While the Kyrgyz revolution was triggered by the Akayev regime's efforts to steal the election and continue looting the country on behalf of Akayev's family and cronies; it clearly was stimulated by two related and converging trends. One of them was Ukraine's orange revolution, and the second was the revulsion felt at home against a corrupt regime that systematically threatened to use force to keep itself in power. While much of what transpired in Kyrgyzstan was reported abroad, it is not commonly known that a decisive factor in the revolution was the refusal of Akayev's own guards and military to respond to his and his government's orders to use force. We now know of the systematic efforts not just to steal the election but also to threaten and even use force to make sure the results came out as intended. Similarly in Ukraine we now know that the refusal of the SBU – Ukraine's Secret Service – to use force, as the Ukrainian Ministry of Interior wished to do, played a key role in assuring the success of that revolution. Thus in these two revolutions the refusal by members of the regime's armed forces to act on those

governments. behalf played a critical role in ensuring the unimpeded action of the revolutionaries.

Thus one key indicator to look for in subsequent potential crises is the the critical question in all revolutions, control over the use of force. Similarly toleration of what is called civil society was also instrumental in allowing opponents to coalesce quickly once the crisis broke out. And these are lessons that Kyrgyzstan's neighbors have quickly grasped. They are certainly tightening up their instruments of repression and devising new ways to forestall mass or elite unrest or their expression. For example, as of May 2005, recent reports show that Tajikistan has intensified its measures of repression against potential opposition. Russia's FSB wants to take control of the internet to prevent or at least monitor electronic communication among opponents of the regime, and Uzbekistan is tearing up the center of Tashkent, undoubtedly with an eye to preventing mass demonstrations and of giving soldiers, either of the Army or from other units, the opportunity to hold the city against demonstrators. Thus Islam Karimov repeats the actions of Napoleon III who redesigned Paris under the supervision of Baron Haussmann, not least to prevent uprisings like those of 1789, 1830, and 1848.

Kazakstan, economically the most advantaged state in Central Asia, has announced a broad program of socio-economic reforms and development to provide the

equivalent of a Singaporean like cradle to grave welfare state or an approximation of it and to forestall unrest based on the immiseration of vast swathes of the population while the regime lives in ostentatious luxury. This hardly means the Nazarbayev regime is renouncing corruption. Rather it seeks to reform from above while preserving its privileges. Even so, since there will be elections there in 2006, a tough political struggle is likely to break out there.

IMPLICATIONS: There have also been major international repercussions of Kyrgyzstan's "Tulip Revolution". Ever since Georgia's revolution, Russian and neighboring commentators have blamed it all on the United States and on NGOs, particularly those funded by George Soros' Open Society Institute. This is a typical response of frightened conservatives and reactionaries dating back to the French Revolution. And it is no more accurate now than it was then. While America has supported the new governments, it hardly organized these revolutions. But the crash of Russian and Chinese policies in Central Asia which are firmly wedded to the support of corrupt status quo governments has had a sobering effect in both Moscow and Beijing.

On the one hand, in both capitals it has led to renewed outcries that America is waging an political and ideological campaign of exporting democracy against them to encircle, weaken, isolate, or even break them up. Pundits echoing this line see these revolutions as essentially Soviet-like operations, so-called refined operations of the special services, not popular uprisings, thereby signifying their own blindness. But on the other hand, these revolutions have also shown the inutility of their own security organizations. China had a rude shock in that the Shanghai Cooperative Organization played absolutely no role in Kyrgyzstan and president Akayev turned for a time to Russia, not China, for help. Yet Russia proved to be as weak a reed upon which to rely as did China.

Thus Russia, according to many reports, is casting around for a new, more workable and reliable approach to Central Asia and the CIS as a whole. China, for its part, seems to have concluded that it has no choice but to rely not so much on multilateral fora, but on adopting the Primakovian idea of a strategic triangle

with India that it embraced when Prime Minister Wen Jiabao traveled to New Delhi in April, 2005. It should be remembered that this gambit aimed to solidify Russia's position in Asia and in Central Asia by leveraging Moscow's relations with Asia's two giants, and to thereby restrain American global power. Beijing certainly wants no trouble with India while there is rising tension with Taiwan and Japan, and it certainly wants to find ways to restrain both democratic revolutions in Central Asia and U.S. global power. While India and the other two states all oppose Islamic terrorism, it is not clear what else they have in common in Central Asia. Meanwhile India and China's rivalry over energy sources, and influence in South and Southeast Asia will probably continue, albeit in much more moderated fashion. Beijing will also continue trying to subordinate Russian policies to its preferences thus turning the triangle idea upon the head of its originators.

CONCLUSIONS: In other words, the Kyrgyz revolution has stimulated a number of political processes in and around Central Asia that bear the most careful scrutiny. This creates a need to examine not just domestic politics in Central Asian countries but the entire series of issues dealing with control over the armed forces, both the regular forces and those of the political and regular police. Second, upcoming succession and election struggles will probably become more intense and there is reason to assume that, especially in the case of the former, they do not lead to violence. After all, it was only by luck that violence was averted in both Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. Even in Georgia, President Saakashvili repeatedly warned about the possibility of assassination attempts and coups in late 2003. Finally, the international politics of the Great Game have assumed an ideological coloration owing to the struggle over democratization in Central Asia. Consequently, relations among the major players here are again in flux and will be for some time.

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SAAKASHVILI ON THE ROPES?

Joel Myers

Just 16 months ago, President Mikheil Saakashvili was elected with 96% of the vote, but recent events indicate his popularity is slipping. Heavy resistance to education reform, a police scandal, harsh criticism from human rights groups, and the unfortunate death of Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania have Saakashvili on the defensive. And recent polling data provides strong indications that the anti-corruption platform that won him the presidency is faltering. Meanwhile, the Labor Party and Shalva Natelashvili are gaining support and represent an emerging threat to the president.

BACKGROUND: Saakashvili hit the ground running after his election in January of 2004. His strong patriotic rhetoric, coupled with his pledges to fight corruption and bring Georgia closer to the West, galvanized the public and gave them hope. He certainly did not disappoint, sending a package of reform bills to parliament within the first month of his presidency, and quickly arresting a number of high profile businessmen and politicians on charges of corruption. His efforts did not go unnoticed. Just three months after his election, he boasted an approval rating of 86%, and the European Union graciously made Georgia part of the New Neighborhood Initiative and pledged over \$1 billion to assist continuing reform.

In recent months, however, things appear to be unraveling for Saakashvili. In January, he passed an education reform bill that established statewide college entrance exams, replacing the old corrupt entrance system that was largely based on bribery. The bill was met with stiff resistance as student protesters took to the streets. Many were arrested and several were injured as police tried to break up the demonstrations. In addition, almost 600 students at Tbilisi Medical College organized a hunger strike in protest of the law, an event that landed 63 students in the hospital.

February brought the untimely death of Saakashvili's Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, the country's most seasoned politician. The sudden loss

of Zhvania's political acumen and administrative savvy left a gaping hole in the administration's reform team. Saakashvili insisted the tragedy would not slow the reform process and quickly nominated what many considered the least controversial candidate, Finance Minister Zurab Noghaideli to provide stability and continuity.

In March, Saakashvili was forced to fire 20 Shida Kartli police officials for alleged smuggling violations with the government of South Ossetia. Interior Minister Irakli Okruashvili has successfully distanced himself from the scandal, but Shida Kartli Governor Mikhail Kareli is on the hot seat. Opposition parties have accused Kareli, a Saakashvili appointee, of being involved in the controversy and have demanded his resignation.

Finally, an April report from Human Rights Watch concluded that police abuse is widespread in Georgia, claiming that reform measures taken so far have done little to curb the use of torture by police. The report also criticized Saakashvili's "plea-bargaining

system", an arrangement that allows suspects to buy their way out of embezzlement charges. This is not Saakashvili's first encounter with human rights watchdogs. In February 2004, Human Rights Watch advised him to discontinue using harsh methods to implement reforms. Additionally, both the U.S. Department of State and the Georgia based Human Rights Information and Documentation Center

cited serious violations by the Saakashvili administration in their 2004 reports, including police brutality, attacks on the media, invasions of privacy and disregard for the rule of law.

IMPLICATIONS: The recent events in Georgia pose serious danger to Saakashvili, because they create the perception that his reform plan is wavering – a perception that could prove particularly perilous for a president elected almost exclusively on an anti-corruption platform. Protests, scandals, human rights violations and the Zhvania tragedy have had serious effects on Saakashvili's standing with the Georgian people. This was confirmed by a poll released in April by Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI). According to the poll, Saakashvili has lost a quarter of the electorate in the last six months, now holding only 38% of the vote. Even worse, only 31% of Georgians feel the country is heading in the right direction, a sharp drop-off from the 79% GORBI reported just over a year ago.

Also troubling for Saakashvili is the emergence of a new rival, a challenge he did not have to face during the first year of his presidency. Labor Party leader Shalva Natelashvili has been slowly gaining ground over the last few months, and is becoming increasingly more critical of Saakashvili's policies. The recent GORBI poll has Natelashvili third with 5.4% of the vote. In GORBI's "Magic Seven" ratings, a measure of the people's confidence in a politician's ability to run the government, Natelashvili is polling at 10%, nearly double his result of a year ago (5.6%).

Natelashvili has put his newfound momentum to good use, actively criticizing Saakashvili at every opportunity. In April, his Labor Party began circulating a petition demanding the president's resignation, and also announced plans to hold a massive anti-Saakashvili demonstration in Tbilisi to coincide with President Bush's visit in May. Interior Minister Vano Merabishvili, subsequently banned all public demonstrations during President Bush's stay. Additionally, Natelashvili has repeatedly challenged Saakashvili to televised debates in hopes of proving him incompetent.

Natelashvili's outbursts are nothing new, but the fact that he now is combining them with increased voter support is cause for concern for Saakashvili. And with over 40% of the electorate undecided on a party or a candidate, there is still a lot of support to be gained. If Saakashvili's policies falter, Georgia could see a major swing in electoral support in the coming months.

CONCLUSIONS: Although the last few months have been discouraging for Saakashvili, there is no cause for panic. With over 38% of the electorate behind him, he is still in complete control, and as Noghaideli settles in as Prime Minister the numbers should get better. However, as Saakashvili deals with political opposition, it is important that he be mindful of civil rights. Tightening polls, emerging political rivalry and non-violent public protests are all signs of a democracy that is getting healthier. Saakashvili will undoubtedly not embrace these developments, but it is vitally important that he not suppress them.

Saakashvili has made significant progress in rooting out corruption in Georgia, but it is a daunting task that will take time. Consequently, reports of scandals and resistance to reform measures are likely to continue throughout his tenure. In the past 16 months, reform success has been met with criticism by human rights watchdogs, and rightly so. As Saakashvili presses on with his reform plan, it is imperative that he become increasingly conscious of human rights. Saakashvili could further legitimize his anti-corruption campaign with a commitment to due process, fair treatment and the rule of law.

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ENERGY RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN CENTRAL ASIA AND CAUCASUS: GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY

Daniel Linotte

The democratic revolutions that took place in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan could impact on other Central Asian and Caucasus countries that have large oil and gas resources and are characterized by high corruption and limited freedoms. Drastic political changes could be met by fierce resistance and could also negatively impact on the supply and export of energy, adding additional pressures on world energy markets. Addressing such risks and challenges requires initiatives, such as the Tony Blair's 2002 "Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative", and concrete follow-up actions to enhance the quality of governance and fight corruption in the energy sector of these countries. Working with the leaders in power may eventually help promote a smooth democratic transition process and, at the same time, avoid extreme social, economic and political turbulences.

BACKGROUND: The revolutions of Georgia, Ukraine and the Kyrgyzstan installed new governments that appear willing to address what is often perceived as the major obstacles to economic development, namely poor governance and high corruption levels. These countries have *inter alia* one common feature: they have very limited endowments of energy resources, particularly oil and gas. *De facto*, neighboring countries – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – are much better endowed. The presence of large oil and gas deposits is also associated with corrupted practices. As indicated by World Bank indicators and Transparency International studies, the quality of governance in these energy rich countries is low and corrupted practices are common. Specifically, measures of the quality of governance proposed by World Bank experts for 2002 indicate that government effectiveness is very low. The worst record is for corruption. Overall, about 10% of the countries surveyed by the World Bank do worse than them. The most

extreme case of autocracy and arbitrariness in Central Asia is certainly Turkmenistan. When compared to Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, the four reference countries seem to be politically more stable and, at the same time, allow for less voice and accountability. In other words, strong and authoritarian regimes may prove much more resilient to political changes. In fact, some of the leaders of Central Asia and Caucasus are already drawing lessons from the recent revolutions with the tightening of laws that reduce basic freedoms (e.g. the right of public assemblies in Kazakhstan) and, as a result, they are increasing their power to avert revolutions. The risk of more repression is taken seriously by NGOs, research organizations and international medias (Radio Free Europe). Strong resistance to democratization and human rights is certainly connected to the possibility to continue to capture incomes (oil and gas rents) and protect immense private wealth based on the systematic exploitation of rich energy resource endowments. The linkages between high levels of corruption and the abundance of mineral

resources have been underlined by many studies. Energy related corruption is well documented and specific Central Asia and Caucasus cases are mentioned in reports published, for instance, by Transparency International.

IMPLICATIONS: In countries dominated by the energy sector, the diversification of domestic economic activities and the reduction of poverty and inequalities require substantial changes to enhance the rule-of-law, transparency and the quality of governance. In that context, the “Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative” that was announced by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair at the Johannesburg 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development is quite important and far reaching. Such an initiative aims at making extractive industries major engines of economic growth and social development. Considering transition countries, the initiative could improve the overall business and investment climate by making rules fully transparent and effective. The IMF and the World Bank are playing key-role in working up the initiative. Practical steps were made in July 2003 with a London Conference that aimed at an agreement on the “Statement of Principles and Agreed Actions” over payments and revenues in the extractive sectors. The event was attended by representative of 70 governments. Follow-up commitments were made by several countries, including Azerbaijan.

In the case of Azerbaijan, according to recent statements of the World Bank country manager in Baku, Mr. Ahmed Jehani, “a multi-stakeholder approach that includes civil society, companies and government” has been adopted to implement Tony Blair’s generous and intelligent initiative. “Under the initiative it is required that, a work plan with time line and budget to ensure sustainability, independent audit of payments and

disclosure of revenues, publication of results in a publicly accessible manner, and that the approach covers all companies and government agencies, are the essential features.” Thus, Azerbaijan is one of the few countries that has made significant progress in promoting and implementing the initiative, becoming a model of best practice in the area of governance. Genuine commitments by all stakeholders to the work plan and timelines for implementation are definitely quite indispensable for success.

CONCLUSIONS: There are growing pressures for democratic transition in Central Asia and Caucasus. The autocratic leaders of the region have also taken unpopular measures to avoid losing their political power and economic privileges, which should correspond to less freedoms and more repression. In other words, the scope for radical changes is narrowing. Nevertheless, following Tony Blair’s initiative and the example of Azerbaijan, there might be opportunities to improve good governance without revolution. In addition, the expertise and the leverage of international financial organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, EBRD and the Asian Development Bank, can help promote new development strategies and policies that could ultimately strengthen liberty and democracy, and avoid unnecessary economic turbulences in these regions, and elsewhere.

AUTHOR’S BIO: Dr. Daniel Linotte earned his D.Phil. at Oxford University (St. Antony’s College). He worked for more than four years as senior economic adviser to the OSCE Secretariat. Before joining the OSCE, he was senior adviser on economic reforms in Georgia. He is now working in the Balkans, supporting the process of WTO accession within a major EU funded project, in coordination with USAID.

EURASIANIST THEORY AND STRATEGIC SECURITY IN THE RUSSIAN MUSLIM SOUTH

Thrassy Marketos

The growing emphasis on geopolitics from all corners of the Russian political spectrum elevates Eurasianism to the level of a mainstream ideology. Hence, when Russian geopolitics is concerned with the expansion of NATO, the 'Islamic threat' and the security of Russia, increasingly actors speak about the future rebirth of an restored Greater Russia, presented as the 'Russian idea' by those endorsing the Eurasianist approach in the Russian foreign policy praxis. Whether acknowledged or not, the Russian government is increasingly aligning its foreign policy with the ideals of Eurasianist thought.

BACKGROUND: In "The Grand Chessboard", Zbigniew Brzezinski classifies the Russian post-Cold War schools of geopolitical thought into three: the "Zapadnik" (pro-Western) approach; the Slavophile, nationalistic and imperialist approach; and the Eurasianist approach, a counter-alliance involving some sort of Eurasian anti-American coalition designed to reduce the United States' preponderance in Eurasia. The West always supported the Zapadnik approach. But in Russia, it has increasingly lost influence. A good example of developing thought in Russia is Vladimir Maksimenko, member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and senior researcher of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies. Maksimenko criticizes Brzezinski's geostrategic construction called 'the Eurasian Balkans', which covers the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as those areas within the present Russian Federation which used to belong to the Crimean and Astrakhan Khanates, branding it an imperialist plot targeting the areas that used to be Russian imperial dominions during the late czarist and Cold War periods. Logically, Maksimenko suggests that Russia have a 'legitimate' interest there and that these areas are subject to reconquest. He utterly rejects an eventual repetition of the 'Buffer State Strategy' introduced by Sir Halford Mackinder in

1918. No doubt this position testifies a Russian imperial mission and the renaissance of Eurasianist ideology.

Eurasianism's early 20th century concepts – advocating the cultural and political struggle between the West and a distinct 'Eurasian' subcontinent led by Russia were championed by prominent figures such as Nikolay Trubetskoi and later Lev Gumilev. But in fact, they have been given increasing attention by the rightward shift in Russian policy discourse in recent years. The growing emphasis on geopolitics from all corners of the political spectrum is in the process of elevating Eurasianism to the level of a mainstream ideology. Whether the issue is NATO expansion, an 'Islamic threat', or Russia's security more broadly, these issues are framed in the context of the future rebirth of a Greater Russia, termed the 'Russian idea' by those endorsing the Eurasianist approach in Russian foreign policy.

IMPLICATIONS: Brzezinski calls for a U.S. strategy aimed at 'the consolidation of geopolitical pluralism within the former Soviet Union', which the Eurasianists consider a threat to the Russian Federation, countering with stressing the need for the construction of a multipolar paradigm to be applied in world affairs. To them the Euro-Atlantic

alliance's aims in Eurasia amount to 'total geopolitical control over the world's largest continental space, rather than testifying an ideological or humanitarian goal'.

In foreign policy practice, these views were mirrored more or less by President Vladimir Putin's search for an ideological basis for the direction of rising Russian imperialism since Autumn 2000, and analytically expressed through the thoughts of well-known Russian nationalist and dissident, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Putin is clearly attracted to the Russian ultra-nationalist geopolitician Aleksandr Dugin's visions for an empire of all Eurasia, dominated by Russia, advocated by his 'Eurasianist Movement'. Dugin has expressed his opinions through speeches and writing in which he presents himself as a passionate agitator of a crusader mentality against the 'Islamic threat'. Dugin's leading work, 'Osnovi Geopolitiki: Geopoliticheskoye Budushiyeye Rossiyyi' (The Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia), serves as the cornerstone of the new Eurasianism. He adopts a revised balance-of-power politics approach, and concepts such as 'Land' versus 'Sea' powers, based on strategic traditional theories of Alfred Thayer Mahan and Sir Halford Mackinder. He stresses the need for the creation of a Russian-dominated Eurasian space, and the alliance-building mechanism (a Moscow-Teheran axis, a Moscow-Berlin pivot, and a Moscow-Tokyo axis), in order to accomplish the ambitious innovation of 'Derzhavnost', the idea of Russia as a Great Power, so popular now among Russians who barely stand their country's diminished international status. Concomitant to this is the ideology for 'Russia's mission' in the post-Soviet Empire's era. This mission is embodied in Eurasianism, described as a suitable answer against the supporters of Wahhabism who have penetrated Russia. In this mission Russia is about to have its entire people united against Wahhabism, Christians and Muslims together, for the pro-Moscow official Islam in the Russian Federation supports the War on Terrorism launched by President Putin against the Chechen rebels.

The main direction of Russian imperial aspirations in the post-Soviet international system, is the traditional southern front or what Winston Churchill described as the "soft underbelly of Russia". Nowadays geopolitical thought in Russia connects the idea of a Western conspiracy into anti-Islamic rhetoric, in which the West, Turkey and Israel are plotting an 'Islamic conspiracy' targeting Russia's security. Indeed, Russia is endowed with some characteristics of an empire by several factors: It suffers from an identity and value-related vacuum in the post-Soviet era; it has not evolved into a nation-state; it has sizable Muslim minorities in the North Caucasus, the Volga-Ural region including Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, and in the Omsk, Tyumen, Tobolsk, Novosibirsk, Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Urengoi areas as well as larger cities, which have a different national and cultural sense of identity. This influences Russia's worldview, security perspective, and foreign policy choices with the outside world.

In Putin's scheme of thinking, Islam, particularly its extremist version, and the Muslim world are either major sources of threat to Russia or actual or potential competitors. Long before the events of September 11, 2001, President Putin had been warning of an arc of instability, extending from the Philippines to Kosovo and claiming that an Islamic terror network, led by Osama bin Laden, was trying to create an Islamic Caliphate, the United States of Islam, which would unite a wide range of Islamic governments as well some Central Asian states and parts of the present-day territory of the Russian Federation.

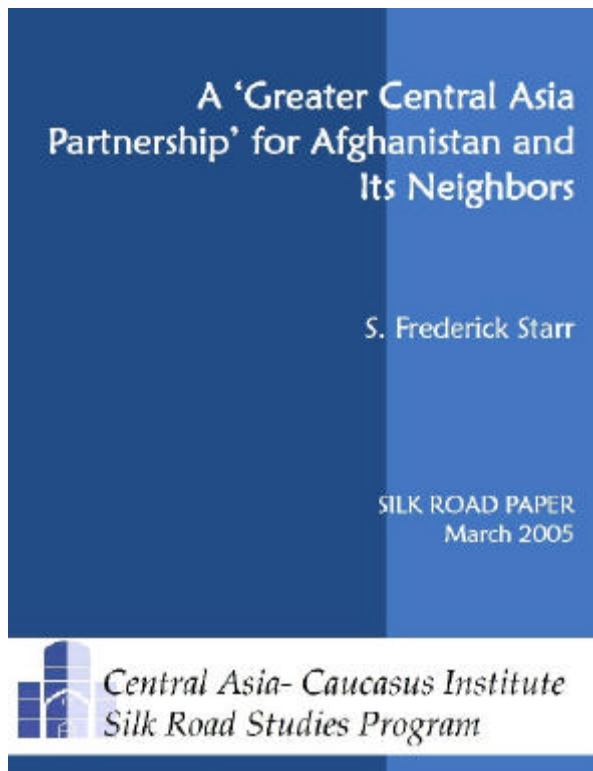
In fact the threat of Islamic extremism has brought Russia and the West closer together, but it has also meant the end of the old Soviet idea of using Islam, in whatever form –even its most radical versions, as instruments of Russian foreign policy in the competition for economic and political advantage. In fact, the Islamic factor has greatly impacted on Russia's foreign policy and strategic security concept.

CONCLUSIONS: In this international environment, the neo-Imperialism hidden beside

the alliances and strategic -military or economic- projects through which President Putin –echoing the hallmark concepts of his foreign policy predecessor, Yevgeny Primakov- aspires to bind the former Soviet Caucasus and Central Asia states to the so called ‘Russian mission’. This of course, even though not acknowledged, in fact serves the goals of the Eurasianist movement. Central Asia’s ‘Rapid Reaction Force’, Eurasian Economic Community and Shanghai Cooperation Organization, back the same purpose in Russian terms. That is to raise Russia into Eurasian hegemony for a renewed quest for national greatness and to unite the different religions of Eurasia against the ‘Great Satan’, the United States of America.

The Eurasianist positions of Aleksandr Dugin do not necessarily coincide with President Putin’s policies inside and outside the Russian Federation, but in a recent editorial, President Putin himself affirmed that Russia has always seen itself as a Euro-Asiatic nation. Definitely, September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks to the U.S. and Islamic extremism has served Russian interests mostly in a negative fashion by acting as an impetus for forging alliances with other countries that share similar fears.

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FIELD REPORTS

NEW AUTHORITIES BLAME AKAYEV'S RULE FOR ECONOMIC DOWNFALL AND CORRUPTION

Aziz Soltobaev

According to Kyrgyzstan's new authorities, corruption for over 15 years during ex-president Askar Akayev's rule had reached incredibly high levels. Only surface state cash flow analysis revealed an additional US\$122 million to 440 million in the annual state budget of republic. This turned out to be possible after the March 24 takeover by the opposition, Akayev's ouster and the establishment of an interim government until the presidential elections slated for July 10. The interim government aims to redistribute the given funds to mitigate social tensions and increase public welfare through payroll increases.

For the first years of Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty, Askar Akayev conducted reforms in a transparent manner for civil society and once was marked as a 'Jefferson of Central Asia'. In 1998, Akayev's leadership took gradual step toward setting up an authoritarian regime following the example of neighboring countries. Corruption in the state system became an aggravating factor, as bribes and abuse of office penetrated to all branches of power. Officials pursued primarily personal interests, and cared less about the economic future of Kyrgyzstan. As a result, by the end of the year 2004 the national poverty level was over 50%, the economy survived largely thanks to donor grants, technical assistance and international loans. The flawed parliamentary elections of 2005 and the following public protests and seizures of building were attempts to counter the corrupt Akayev regime. Social discontent reached such a critical point that on March 24, the Government House in Bishkek was taken over in

three hours. This unexpected scenario revealed the vulnerability of the corrupt system and the lack of power of the ruling authoritarian regime.

After Akayev's ouster, opposition leaders ostensibly found files in Akayev's cabinet that painted a picture of the depth of corruption in the state system. In the first days, acting president and Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiyev declared that two-thirds of all tax collections had not reached the state budget, but went to Akayev's so called 'family purse'. The list of possible organizations involved in personal deals with the ex-president reached 70; the number of people that were somehow affiliated with the former regime's corruption deals reached 102 persons. For a review of Akayev's property and corruption, a special governmental commission was created.

Bakiyev stated that the top priority of the new government should be "dismantling the system of corruption built by the previous leadership." He also stated that this problem could not be addressed without civil society support. "Corruption influenced all fields of our lives. We have to stop giving bribes. The government promises on its side to provide worthy salaries for state employees", the Akipress information agency reported him as saying.

Most of the corruption deals somehow had relations with Askar Akayev's family and aides. Akayev's son-in-law Adily Toygonbaev, had been either formally or informally controlling key state and the largest private enterprises of country. Akayev's son

Aidar Akayev, deputy of the new parliament, had also owned some enterprises mostly subject to hostile takeover by him. Under Akayevs' protection, such enterprises had been avoiding tax collections and received better market positions by using administrative resources to push out or defeat competitors.

The first criminal case against Akayev's family members was filed against the ex-president's wife Mayram Akayeva, who is charged with illegally appropriating a 30% state share in the Charity Fund "Meerim" lead by her. Their two children – Bermet and Aidar Akayevs – could not be charged, since they enjoy parliamentary immunity. In the meantime, the investigation commission had not found anything disrupting or discrediting against ex-president Akayev. He had only used a car and apartment in Bishkek city.

Acting vice premier minister Daniyar Usenov said corruption has already been alleviated in the customs service, and in the next months, it would be alleviated in the alcohol and energy sectors of Kyrgyzstan. Usenov stated that nearly 40% of all supplied energy was registered as "energy losses in transmission". This does not fit with reality and some corruption deals might be present in the energy sector. Responding to the governmental signals, some top managers of energy companies recently resigned.

Mr. Usenov also touched on the finances of the Kumtor Operating Company, a joint project of the Canadian Cameco Corporation and the Kyrgyz government launched in 1993. "During the period of Kumtor's operations, it produced 207 tons of gold sold for more than US\$2 billion. However, the Kyrgyz budget received only US\$107 million, even though it held 70% of shares in the gold mining Company".

Having revealed additional funds, the interim government promises to redistribute the funds for payroll increases and expansions of mortgage availability. The government plans to a 50% increase in salaries in the next months, as opposed to the 15% promised by Akayev earlier this year. The issue of mortgages turned out to be thorny when real estate prices increased by up to 50% last fall, while personal income remained unchanged. Many citizens hoping to buy apartments lost their chance, because the construction of new residential buildings had been frozen, while bank mortgage terms were inaccessible for most of Kyrgyzstan's residents.

These popular actions of the interim government could increase its chances in the upcoming presidential elections, where acting President Kurmanbek Bakiyev intends to stand for election.

FIRST MEETING OF 'CENTRAL ASIA + JAPAN' INITIATIVE HELD IN TASHKENT

Atabek Rizayev

In the Beginning of March, the first meeting under the formula "Central Asia + Japan" was held in Tashkent. It was the first such meeting at a level of the high-ranking diplomats of the countries of Central Asia and Japan. The member state delegations at the summit were headed by deputy foreign ministers, except for Turkmenistan, which

was represented by the country's ambassador to Uzbekistan. The Japanese delegation was headed by Kendzy Shinoda, Assistant Director General at the Bureau for Europe of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In August 2004, Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi met his Central Asian

counterparts in Kazakhstan. At this meeting the future format of the new initiative “Central Asia + Japan” also took shape. The Japanese use the analogy of the “ASEAN + Japan” initiative. The following spheres of cooperation have been suggested for this initiative: Short-term problems, such as the struggle against terrorism, spread of drug addiction, mine clearing, elimination of poverty; secondly, the sphere of public health services; and finally, longer term issues such as environment, water and power resources, foreign trade and investments, transportation.

The meeting can be called the fourth stage of the partnership between Japan and the countries of Central Asia. At the first stage, the Japanese government distributed Overseas Development Assistance to the countries of Central Asia. During the second stage, since 1995, the countries of Central Asia have gradually received a preferential status in economic cooperation with Japan. At the third stage, the Japanese government declared a new strategy in the development of attitudes in Japan toward the countries of Central Asia. In 1997, the Japanese government headed by Ryutaro Hashimoto presented a strategy of “Eurasian diplomacy”. It declared a special value for the region in Japan’s interests. Later an Action Plan on “Diplomacy of the Great Silk Road” based on the principles of political dialogue for deepening of trust and understanding was accepted.

Economic projects are being developed in a number of spheres. These include geological prospecting, extraction and transportation of natural resources, investigation and extraction of nonferrous metals, modernization of nonferrous metallurgy, development and modernization of communications, modernization and development of the textile industry, and cooperation in the field of a science, culture and education. Practically in all these spheres, Japan has earlier been active in Central Asia.

It should be noted that the importance accorded to Central Asia by Japan has increased after the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom and coalition activities in Afghanistan. In this context, the words of Uzbekistan’s Senator and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Sadyk Safaev are worth quoting: “I would like to pay attention to the fact that the presence of Japan in Central Asia also includes Afghanistan. It is not a coincidence that the process of economic revival of Afghanistan is referred to as the Tokyo process. It was inaugurated in Tokyo in 2002, and Japan is today one of the most important donors for this country. We considered then and we consider now Afghanistan as an integral component of Central Asia”.

As a result of the recent summit in Tashkent, the final registration of a new regional organization took place. An interesting fact is that for the first time, an observer from Turkmenistan participated in a regional summit of this type. From now on, the new organization will gather for a summit each year.

In its last military doctrine, Japan named China one of the basic threats to its security. One can deduce from the recent flurry of activities that Japan has decided to actively counteract Chinese presence not only in Southeast Asia, but also in Central Asia where a decidedly pro-Chinese organization, The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, already exists.

Differing from the ASEAN + Japan format, Japan has in the case of Central Asia decided to create an organization exclusively with the governments of the countries of Central Asia, instead of with an existing organization, such as CACO (Central Asian Cooperation Organization) where Russia is a member. And this confirms Japan’s desire to have a presence in the region on its own merits and not related to China or Russia.

ASTANA AND BISHKEK VOW TO RENEW THE OLD FRIENDSHIP

Marat Yermukanov

Unpredictable twists of popular upheaval in Kyrgyzstan left policy makers of Kazakhstan pondering over what attitude to take about these events. Intensified contacts at intergovernmental level in recent weeks clearly signal the intention of Astana and Bishkek to put economic interests before political considerations. But there are many hurdles to be overcome before bilateral relations take their normal course.

Acting president of Kyrgyzstan Kurmanbek Bakiev's April 22 visit to Almaty did not and could not make a front-page story in Kazakhstan's media. Not only because of his present ambiguous official rank, but also because he came to Almaty humbly seeking assistance to restore the paralyzed economy of his country, in what looked like a visit of a poor nephew to a rich uncle. Nursultan Nazarbayev treated his Kyrgyz guest in a condescending manner, generously dishing out everything Kurmanbek Bakiev asked for: grain, diesel oil and lubricants, aviation fuel and promises of huge Kazakh investments in Kyrgyzstan's economy. To some extent, it signaled a sudden change of mood in Astana, for just a few weeks before Bakiev's visit Kazakh president aired the view that "events in Kyrgyzstan were a mistake". The phrase suggested that he was not going to reconcile himself with Kyrgyz "usurpers" so soon. But after the talks with Bakiev, for the first time he clearly articulated to the press that he accepts political realities in Kyrgyzstan and is willing to maintain the warm relations that existed in the Akayev era. He emphasized the ethnic closeness of the two nations. "There is nothing to divide Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz. What is done is done. We are fraternal peoples, and we will continue our traditional relations", the Kazakh leader said.

Kurmanbek Bakiev kept a low profile during the talks that suited his current position best, but he got everything he bargained for. Experts estimate that the Tulip revolution cost the Kyrgyz economy \$100 million. However strong fraternal sentiments towards the Kyrgyz people may be, it is difficult for Kazakhstan to resist the temptation of taking advantage of its neighbor's current vulnerable economic situation. Nazarbayev used this opportunity to resume Kazakhstan's claims on four resorts on the Kyrgyzstan's renowned Lake Issyk-kul built by Kazakhstan in the socialist era. Property rights on these resorts were debated between the neighbors from time to time, but under Akayev the sides never came near to a compromise solution. In 2003, the Kyrgyz government unilaterally declared the resorts the property of Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakh prime-minister Daniyal Akhmetov responded promptly, setting up a government commission to settle the dispute. This resolute step forced Kyrgyzstan to abandon its claims. Talks with Kurmanbek Bakiev produced some kind of a compromise on this vexed issue and the sides agreed on using the resorts jointly.

Another unraveled knot was the maintenance of the Kyrgyz sector of the gas pipeline which runs from Uzbekistan to South Kazakhstan via Kyrgyzstan. In past years, this pipeline caused much irritation for the Kazakh government, which accused Kyrgyzstan of stealing gas from the pipeline. Officials of the Kazakh gas transportation company Kaztransgaz estimate that in 2004, the amount of gas stolen by Kyrgyzstan cost the Kazakh gas industry \$5 million. Kaztransgaz was even contemplating the construction of a bypass pipeline to avoid the Kyrgyz transit route. But that costly project would hardly be technically feasible. So far, Kurmanbek Bakiev and Nursultan Nazarbayev reached a preliminary agreement on joint technical

maintenance of the gas pipeline. Kazakhstan showed readiness to allot \$20 million to repair the pipeline. Undoubtedly, the sum will palpably sap the tight budget of Kazakhstan. But the acute shortage of Uzbek gas supplies to South Kazakhstan demands some sacrifice.

Kurmanbek Bakiev stressed that he would welcome Kazakh investors in Kyrgyzstan and investment security would be guaranteed. Given the miserable state of the financial sector of Kyrgyzstan and the ongoing political turmoil, these assurances sound hollow. Under the previous Kyrgyz regime, projects of setting up joint ventures to develop the water and energy resources of the Naryn and Syrdarya rivers, and the construction of the Kambarata hydroelectric power station in Kyrgyzstan largely remained on paper. The prospect is even less encouraging now. It is hard to expect heavy investments in industrial enterprises of Kyrgyzstan.

More than 70% of the holiday-makers in the Issyk-kul resorts come from Kazakhstan. But this year, many Kazakhstani citizens will be deterred from going to Issyk-kul by rumors of lawlessness and violence raging in the area. Kyrgyz tourist industry officials came to Almaty on April 27 to encourage Kazakh citizens to travel to Issyk-kul. Kazakh authorities also fear the growing number of Kyrgyz labor migrants to tobacco plantations in South Kazakhstan who do not possess passports. This contributes to the rise of criminality.

There is little reason to hope that bilateral relations will be normalized before the presidential elections in Kyrgyzstan. Any strongman capable of restoring peace and order in the neighboring country would be welcome for Kazakhstan.

GEORGIA: THE HONEYMOON IS OVER

Kakha Jibladze

As the much anticipated reforms affect the lives of everyday Georgians, President Saakashvili has seen his rating drop an estimated 25%. The political feeling toward Misha is a lot different now his policies are hurting run of the mill citizens and not just wealthy businessmen. However, as startling as those figures seem, the voting population is not supporting the opposition either-according to polls, opposition parties claim a miserly three percent support, which is reportedly within the statistical error of margin. As long as Saakashvili continues his plan of reforms, his popularity will suffer. Only time-and the eventual results from his policies-will provide an accurate picture of his success or failure as president.

A drop of a quarter of the voters would worry any politician, but most experts anticipated Saakashvili's phenomenal support, which at a high point was estimated at 98% of the population-was doomed to fall. And, while it is easy to pinpoint the

reason for people's disillusion, it is much harder to address it.

One of the main complaints is people anticipated a quick release from the hardships they have endured over the past dozen years. But instead of instant relief, many have seen their livelihood fall victim to the government's war against contraband. This spring, the government announced no vender would be allowed to sell cigarettes or alcohol without a government license-one week before the law was to take affect. The protests from small street vendors came after a long line of similar protests from street traders throughout the country. In a move to improve sanitary conditions and oversight on food products, as well as close outlets for contraband, regional governments began closing local bazaars and markets either for reconstruction or relocation outside of the city center. In the western town of Zugdidi, traders from the local bazaar protested for weeks after the government announced the

marketplace would be temporarily closed for reconstruction. Women tried to force their way into the closed market, holding signs alternating between calls for 'Misha' to help or calls for Shevardnadze to return and save them. In Tbilisi, traders from the construction market, Iliava, closed a main road in the capital after being told their market would be relocated to the suburbs.

There are also fewer jobs in the government as Saakashvili makes good on his promises to limit the size of the bureaucracy. Those former bureaucrats who have been laid off have few options for finding new work; the new administration has not made any real visible strides in revitalizing the job market.

While reforms of this sort are necessary, they accent the country's dependence on the black market and the lack of real understanding what reforms mean. After seven decades of communism, people have grown accustomed to receiving everything from their government. When President Saakashvili promised Georgians 'a new life,' average Georgians did not anticipate that path to that 'new life' would adversely affect them. The new government also did not properly educate the population before radical measures went into effect, either.

Georgians – especially in the countryside – are also disillusioned with the new president because life in regions outside the capital has not noticeably changed for the better to date. The major problems that plagued villagers, namely the lack of electricity, have not been addressed. While the new administration has presented a plan to rehabilitate the energy system throughout the country, the full effects will not be felt for an estimated 18 months. During Saakashvili's first winter in office, he was fortunate that the weather conditions were mild; this past winter was very harsh and the country felt the full force of the energy crisis. People in the regions are also not accustomed to paying for the electricity they consume; on average people outside the capital not only do not regularly pay their electric bills, they also pay considerably less than it cost to provide electricity. As the government

allows the tariffs to slowly rise, people feel cheated. Not only are they not regularly receiving electricity – a commodity they widely anticipated after the Rose Revolution – but they are being charged more for the little they do receive. Residents in the regions are used to receiving electricity without paying for it, since during Shevardnadze's government no one paid attention.

The new tax laws are also difficult for people to understand. After so many years of corruption, not only are people distrustful about what will happen with the money, they often do not understand there is a direct connection between what services the government can provide and how much tax businesses pay. There is also a lack of information; although the tax law was passed several months ago, the average small businessman still does not know what is expected out of him.

However, without a strong opposition, there is no real forum to address people's concerns. The current opposition parties in Georgia have largely discredited themselves in the eyes of the Georgian population; while people may be unhappy with the current reforms there are no viable alternatives in the current political landscape.

The rash of protests in Georgia over the past few months is a reflection of Georgians' disillusion with the current administration and post-revolution life in Georgia. The reforms are a necessary evil to strengthen the Georgian state, but they are completely foreign for the Georgian people, and in addition to the reforms themselves being hard to get used to, the government has not consistently educated the public about what the policies are and why they are needed. The reform process has just started; people will feel the impact of the new government in their lives more and more as the process continues. While the population is still largely supportive of Saakashvili, he will continue to lose support as the reforms take on more and more aspects of everyday life. However, he will be in danger of losing his core supporters if the government can not develop a way to prove to the Georgian people their current sacrifice will lead to a much brighter future.

NEWS DIGEST

AFGHAN CLASH 'KILLS 20 MILITANTS'

4 May

Twenty suspected Taleban militants have been killed in a bloody clash with US and Afghan forces in southern Afghanistan, the US military has said. One Afghan policeman was also killed and six US soldiers injured in the fighting in Zabul province on Tuesday. The clash began when gunmen fired on coalition forces investigating the beating of a local man, the US said. The US has about 18,000 troops hunting al-Qaeda and Taleban militiamen, mainly in the south and east of Afghanistan. A US military statement said helicopters and aircraft were called in during the clashes with about 25 suspected militants in Zabul's Deh Chopan district. Five Afghan police officers were also wounded and six of the insurgents, including a village head with suspected Taleban links, were detained, it said. Four injured US soldiers have been taken to hospital in Germany in stable condition. The two others have returned to duty.

AZERBAIJANI PARLIAMENT RATIFIES OIL CONTRACTS WITH SOME DISSENTING VOICES

3 May

Azerbaijan's parliament on 29 April ratified three oil contracts worth almost \$1 billion that were signed last year to develop three on-shore oil fields. Azerbaijan's state oil company SOCAR has a stake in all three contracts. Its partners are Caspian Energy group (U.K.), Noble Sky (PRC/UAE), and the Turkish-Azerbaijani Azen Oil Company. Two parliamentary deputies objected during the 29 April debate that the terms of the three oil contracts under discussion constitute a violation of the rights of Azerbaijan's oil-sector workers. Mais Safarli argued that Azerbaijan has numerous skilled oil workers and there is therefore no need for foreign companies developing Azerbaijani oil deposits to bring workers from abroad. He added that it is unfair to pay foreign personnel more than their Azerbaijani co-workers. Djalil Hasanli urged parliamentary speaker

Murtuz Alesqerov to stop delaying debate of a draft law on the oil sector. (Turan)

KAZAKH OPPOSITION MEMBERS ATTACKED

3 May

A group of unidentified young men attacked leaders and members of the Kazakh opposition bloc For a Just Kazakhstan in Chimkent, the administrative center in southern Kazakhstan, bloc members said at a press conference in Almaty on Tuesday. Bloc activists Altynbek Sarsenbayuly, Bolat Abilov, Serikbolsyb Abildin and Amirzhan Kosanov said the incident occurred when the bloc was preparing for a regional conference on Monday. (Interfax)

KYRGYZ ASABA PARTY NOMINATES PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

3 May

The political council of Kyrgyzstan's Asaba party has nominated the country's acting Prosecutor General and Asaba leader Azimbek Beknazarov as a presidential candidate. Beknazarov, who is also a member of parliament, could not be reached for comment. The Asaba party leader said following the March political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, that he would support interim President and Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiyev as a candidate in the presidential elections. Ten people have already announced plans to run for the presidency. They include Dignity party leader Felix Kulov, Social-Democratic Party leader Almazbek Atambayev, Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan leader Zhypar Zheksheyev, doctor Zhenishbek Nazaraliyev, member of parliament Bayaman Erkinbayev, and former Ecology and Emergency Situations Minister Temirbek Akmataliyev. (Interfax)

TAJIK OPPOSITION PARTY DEMANDS DETAILS OF LEADER'S 'EXTRADITION'

3 May

Tajikistan's Democratic Party has sent a written appeal to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Russian Prosecutor-General Vladimir Ustinov, and

Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov asking them to clarify the details of party head Muhammadruzi Iskandarov's transfer from Russia to Tajikistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported on 2 May. Iskandarov, who was released from detention in Russia in early April, had told his lawyers he was subsequently abducted in Russia and brought to Tajikistan by unknown individuals. Russian and Tajik authorities have not commented on the circumstances of Iskandarov's return to Tajikistan. Rahmatullo Valiev, deputy head of the Democratic Party, said that the party has also sent its appeal to the United Nations, the OSCE, and the British, French, German, and U.S. embassies. If the party does not receive an answer from Tajik authorities, Valiev said, it will withdraw from the country's Public Council. (RFE/RL)

FOUR MILITANTS SURRENDER IN CHECHNYA

2 May

Four militants voluntarily turned themselves in on Sunday in Chechnya, spokesman for the regional headquarters of the anti-terrorist operation in the North Caucasus Maj. Gen. Ilya Shabalkin told Interfax on Monday. He said that a militant from the group of Isa Muskiyev operating in Shali and Kurchaloi districts turned himself in to the police in Koshkeldy. He also surrendered his Kalashnikov assault rifle. Two militants surrendered in Grozny. Shabalkin said that they expressed readiness to cooperate with investigators and reported facts about the crimes committed by their group. The degree of their responsibility is being established. A resident of Novy Sharoi turned himself in to the local police Sunday night. A police source told Interfax that the man said he had belonged to a militant group operating his village since spring 2004 and subordinate to Rezvan Magomadov. He surrendered a portable anti-tank grenade-launcher, a sniper rifle, a flame-thrower, a land mine, explosives and ammunition. Also two caches of arms and ammunition were uncovered in Chechnya. Both places were reported to the authorities by local residents who had discovered them. Shabalkin said the question of paying rewards in keeping with a Chechen Cabinet resolution is being settled. (Interfax)

NAKHICHEVAN POLICE TARGET INDEPENDENT LAWYER

2 May

The Supreme Court of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic has rejected an appeal by lawyer Elman Calilov against the 15-day administrative arrest imposed upon him on 24 April. Calilov was preparing a documentary film on corruption in Azerbaijan from 1969-82, when Heidar Aliyev headed the Communist Party of Azerbaijan, and on the circumstances surrounding Aliyev's return to power in 1993. Police have confiscated the script and the source materials on which it was based. Calilov has since been charged with systematic embezzlement and with resisting arrest, his lawyer Telman Novruzade told Turan. (Turan)

GEORGIAN DEFENSE MINISTER THREATENS DJAVAKHETI ARMENIANS

2 May

Irakli Okruashvili told journalists on 2 May that the Georgian government will take decisive steps to crush any protests by the largely Armenian population of Djavakheti in southern Georgia against the closure of the Russian military base that is the region's largest employer. Okruashvili warned that the government will not tolerate the emergence of a new hotbed of separatism, and he repeated recent pledges by other top Georgian officials that all Armenians currently employed at the Russian base will be offered alternative employment. (Caucasus Press)

FAMILIES OF SLAIN KYRGYZ DEMONSTRATORS TO RECEIVE COMPENSATION

2 May

Acting Prosecutor-General Azimbek Beknazarov told RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service on 2 May that the families of six demonstrators shot dead in Aksy Province in March 2002 will receive compensation. Noting that the Supreme Court had previously refused to hear the relatives' grievances, Beknazarov said, "[The court] recently reviewed their complaint and ruled to give one million soms (\$24,400) to each of the six families whose relatives perished during these events. This decision has been conveyed to the government to carry out." Beknazarov also noted that the events are under renewed investigation and that the guilty parties will be brought to justice. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZ PARTY NOMINATES ACTING PROSECUTOR-GENERAL FOR PRESIDENT

2 May

The political council of the Asaba Party reached a decision on 2 May to nominate party head and acting Prosecutor-General Beknazarov for president, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported. Beknazarov told RFE/RL that while the party has the right to nominate whomever it sees fit, he does not plan to comment publicly on the issue until after 10 May. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZ PRESIDENTIAL RACE BEGINS

2 May

Kyrgyzstan's Central Election Commission has announced the time frame for presidential elections, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported on 1 May. Candidates can be nominated until 26 May. Each candidate must collect 50,000 signatures by 2 June. The commission will finish registering candidates on 13 June, election campaigns will last from 14 June to 9 July, and the election itself will take place on 10 July. At present, the following individuals have announced that they intend to run: acting President Bakiev, Ar-Namys party head Feliks Kulov, doctor Jenishbek Nazaraliev, Social Democratic Party head Almaz Atambaev, Moscow-based surgeon Kybanychbek Apas, businessman Nurbek Turdukulov, former Environment and Emergency Situations Minister Temirbek Akmataeliv, and parliament deputy Erkinbaev. RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service also reported the registration of another candidate, Jypar Jekshe, the head of the Kyrgyzstan Democratic Movement party. Thus far, the Central Election Commission has only registered the candidacy of Nazaraliev. (RFE/RL)

JAILED TAJIK OPPOSITION LEADER ABDUCTED, LAWYERS SAY

30 April

Azam Badriddinov and Shirinmoh Ibranova, the lawyers defending Muhammadruzi Iskandarov, the jailed head of Tajikistan's Democratic Party, held a news conference in Dushanbe on 30 April to share details of Iskandarov's recent disappearance in Russia and reappearance in custody in Tajikistan, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported. Badriddinov and Ibranova, who recently held their first meeting with Iskandarov in custody, said he was abducted in Moscow on 16 April by a group of unidentified men

of Slavic appearance wearing Russian police uniforms. They held him overnight in a sauna before handing him over to another group the next day. The second group carried him alone on a plane to Dushanbe. Russian prosecutors had refused to honor an extradition request from their Tajik colleagues, and they released Iskandarov in early April. Iskandarov faces corruption and terrorism charges in Tajikistan. (RFE/RL)

SAAKASHVILI SAYS THAT RUSSIANS MAY NOT NEED VISAS

29 April

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili does not rule out the unilateral cancellation of the visa requirement for Russian nationals, he told reporters on Friday after visiting southern Georgia. "We unilaterally simplified visa regulations with Russia and are ready to fully cancel visas now," he said. He said the decision will be made "if the coming talks with the Russian side end well." (Interfax)

CHECHEN WARLORD IS IN DAGESTAN - OFFICIAL

29 April

Chechen militant leader Shamil Basayev is presently in Dagestan, according to Deputy Prime Minister of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov. "According to our knowledge, he is in Dagestan now," Kadyrov said in an interview with Komsomolskaya Pravda published on Friday, but could not name Basayev's exact whereabouts. "If I knew them, I would have killed him myself," he said. "I have not promised to catch Basayev alive. I promised to destroy him. Our goal is to kill Basayev by May 9. There still is time. We believe in God, therefore we rely on the Almighty," Kadyrov added. He added that Basayev's destruction is his sole objective. "I assure you that I have no other business than to hunt down the devil and destroy him," he said. He said by now almost everyone involved in the murder of his father, Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov, has been eliminated and only Basayev who contracted the murder and one of the five perpetrators of the terrorist act are still alive. Kadyrov ruled out the chances of a trial for the participants in the terrorist act. "I will blast them to hell. If we don't get them, it will be a shame for all Chechens," he said. (Interfax)

**AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT PRESENTED
WITH DIAMOND-ENCRUSTED AWARD**
29 April

Azerbaijan's parliament has voted to bestow on President Ilham Aliyev the Order of Heidar Aliyev, which was formally presented to him on 28 April by Constitutional Court Chairman Farhad Abdullaev. The medal is fashioned of gold, silver, and platinum with 299 diamonds. Abdullaev said at the presentation ceremony that the current president has been awarded the order in recognition of his accomplishments in continuing the policies adopted by his father and predecessor. (Interfax)

**SACKED AZERBAIJANI RAILWAY
PERSONNEL ACCUSE MINISTER OF
CORRUPTION, EMBEZZLEMENT**
29 April

A group of former railway workers presented journalists in Baku on 28 April with the findings of an investigation into embezzlement and mismanagement by Transport Minister Ziya Mamedov. Among other things, they accused Mamedov of selling rolling stock abroad for scrap metal and counterfeit train tickets, adding that reports that he connived in the shipping of goods via Azerbaijan to Armenia are still being verified. (zerkalo.az)

**GEORGIAN PRESIDENT QUERIES STATE
DEPARTMENT REPORT ON TERRORISM**
29 April

Mikheil Saakashvili publicly refuted on 28 April the U.S. State Department's "Country Reports on Terrorism 2004." That U.S. assessment notes the Georgian government's "deep commitment" to combating domestic and international terrorism, adding that "Georgia is still used to a limited degree as a terrorist transit state, although much less so since the government crackdown on the Pankisi Gorge in 2002." Saakashvili affirmed that "there are no terrorists in Georgia and will not be any as long as I am president." Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili was more circumspect, commenting that no country in the world can categorically exclude the possibility that its territory has been used by terrorists. Parliament speaker Nino Burdjanadze said the U.S. assessment should not be seen as "tragic," noting that it is difficult to control a

mountainous region such as the Pankisi Gorge, and that the U.S. report acknowledges that "the infiltration [of Georgian territory] by terrorists has been reduced to a minimum." In Moscow, Akhmar Zavgaev, who is Chechnya's representative on the Federation Council, said on 28 April that militants, including foreign mercenaries, continue to enter Chechnya from Georgian and Azerbaijani territory. (RFE/RL)

**GEORGIAN PRESIDENT, FOREIGN
MINISTER SEEK TO REASSURE ARMENIAN
MINORITY**
28 April

Georgian Foreign Minister Zourabichvili has assured Armenians currently serving at the Russian military base in Akhalkalaki that the Georgian government will offer them alternative employment after that base is closed. Meeting on 28 April with visiting Armenian parliament speaker Artur Baghdasarian, President Saakashvili likewise affirmed that the Georgian government will implement a development plan for the remote, impoverished, and mountainous region, including improving existing highways linking it with other parts of Georgia and with neighboring Armenia. (Caucasus Press)

**RUSSIAN OFFICER ARRESTED IN
CONNECTION WITH GALI DEATH**
28 April

A Georgian military official told Caucasus Press on 28 April that a Russian officer with the peacekeeping force deployed in the Abkhaz conflict zone has been detained in connection with the 20 April death of a young Georgian in Gali Raion. He said Russian, Georgian, Abkhaz, and UN officials are investigating the incident together with the North Caucasus Military Prosecutor's Office. Also on 28 April, a Russian officer from the North Caucasus Military District told Caucasus Press that the Russian peacekeeper accused of killing the young man acted correctly. He claimed the victim was drunk and tried to take possession of the Russian officer's gun. (Caucasus Press)

**KAZAKH COURT ORDERS ARREST OF
OPPOSITION FIGURE**
28 April

A court in Almaty called on 28 April for the arrest of former Emergency Situations Agency head Zamanbek Nurkadilov. Nurkadilov, a onetime supporter of President Nursultan Nazarbaev who joined the opposition in 2004, faces defamation over his charges that unnamed officials were complicit in the 2004 death of journalist Askhat Sharipzhanov. The court, which has not yet ruled on the substance of the case, had ordered on 20 April that Nurkadilov be brought to court by force after he refused to appear, although he entered a "not guilty" plea in absentia. The latest ruling reinforces that decision. Mustakhim Tuleev, who is representing Nurkadilov, told "Kazakhstan Today" that his client plans to appeal the 28 April ruling, which comes into force in 10 days. ("Kazakhstan Today")

ACTING KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS KAZAKHSTAN

28 April

Acting Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Roza Otunbaeva met with Kazakh Foreign Minister Qasymzhomart Toqaev and Prime Minister Daniyal Akhmetov in Astana on 28 April for talks focusing on bilateral relations, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service and Kazakh Service reported. Toqaev said that his discussion with Otunbaeva revealed "no differences of opinion," "Kazakhstan Today" reported. "We think that Kazakhstan's dynamic economic growth will be a stabilizing factor [in the region]," RFE/RL's Kazakh Service quoted Otunbaeva as saying. Toqaev reiterated his government's decision to send Kyrgyzstan 1,000 tons of wheat and 10,000 tons of fuel in humanitarian aid. Addressing the significance of recent events in Kyrgyzstan for Kazakhstan, Toqaev said, "In Kazakhstan, the repetition of such events is practically impossible. The weakness of the previous [Kyrgyz] regime was its [penchant for] giving promises [and] signing agreements and treaties without carrying them out." (RFE/RL)

UZBEK WORKERS ON HUNGER STRIKE

27 April

More than 400 workers at Uzbekistan's Shorsuv Metalworks were on the third day of a hunger strike on 27 April. The workers began their hunger strike as a protest against the plant's managers, who they say cheated them out of shares in the enterprise.

Ferghana Province Governor Sheramat Nurmatov had told the hunger strikers on 26 April that only a court could resolve the conflict, but the protestors replied that they have sought justice through the courts for eight months without result. The workers said that they will await word from President Islam Karimov, whom they addressed in a 25 April telegram demanding the resignation of the government and threatening continued protest actions if their demands are not met. (fergana.ru)

GEORGIA'S MINORITIES COMPLAIN TO PRESIDENT

28 April

Representatives of some 50 organizations and NGOs representing Georgia's ethnic minorities have addressed an open letter to President Mikheil Saakashvili criticizing the approach adopted by his administration to issues that impinge on the rights and sensitivities of national minorities, including revision of internal district borders, reform of the election process, and providing educational opportunities for members of ethnic minorities. Visiting Georgia on 27 April for the fifth time in three years, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Rolf Ekeus met with Minister for Conflict Resolution Giorgi Khaindrava, OSCE Mission head Roy Reeve, and with Heidi Tagliavini, who is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special representative for the Abkhaz conflict, to discuss the Abkhaz and South Ossetian conflicts, the situation of the Greek and Armenian minorities, and the prospects for the repatriation to southern Georgia of the Meskhetians deported in 1944. Also on 27 April, Georgian Education Minister Kakha Lomaya announced to journalists the creation of a special school in Kutaisi to train 200-400 civil servants annually, primarily Armenians and Ossetians. (RFE/RL)

DEMONSTRATORS STORM KYRGYZ SUPREME COURT BUILDING

27 April

A group of about 80 demonstrators stormed the Kyrgyz Supreme Court building in Bishkek on 27 April. With another 100 picketers outside the building, the demonstrators threaten to set fire to the building unless the entire court resigns. Supreme Court Chairman Kurmanbek Osmonov had already submitted his resignation but it was not

accepted by interim President Bakiev. (ITAR-TASS)

AZERBAIJANI, ARMENIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS TO MEET IN FRANKFURT 26 April

Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov and his Armenian counterpart Vartan Oskanian will discuss outlooks for the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement in Frankfurt on April 27, Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry spokesman Metin Mirza told Interfax on Tuesday. "The meeting between the ministers will be held in the framework of the former talks called the Prague process," he said. (Interfax-Azerbaijan)

GEORGIA'S POSITION ON RUSSIAN BASES BECOMING MORE REALISTIC – SOURCE 26 April

Progress made recently at Russian-Georgian negotiations on the withdrawal of Russian military bases from that country is due to the fact that Tbilisi has taken a more realistic attitude towards this issue, a Moscow-based diplomatic source told Interfax on Tuesday. "When Russia talks about a convergence between Moscow's and Tbilisi's positions concerning the time and conditions of the presence of the Russian military bases on Georgian territory, it is implied that Georgia has begun to discuss more realistic dates for their withdrawal," the source said. (Interfax)

GEORGIAN BORDER GUARDS FIND MINES ON BORDER WITH TURKEY 26 April

Georgian border guards found 12 anti-personnel mines dating from Soviet times on the border with Turkey, a spokesman for the Georgian Border Service told Interfax on Tuesday. "It was common practice in Soviet times to plant mines along the border to prevent border violations, but Russian frontier guards should have left their Georgian colleagues mine maps, something they failed to do. Today we face the threat of potential mine explosions because we don't know where these mines are located," the spokesman said. (Interfax)

FORMER TAJIK OFFICIAL SENTENCED FOR HIZB UT-TAHRIR LINK 25 April

A court in Tajikistan's Sughd Province on 22 April sentenced Davron Jabborov to a 10-year prison term and confiscation of his property for membership in the banned Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir and bigamy, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported. Jabborov had worked in the counterterrorism section of the security services in Sughd Province from 1995 to 1998 before he was dismissed for a firearm mishap that led to the death of a colleague. Although Jabborov admitted to membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir, he denied any guilt, saying, "The sentence is unjust, since it was not proven that I broke the law, because Hizb ut-Tahrir does not set the goal of overthrowing the government by force." (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZ STATE TELEVISION STAFF WANTS PUBLIC CONTROL 25 April

Employees of Kyrgyzstan's National Television and Radio Broadcasting Corporation (NTRK) held a news conference on 22 April demanding that state-run television be transformed into public television, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported. They stated, "The destabilization of the information front will continue until NTRK becomes public television." Jainagul Maksimova, chair of the group Journalists for Law and Order and the head of a broadcasting company in Chuy Province, said, "Kyrgyz TV carries out the same political orders now as it did under the previous regime," akipress.org reported. She argued that only public control can bring freedom of expression to the airwaves. Tamara Valieva, a television staffer, said that new procedures are needed for appointing top management, or else "TV staff will stage attempts to stop broadcasts." Despite tension between the post-Akaev management of state-run television and employees, management is also prepared to accept public control over broadcasting. (RFE/RL)

THOUSANDS TAKE TO STREETS IN ADYGEYA TO PROTEST PLANNED TERRITORIAL MERGER 25 April

Some 10,000 people attended a demonstration on 22 April in Maikop, capital of the Republic of Adygeya, to protest Moscow's plans to abolish the region's status and merge it with the surrounding

Krasnodar Krai. Two new organizations have emerged to mobilize public opinion against that planned merger: the Committee to Protect the Status of the Republic of Adygeya, which held its constituent meeting on 23 April, and the League of Social Unions. On 21 April, Vladimir Gromov, ataman of the Kuban Cossacks, warned in Maikop against changing any borders in the North Caucasus. He reasoned that the region needs peace and stability, and that any move to abolish borders would only compound existing tensions. In Grozny, however, Chechen State Council Chairman Taus Dzhabrailov again proposed merging Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Stavropol Krai into a single territorial unit. He argued that it is more difficult to cross internal borders between North Caucasian republics than the frontier "between the former USSR and a capitalist country," and that abolishing the existing checkpoints on those internal borders would save money. (RFE/RL)

ARMENIA COMMEMORATES 1915 MASS KILLINGS

25 April

Hundreds of thousands of people, including Armenia's top leaders, marked on 24 April the 90th anniversary of the mass killings of Armenians in Ottoman Turkey, converging on the monument to genocide victims near Yerevan, RFE/RL's Armenian Service and international media reported. In a written address to the Armenian people, President Robert Kocharian termed the genocide a watershed in Armenian history and said international recognition that the killings constituted a genocide should become an issue in regional and international politics. At the same time, he reaffirmed Armenia's readiness to establish "normal relations" with Turkey. Defense Minister Serzh Sarkisian said on 24 April that he believes Turkey will eventually acknowledge it as a genocide, but he added that "the Turks must admit their ancestors' mistake." Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian said that Armenia wants Turkey's accession to the EU to be made contingent on recognition of the genocide and the opening of its borders with Armenia. (RFE/RL)

TURKMEN PRESIDENT CHANGES MARRIAGE LAW FOR FOREIGNERS

22 April

Saparmurat Niyazov has changed the law regulating marriages between Turkmen citizens and foreigners, *turkmenistan.ru* reported on 22 April. Under the new law, foreigners will no longer have to pay a \$50,000 deposit, although they will still have to reside in Turkmenistan for no less than one year. (*Turkmenistan.ru*)

ANOTHER CANDIDATE ENTERS KYRGYZ PRESIDENTIAL RACE

22 April

Jeneszbek Nazaraliev, a doctor who runs a well-known clinic for drug addicts in Bishkek, announced on 21 April that he plans to seek the presidency in the 10 July election, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported. Nazaraliev told Bishkek TV that he was prompted to declare his candidacy by a desire to stabilize the situation in the country. Nazaraliev's announcement brings the number of declared candidates to 10, a number that is expected to rise as the election nears. (RFE/RL)

TWO NEW POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS EMERGE IN AZERBAIJAN

22 April

The seven prominent Azerbaijani oppositionists jailed last October for their imputed role in the post-presidential clashes in Baku on 16 October 2003 and pardoned last month by President Ilham Aliyev launched the political movement "16 October" in Baku on 22 April. Former People's Party Chairman Panah Huseinov said the movement's primary objectives are to further democracy and the holding of free and fair elections, although the movement will not field candidates in the parliamentary elections due in November 2005, according to Democratic Party of Azerbaijan Secretary-General Serdar Djalaloglu. But Rauf Arifoglu, editor of the opposition newspaper "Yeni Musavat," said that "if the people want a revolution, we shall bring one about." On 21 April, a group of NGO leaders, including Sabit Bagirov, former president of the state oil company SOCAR, announced their alignment in the election bloc Public Leaders, *echo-az.com* reported on 23 April. They affirmed their readiness to cooperate with other blocs to support amendments to the election law and

ensure that NGOs are permitted to monitor the vote without any restrictions. (Turan)

KYRGYZ COMMISSION ON EX-PRESIDENT'S PROPERTY ASKS FOR COOPERATION

22 April

Acting Deputy Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov, who chairs the recently formed commission to investigate the alleged business holdings of former Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev, told a press conference in Bishkek on 21 April that the commission invites anyone with knowledge of the ousted president's business dealings to come forward, *Kabar* reported. Usenov noted that the commission is currently working with a "tentative" list of 42 enterprises. He added: "The commission will also investigate money transfer schemes through offshore zones, schemes for skimming from the budget, and from such enterprises as Kumtor [gold mine]." He also said that the commission has information that "shortly before 24 March, between \$20 million and \$30 million in assets from [cellular operator] BiTel...were transferred to offshore zones." Usenov also confirmed that the National Security

Service has opened a criminal case against Adil Toigonbaev, the son-in-law of former President Askar Akaev. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKH PRESIDENT ADDRESSES MEDIA FORUM

21 April

Nursultan Nazarbaev told participants in the Eurasian Media Forum in Almaty on 21 April that freedom of speech and the media are an "integral part" of Kazakhstan's progress toward democracy and an open society. The president called free media a "supreme value," but warned that the media should not serve as a weapon in "information wars." Turning to recent events in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan, Nazarbaev commented: "As clear-headed people, we understand the deeper reasons for these events. These reasons lie not in some mythical plots by outside forces, but are the result of the logic of internal development. Poverty and unemployment...are fertile ground for people's dissatisfaction with the authorities." ("Kazakhstan Today")

