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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.

The Analyst aims to provide our industrious and engaged audience with a singular and reliable assessment of events and trends in the region written in an analytical tone rather than a polemical one. *Analyst* articles reflect the fact that we have a diverse international audience. While this should not affect what author's write about or their conclusions, this does affect the tone of articles. Analyst articles focus on a newsworthy topic, engage central issues of the latest breaking news from the region and are backed by solid evidence. Articles should normally be based on local language news sources. Each 1000-1200 word analytical article must offer a concise and authoritative statement of the event or issue in question. An article must provide relevant, precise and authoritative background information. It also must offer a sober and analytical judgment of the issue as well as a clinical evaluation of the importance of the event. Authors must cite facts of controversial nature to the Editor who may contact other experts to confirm claims. Since *Analyst* articles are based on solid evidence, rather than rumors or conjecture, they prove to be reliable sources of information on the region. By offering balanced and objective analysis while keeping clear of inflammatory rhetoric, The Analyst does more to inform our international readership on all sides of the issues.

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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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POST-REVOLUTIONARY SYNDROME IN KYRGYZSTAN – THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER CONTINUES

Fredrik M. Sjoberg

For the first time, a southerner was last Sunday elected as the head of state of Kyrgyzstan. This is a significant event in a country that for long was dominated by Askar Akaev and his northern clan. Kurmanbek Bakiyev emerged as a leading opposition figure following the parliamentary elections in February this year and was now elected in a race that lacked any major opponents. Another leading Akaev opponent, Felix Kulov, will now be the new prime minister, according to a pre-election agreement between the two. That agreement also stipulates a strengthening of the role of the prime minister, but to what extent that will materialize is still uncertain. Should this happen, it would be a unique development in a region characterized by strong presidential systems.

BACKGROUND: On Sunday July 10, Kyrgyzstan elected Kurmanbek Bakiyev as its new president with the astonishing figure of 89 percent in an election that was a considerably improvement over the February parliamentary elections, according to the OSCE. This was considered by many as the final act in the “Tulip Revolution” that started with the fraudulent elections in February and led to the ousting of longtime president Akaev.

The most basic dividing line in Kyrgyz politics is the north-south divide, the south being politically marginalized since Soviet times and more traditional and characterized by a large Uzbek minority. Akaev was a northerner and basically staffed his administration with fellow northerners, and consequently ignored the south. A notable previous challenge to Akaev’s power was the events that culminated in the southern region of Aksy in March 2002, which left at least five people dead. The issue at that time was parliamentarian Azimbek Beknazarov’s critique of Akaev’s transfer of territory to China. The newly elected president, Bakiyev, was Prime Minister at the time and an Akaev supporter, but resigned as a consequence of police firing into the crowds.

The presidential campaign that began immediately after the revolution was from the beginning destined to be a struggle between the two strongmen of the revolution, Bakiyev and Kulov. The race was predicted

to be very competitive until Kulov suddenly agreed on May 12 to withdraw and to become Bakiyev’s Prime Minister once elected. Kulov had been in prison for the last five years on charges of abuse of office, charges that were apparently politically motivated. In the wake of the revolution in March, he was freed from prison and charged with coordinating the security situation during the post-revolutionary chaos. Soon thereafter he stepped down until he entered the government as a consequence of the Bakiyev-Kulov agreement, which basically meant that Kulov would withdraw from the presidential race and immediately be appointed Deputy Prime Minister, and that he would become the PM in the case of a Bakiyev victory. Moreover, a new constitution would be adopted that would increase the powers of the PM. The agreement, which was publicly announced twice, and especially the part of it that states that the powers of the Prime Minister will be increased, will most likely be the defining element of Kyrgyz politics this fall.

In the pre-election period, the security situation was marked by three serious incidents of violence, one being an attempt to seize the Government Building on June 17. Urmat Baryktabasov, a member of parliament from the north with ties to Akaev’s clan, carried this out as a response to being deregistered as a presidential candidate. Some observers saw the mobilization of the public association “Mekenim Kyrgyzstan”, which

Baryktabasov leads, as an attempt at counter-revolution. It ended with the offices of “Mekenim Kyrgyzstan” being searched and sealed by law enforcement authorities.

IMPLICATIONS: The revolutionary changes in the government of Kyrgyzstan can be considered as a new opening for Kyrgyzstan, especially when it comes to clearing out the most corrupt elements of the government. The power balance of the country is nevertheless still in flux, with possibly divisive fights to be expected. Everything boils down to the Bakiev-Kulov power struggle, with its main ingredient being working out a new constitution, of which a draft was accepted by the parliament 8 June. Whether any real changes in patterns of governance will take place or whether Bakiev will simply bring in his own people without changing the recruiting structures and enhancing the professionalism of the public administration, remains an open question.

If, however, what is happening is an emerging parliamentarism in Kyrgyzstan, it would be a unique and novel development in the entire region, dominated by authoritarian presidential systems. At this stage is far too early to tell whether this will materialize or not. This question will be a defining element of the power struggle between Bakiev and Kulov. Nevertheless, the composition of the new parliament does not inspire hope for the development of the country, since many of the members have criminal records and ties to corrupt business. Since being a member of the parliament offers immunity, the February elections could essentially be characterized a politicization of criminals. One possibility is for new general elections to be announced, something that Bakiev strongly advocated in the aftermath of the revolution.

In terms of foreign policy, Bakiev needs to balance Russia, China, and the United States, which is getting increasingly tricky. At the press conference after being elected, Bakiev referred to discussions about the closing of the U.S. military base in Kyrgyzstan. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) raised the issue at a summit in Astana, Kazakhstan last week, and being a

member, Kyrgyzstan is pressured by Russia and China to get the U.S. out of Kyrgyzstan. Bakiev mentioned the changing situation on the ground in Afghanistan and said that discussions about setting a date for U.S. withdrawal was “the right thing to do”. Up to this date the SCO has been considered a paper tiger, but with upcoming joint training sessions and energy cooperation it will be interesting to follow Kyrgyzstan’s positioning in the organization.

CONCLUSIONS: Real work begins now for newly elected president Bakiev, the outcome being uncertain at the time of writing. One thing is clear and that is the willingness of the donor countries of the west to support the new regime in Bishkek. There is a golden opportunity for Bakiev and Kulov to focus on reforming the state apparatus and to start delivering along the lines of Bakiev’s first press conference. The regional situation, and in particular the situation in Uzbekistan, might turn out to be a unifying factor in this crucial stage of Kyrgyz state-building. The constitutional amendment process and the new power-sharing arrangements currently under discussion will define the near future. As for domestic opposition, the situation is still uncertain, and it might emerge from within the winning side of the tulip revolutionaries, i.e. from Kulov, or it might emerge from the remnants of Akaev’s power base.

Kyrgyzstan was in the mid-1990s considered as becoming increasingly democratic and later turned less so. It is now making a comeback as the “island of democracy” in Central Asia. But for how long will this last this time around?

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INDIA'S CONTINUING QUEST FOR CENTRAL ASIAN ENERGY

Stephen Blank

The spike in energy prices to \$60 a barrel of oil and China's recent bid to buy Unocal underscores how issues of energy access are driving global economic and political trends. Certainly, this is particularly visible in Asia in general and in Central Asia in particular. While China's voracious demand for energy has gotten almost all the publicity, in fact India's demand is not far behind and India and Pakistan are competing vigorously with China for reliable access to global energy sources.

BACKGROUND: In Pakistan's case, President Pervez Musharraf has said, "We are short of energy. We want gas immediately. Our industry is suffering; investment coming to Pakistan is suffering, so Pakistan's interest is to get gas fast." Therefore Musharraf is pushing primarily for a gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and then on to India.

For his part Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that "Energy security is second only in our scheme of things to food security." Thus India's dependence upon secure oil and gas supplies from the Gulf and from Central Asia, as manifested in its energy firms' quest for equity holdings in Russian, Angolan, Sudanese, Venezuelan, Central Asian, and Iranian energy fields or for major deals with energy producing states like Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran represents a vital national interest. Moreover, India wants to explore as many options as possible, not just Iran. Thus in June, 2005 it signaled its interest in participating in the so called TAP project (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan or Trans-Afghan Pipeline), a project sponsored by those governments and the Asian Development Bank.

India's interest in this project is only the latest manifestation of its rising interests in Central Asian energy. Accordingly India has signed or is negotiating major deals with Russia and Kazakhstan, as well as showing new interest in

Turkmenistan. For, example, India has formally bid for immediate participation in the Tengiz and Kashagan oil fields and the Kurmangazy and Darkhan exploration blocs. India is also interested in nine other exploration blocs in and around the Caspian Sea. Indian Energy Minister Mari Shankar Aiyar also offered the services of India's Gail Ltd., a gas infrastructure firm, as a project consortium partner in Kazakhstan's three pipelines with China. Gail is also eager to invest in gas processing and petrochemical plants in association with other Indian public-sector companies in the Kazakh towns of Atyrau and Akhtau and to improve oil recovery in older fields in Kazakhstan. In order to promote this comprehensive plan of Indian participation in all aspects of Kazakhstan's oil and gas projects, both sides agreed to establish a joint working group to examine and develop various projects for cooperation.

Nevertheless, the TAP project remains perhaps the most intriguing project in which India seeks to participate, precisely because it brings together Turkmenistan's gas and a pipeline shipping it through Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. It will be remembered that there was considerable interest in such a project in the 1990s as it was believed that this could serve to moderate the threat then posed by the new Taliban rulers of Afghanistan and bring much needed royalties and energy access to that state. Such a pipeline would also constitute an

outlet for Turkmen natural gas that was not at all dependent upon Russian pipelines and facilities. Thus the TAP pipeline would strengthen Ashkhabad's independence from Moscow.

Today all three states would benefit from this pipeline. Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India have once again resurrected interest in it albeit under vastly changed geostrategic circumstances. Not only does Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government in Afghanistan need the royalties and the energy that would accrue to it through this pipeline; it appears that India and Pakistan have actually begun to approach each other in a cooperative spirit as regards energy. Previously such projects always foundered upon the rocks of Indo-Pakistani enmity as New Delhi was naturally most reluctant to have its access to reliable energy supplies depend on pipelines through its arch-rival and enemy, Pakistan. And without an Indian terminus this pipeline did not make sufficient economic sense to justify construction at a time of war, instability, terrorism, and much lower prices for natural gas. Neither was Pakistan interested in supporting India's economic development and American policy towards this part of the world in the Clinton Administration was, as we now know, tragically disconcerted.

IMPLICATIONS: Today, however, Washington strongly supports this pipeline, and not only because it would enhance Turkmenistan's independence and Afghanistan's stability. India and Pakistan, both of whom need to obtain reliable energy access in and around the Caspian to meet their exploding demand for energy, are pondering their options. For Pakistan, as noted above the priority appears to be Iran. But it also clearly is interested in the TAP project and possibly in a third supply route originating in Qatar. India is ready to embrace all three options given the much larger population and demands that it must satisfy. But its professed interest in the TAP project reveals intriguing geostrategic considerations at work beyond considerations of merely obtaining reliable and quick access to natural gas.

For example, Washington strongly supports the Turkmen option, not just to maintain tight economic pressure upon Iran, but also to bring India and Pakistan closer together. While India and Pakistan have never interfered with supply of water to both states as regulated by earlier treaties that give India the dominant hand over water from the Indus River, rivalry over energy has been a different case. If New Delhi and Islamabad can jointly agree on a pipeline from Turkmenistan or Iran, this will be a tangible sign of much greater mutual trust and willingness to accept mutual dependence. Indeed Aiyar talks openly of India's and Pakistan's common interest in securing access to low cost energy from their "extended neighborhood" (Central Asia and the Gulf) and espouses bilateral cooperation toward this end. Therefore it would be a sign of progress towards Washington's main regional goal of being a midwife to a stable and progressively unfolding South Asian peace process that would cut the ground out from under much of the region's terrorism and ethno-religious insurgency movements.

The potential strategic payoffs from this pipeline option do not end with enhanced possibilities for bilateral Indo-Pakistani cooperation. Indo-Pakistani rivalry for influence continues to this day in Afghanistan and was in the past a major factor in aggravating Afghanistan's own internal weaknesses that led to a generation of upheaval and war after the coup of 1973, even before the Soviet invasion of 1979. To the extent that both India and Pakistan learn to cooperate with each other and accept mutual dependence on energy and water as a stable, non-provocative, and undisturbed fact of life, their broader geopolitical rivalry throughout South and Central Asia should also cool down. That trend offers significant payoffs to Afghanistan as well for President Karzai recently again criticized Pakistan for not doing enough to suppress terrorists inside its borders or to refrain from providing assistance to Taliban forces in the Pakistani-Afghanistan border regions. Construction of the TAP line or of any pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India strengthens Afghanistan's hand vis-à-vis Pakistan

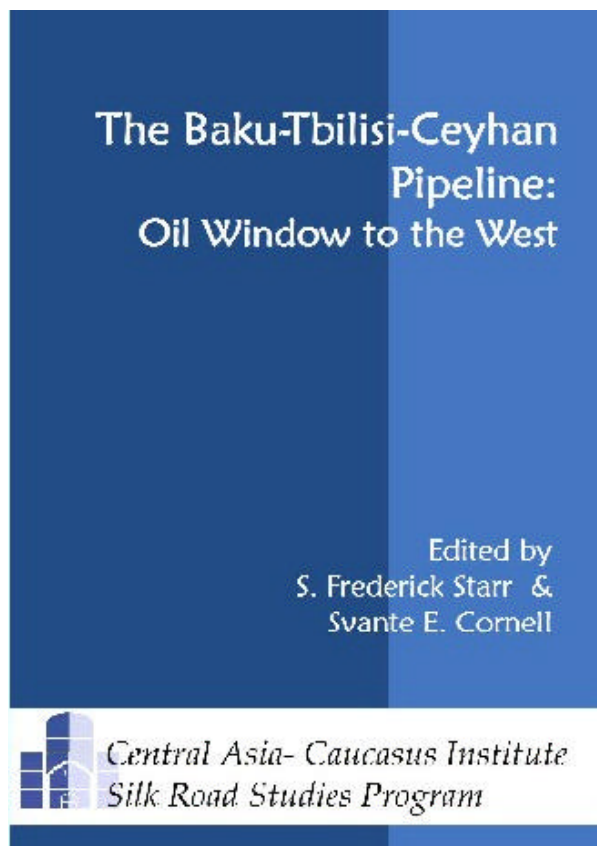
and raises the potential cost to Pakistan of continuing to flirt with elements who wish to spread terror throughout Central Asia.

For these many reasons, stabilizing the nascent South Asian “peace process”, striking at the roots of terrorism in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and potentially Central Asia, and to demonstrate its friendship for India and Pakistan and solicitude for their energy needs, Washington has publicly supported the TAP line and pushed for it while pressuring both sides to refrain from the Iranian option.

CONCLUSIONS: This project is more than a potential of Indo-Pakistani rapprochement. It would also epitomize India’s growing reach and interest in the entire Caspian area. Aiyar has also proposed to Azerbaijan that it either build a pipeline through Iran to bring oil to India, or join its gas supplies to an extension of the TAP project to bring

its natural gas to India. India is also pushing the idea of a consumers’ union in the energy market and is sponsoring major meetings to bring producers and consumers, including Caspian producers together in New Delhi later this year. India’s aggressive oil and gas diplomacy hardly stops in Central Asia and is global in scope. All these signs of activity denote India’s rising capabilities, demands, and ability to satisfy them. Henceforth India, no less than China, will be a major player in Central Asian and Russian energy issues. As it is equally interested in Central Asia for strategic reasons, India will be a factor to be reckoned with on those issues too.

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ATTEMPTS AT RE-PRIVATIZATION FOLLOW KYRGYZ REVOLUTION

Zoya Pylenko

Kyrgyzstan's March revolution ended Askar Akayev's 15-year presidency - and so gave the new government a chance to correct old problems concerning corruption and faltering democracy, and to stimulate economic development. However, the most visible result of the revolution so far is a collapse of state authority and a worsening economic situation, caused in large part by popular attempts to seize privatized property and force a change in ownership. Such incidents can be observed all over the country. Property seizing in Kyrgyzstan is the result of the instability following the revolution - instability to which such incidents further add. The economy is badly affected by it, and investors are wary to invest in a country where the power of the law means little.

BACKGROUND: A recent International Crisis Group Report termed the March events in Kyrgyzstan as “less a revolution than a process of state collapse”. And this situation of lawlessness and anarchy creates perfect conditions for people to illegally seize property. The most advertised of such incidents was the capture of a coalmine in Kara-Keche, in the Naryn region of central Kyrgyzstan, by workers of the enterprise. The workers said this was an attempt to bring about justice. When the company was privatized 14 years ago, businessman (and now also member of parliament) Kamchybek Joldoshbayev, became its new owner. Joldoshbayev was close to Akayev. The workers of the coalmine seem to have grounds for complains, as they used to work in bad conditions for a scanty salary, and were not even immune from violence: they claim they were not seldom beaten at work. On June 6, workers at Kara-Keche under the leadership of a local politician, Nurlan Motuyev, seized the offices of the companies “Besh Sari”, “Akzhol” and “Shabdan”, who were handling coal extraction at this largest coalmine in the country. They demanded that Joldoshbayev's ownership be cancelled and that instead a new company be formed from the old three. Of its shares, 49 % should then belong to the

workers, and 51% to the state. And they demanded that 70 % of the new company's profits would go to them, and only 30% to the state.

The workers considered their demands to be well founded. They wanted to receive compensation for their pitiable life during the past 14 years. They had no choice but to work there without a legal contract and to be content with small and irregularly paid salaries, the workers say. It is very difficult to find a job in small towns and villages in Kyrgyzstan. But Kara-Keche wasn't only occupied by its workers. Self-appointed “revolutionaries” from nearby villages arrived also at the site to help the employees (and perhaps to profit themselves from this redistribution of property). It was feared that disruptions of work there could lead to an increase of coal prices and an insufficient availability of coal for the winter period.

Attempts to regulate the conflict were not successful. On 15 June, a parliamentary commission – including Joldoshbayev – was driven away by stones. (The workers say they were being shot at by thugs that Joldoshbayev brought with him). According to Joldoshbayev, the workers are ruled from Bishkek. Motuyev, for his part, was reported as saying that he had no connection to the initial

seizing of the coalmine. He just agreed, on the worker's request, to lead their action further.

The incident at Kara-Keche doesn't stand on its own. Everywhere, it seems, privatizations concluded during Akayev's reign are now being questioned. Workers at the goldmine of Kumtor – that is now completely in Canadian hands – also demand the enterprise be returned to Kyrgyz ownership.

IMPLICATIONS: Whatever the reasons of locals might be when questioning privatizations – greed or a genuine strive to correct past injustices – one consequence of their actions is very clear. Foreign investors are afraid of the current situation in Kyrgyzstan where nobody seems to be in control and regard for the law is flimsy. They now prefer to wait with making further investments in the country. According to a June 2005 Investor Survey by the International Business Council – an organization representing Kyrgyz and foreign investors – no changes for the better are to be expected for the economy or investments.

According to the survey, investor expectations about economic conditions and the investment climate severely worsened during the last six months. Apart from instability in the country, investors worry about government investigations into corruption during the reign of Akayev. Some believe the investigations haven't always been independent or fair, targeting also “clean” businesses that had links with Akayev. (Yet during Akayev's tenure it was all but impossible to do business without being on good terms with the president) Nevertheless, the authorities intend to investigate all claims about illegal property privatization during Akayev's presidency.

With regard to the coalmine seizure at Kara-Keche, the government made a surprise decision. It appears to have agreed to appoint Nurlan Motuyev to the post of director of the new coalmine enterprise. The structure of the new company, and the divisions of its profits, will apparently be as the workers demanded.

There are several possible explanations for this appointment. The first might be that the government lacks any power to fight against the seizure of the coalmine and had no wish to make the situation worse before the presidential elections of 10 July – and therefore accepted the workers' terms. Another version is that Motuyev (who claims to have made “revolution” together with today's rulers of the country) and his men were supported in their attempt to seize and redistribute the coalmine. Akayev's old ally, Joldoshbayev, conveniently has been left empty-handed as a result.

That businesses can apparently be taken from their lawful owners by force makes investors feel insecure. Many foreign businessmen prefer to wait with further investments until after the presidential elections. Then, they hope, it will be clearer what will follow in the country. How the situation at Kumtor develops will be especially important because here, foreign investors are concerned – not local ones as at Kara-Keche.

CONCLUSIONS: The Kara-Keche incident is another demonstration of the instability and lawlessness in Kyrgyzstan. Many people who have the chance seem to try to profit from the general chaos. Workers such as those as Kara-Keche seem to have good reasons to be dissatisfied. But local politicians, shady businessmen and would-be revolutionaries might easily make use of the chaotic situation. That possessions can be redistributed by force and not by law is an ominous development. The new authorities might, in this way, hand property from old allies of Akayev to their own allies. Besides, such incidents damage the country's reputation and make foreign and local businessmen less willing to invest in Kyrgyzstan, which risks worsening the ongoing economic decline in Kyrgyzstan.

AUTHOR'S BIO: Zoya Pylenko is a Bishkek-based freelance writer, a contributor among other to ISN Security Watch.

GEORGIA'S POLITICS REMAIN CRISIS-PRONE

Blanka Hancilova

The latest clash between the opposition and the ruling party in Georgian parliament is symptomatic of the fact that a healthy political process failed to form after the Rose Revolution. The opposition is willing to attack the institutions of the state to gain political support, while the authorities are unwilling to consult the opposition on any crucial issues of legislation and policies. This communication deficit may undermine the legitimacy of government in Georgia.

BACKGROUND: The opposition and the ruling party representatives engaged in a fist-fight in the parliament on July 1. This confrontation followed the overnight riots which broke out in a courtroom as the Tbilisi City court decided on three-month pre-trial detention of two wrestling champions detained on extortion charges. The riot police broke up the rally after protesting friends and relatives blocked the main thoroughfare of the city, Rustaveli Avenue. The opposition parties joined the rally and criticized the state for excessive use of force.

The brawl in the parliament was also preceded by tension between the ruling party and the opposition over the new rules of electing the Tbilisi City Council and the City Mayor, recently adopted by the parliament. The Law was rushed through the first hearing in the parliament by the ruling National Movement, which commands an overwhelming majority, just days after the draft has been introduced. Following the brawl in the parliament, the opposition walked out and the majority adopted the law in the second and third, final, hearings, clearly showing disregard to dissenting opinion.

The law on election of the Tbilisi City authorities is important because almost a third of Georgia's population lives in Tbilisi. The newly adopted law represents an improvement over the old one that stipulated that the mayor is a presidential appointee. However, as the opposition points out, the new

system of electing the councilors – through first-past-the-post (majoritarian), “winner takes all” system in multi-mandate precincts – will disproportionably favor the ruling party. The opposition also opts for the direct elections of the Mayor, rather than the Mayor's election by the Council, as foreseen by the new law. Some of the opposition parties threatened to boycott the Tbilisi City council elections and to initiate a referendum on the direct election of the Tbilisi mayor.

IMPLICATIONS: The ruling National Movement, which now staffs both the central and local governments, is acting with apparent arrogance towards dissenting opinion. The National Movement came to power with overwhelming majority while the opposition is marginalized. Some former members of the National Movement coalition – such as the well-established Republican Party and the relatively new Conservatives – moved into opposition since, but still struggle to consolidate supporters and present viable policy alternatives.

The National Movement has repeatedly failed to consult the opposition on important draft legislation, which is often rushed through the parliament with confidence, which borders arrogance. Just after acquiring power, the National Movement rushed through the parliament the constitutional changes that, on the total, have increased presidential powers. Other important

legislation, including the rule of composition of the election authorities and the law on the Adjara Autonomous Republic, have been passed without consulting the opposition. Many of the legislation pieces have significant merits and can be viewed as improvements, however overall the process whereby they were adopted demonstrates a lack of transparency and lack of will to consult with other forces in society.

The June confrontation is an alarming signal that as the parties are not able to engage in meaningful dialogue, the political landscape becomes more polarized and extremist actions and statements become acceptable. It shows that the political landscape of Georgia has failed to develop significantly since the times of Eduard Shevardnadze. Then as now, the opposition is inclined to challenge or at least question not only the ruling party, but also key institutions of state – such as the courts, law enforcement or the credibility of the parliament – to gain popular acclaim. Although the extent of such challenges is not extensive yet, the repeated incidents would undermine President Mikheil Saakashvili's claim that the country is moving towards more established, respected and accessible state institutions.

In difference with Shevardnadze's administration, President Saakashvili nevertheless still commands significant popular support. In these conditions, the authorities managed to turn the public debate which ensued after the rallies and the incident in the parliament in the media in their favor. Express polls the next day showed public opinion in Tbilisi almost evenly split – around forty percent of the surveyed supporting and around the same number disapproving of the opposition's actions. The joint opposition rally to protest "government violence" has attracted less than thousand protestors, most of them from the radical-populist Labor party.

There are grounds to fear that the National Movement would understand this failure of the

opposition to rally the voters as a *carte blanche* for more unilateral decisions. This assessment could be misleading. The weakness of the opposition does not warrant inflated self-confidence on the part of the National Movement. Many Georgians, including influential middle-class and business leaders as well as ordinary citizens, are disgruntled by various government policies. Most of these groups do not share the same agenda, and the policies favored by some might well be resented by the others. However, the reluctance of the government to consult with stakeholders on vital decisions could be the factor that would unite these interest groups.

More extensive consultations would lead to a more legitimate and inclusive political process. The opposition would get the chance to feel the constraints the government faces. Such consultations will also increase the legitimacy of the government, and will help to create an environment in which all players on the political arena would agree on the rules of the political game, preserving and strengthening the pillars of democracy and the rule of law.

CONCLUSIONS: Georgian politics remain prone to recurring political crises, leading to the overall weakening of both the ruling party and the country as a whole. After the summer lull, the political skirmishing is likely to heat up by early fall, and reach its climax with by-elections to the parliament, which are tentatively scheduled for October. A decision by the opposition to boycott the local elections would lead to a dead end and might seriously destabilize Georgia's politics. Any reversal of such decisions can be interpreted as a window of opportunity for enhancing the political dialogue.

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FIELD REPORTS

AZERBAIJAN'S ELECTION CODE IS CHANGED – WITHOUT REAL CHANGE

Alman Mir-Ismail

Last week, before ending its spring session, the Parliament of Azerbaijan voted and adopted the final version of the amendments to the Election Code, submitted by the President of the country. More than 30 amendments were made to the document that regulates the electoral process in Azerbaijan, yet leaving the most controversial and hotly debated issue of the composition of the election commission untouched.

The change to the election code came under pressure from the Council of Europe and the OSCE, which advised the Azerbaijani authorities to revise the document in order to improve the conditions for the upcoming parliamentary elections, scheduled for November 6. Specifically, the domestic opposition and the international community has lobbied for changes to the provision that described the formation of the Central Election Commission and the local election commissions. Opposition parties claimed that the current election commissions were under the monopoly of the authorities with 2/3 of votes also going in favor of the ruling regime. Thus, they suggested that the election commissions be formed on equal parity between the ruling and opposition parties.

Moreover, the international community also advocated for changing the provision in the code that banned the participation of local NGOs in the election observation process. Currently, the law prohibited all local civic groups that received more than 30% of their funding from foreign sources to do so.

Despite the calls for free and fair elections from the Council of Europe, the OSCE and American and European governments, the Azerbaijani authorities have decided to keep these two issues unchanged. Some of the changes made to the election code carried a technical nature. For instance, under the new rules, the voter lists, known for their massive shortcomings in the previous elections, will now be posted online for voters to be able to view and verify the data. Observers were also given additional rights, such as accompanying the final local election result protocols to the district election commissions. Finally, one of the most important changes were made for the prevention of multiple voting. From now on, each voter will receive a personal, named invitation card, which would be stamped upon his/her voting at the polling station.

The representatives of the Council of Europe and its so called Venice Commission, charged with legislative reforms in the member countries, have worked hard with the Azerbaijani authorities weeks before the discussion of the code was brought to the Parliament. Yet behind the scene negotiations produced no agreement on the composition of the election commissions. Speaking last month, Ramiz Mehtiyev, Head of the President's Administration and a powerful figure in domestic politics, said that there was no need for changing the election commissions. As for the NGOs' right to observe the elections, the Azerbaijani authorities held that foreign-funded NGOs should not be able to interfere with domestic politics.

The changed election code, which leaves practically all controversial and hotly debated issues untouched, symbolizes the victory of conservative forces within the ruling regime, which would like to maintain their grip on power even at the expense of democratic elections, so much demanded by the international community and the domestic opposition. It also sets a bad tone for the upcoming elections. Although President Ilham Aliyev issued a separate decree on the improvement of the electoral process in the country and pledging to provide equal conditions for all candidates, the situation around the local authorities continue to create obstacles for

the opposition parties, especially on the issue of freedom of assembly and campaigning.

Unlike previous municipal elections, opposition parties have decided not to boycott the parliamentary elections despite being disadvantageously represented in the election commissions. On July 10, major opposition parties, united in the Azadliq (Freedom) election block, organized their third rally in a row to demand free and fair elections. Chances are nevertheless slim for last-minute amendments to the election code, leaving the international community feeling disappointed with a lost opportunity for change for the better.

CHINESE CONUNDRUM OF KAZAKHSTAN'S MULTI-VECTOR POLICY

Marat Yermukanov

China seems to choose the right moment to strengthen its foothold in Central Asia, taking advantage of the chaotic and uncertain situation after the series of anti-government upheavals in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The fear of a rose revolution throws the Kazakh establishment into the arms of the Chinese juggernaut. This cat-and-mouse relationship acquired the guise of a "strategic partnership" during Hu Jintao's four day visit to Kazakhstan.

The Chinese leader placed oil and gas on the top of his shopping list in his talks with Nursultan Nazarbayev. Statistically, 70 joint enterprises operate in Kazakhstan, but what really attracts China's interest is the energy resources, uranium mines and mineral deposits of its neighbor. In an interview to the Kazinform news agency prior to his trip to Kazakhstan, Hu Jintao termed energy cooperation as the cornerstone of the partnership.

Nursultan Nazarbayev and Hu Jintao reaffirmed that the construction of the Atasu-Alashankou oil pipeline from Western Kazakhstan to China would be completed in December this year. Concluding the ambitious agreement on the construction of the pipeline, Kazakhstan was counting on Russia's Siberian oil to operate it at full transportation capacity. Minister of Energy and Mineral resources Vladimir Shkolnik and deputy minister Lyazat Kiynov have assured that Russian oil would be pumped through Atasu-Alahsankou. But the recent statement of the president of the Russian Transneft Company Semyon Wainshtok who said that Transneft could not supply that amount of oil needed threw cold water on this calculation. Further, the president of Transneft added that Atasu-Alashankou would be too costly an undertaking for Russia which would preferably ship East Siberian oil to Russian Pacific seaports to reach South East Asian markets. At the same time, the agreement signed between Russia's major Rosneft

oil company and China National Petroleum Company on July 1 indicates some common ground in Russian-Chinese oil cooperation. On the other hand, the shift of Russian interests from the Caspian sector to Siberian oil and gas reserves enhances Kazakhstan's chances to play a dominant role in the Caspian. The envisaged joint construction of the Trans-Kazakhstan railway from the western coast of the Caspian to China makes this ambitious goal more real. The \$4 billion railway with a 70-kilometer stretch to pass through Iran, as estimated, will take 15 years to build. Another important joint project is the gas pipeline from Kazakhstan to China.

Hu and Nazarbayev signed eight agreements including cooperation in areas of transport communication, trade, scientific and humanitarian partnership, and information exchange on cross-border rivers. The sides also stressed the need to implement the 2004 agreement on the Khorgos cross-border trade area covering 300 hectares of Chinese land and 200 hectares allotted by Kazakhstan. According to the Chinese customs office, bilateral trade reached \$4,489 million last year. This volume will increase to \$5 billion, as stated at the press-conference in Astana. At the same time, travelers to the neighboring Chinese town of Urumchi are surprised to see exclusively Chinese goods in local marketplaces there. Among the banned imports from Kazakhstan and Russia are not only cigarettes and alcoholic beverages but virtually everything manufactured outside China. Meanwhile, Kazakh markets in every city have turned into dumping sites for cheap Chinese goods of inferior quality. Russian-made vans in Kazakhstan are gradually being squeezed out by Chinese-made minivans.

Far more alarming than the Chinese commodities expansion is the demographic threat posed by accelerated development of the neighboring Xingjian-Uighur Autonomous Region. The migration process in border areas is irreversible and uncontrollable. Statistics Agency figures say that while the Russian population in the northern regions have decreased by 1.2% as of January 1, 2005,

the number of Uighurs in the densely populated south has risen by 1.6%. This number will predictably grow as long as China sticks to its discriminatory policy towards ethnic Uighurs. Hu Jintao reiterated his "anti-terrorism" call in Astana and found strong support from Nazarbayev, who even before the Chinese leader's visit to Astana told the Euronews TV channel on June 30 that as long as superpowers such as the U.S., Russia and China do not lose political and economic interests in Kazakhstan, the country's security is guaranteed. A senior researcher at the Kazakh Institute for Strategic Studies, Murat Laumulin, holds the view, like many others, that growing Chinese nationalism and China's influence on world oil markets suggest that China is to play a leading role in the region.

For China, the most significant part of the joint declaration on strategic partnership signed on July 4 is undoubtedly the statement of Nursultan Nazarbayev that Kazakhstan opposes any international recognition of Taiwan and firmly supports the "one China" policy. Many analysts believe that China succeeded through diplomatic pressure on Kazakhstan to reduce the threat from Uighur separatists in Xinjiang. Nazarbayev, on visits to China, called on the 1.3 million ethnic Kazakhs in China to contribute to stability and peace. Political scientist Azimbay Galym notes the slackening support from Chinese Kazakhs to the East Turkistan liberation movement. To win Chinese confidence, Kazakh authorities detained and handed over Uighur refugees to China.

Former Ambassador of Kazakhstan to China Murat Auezov thinks that for China, Nazarbayev's Central Asian integration idea is not a lesser evil than the rose revolutions in the region. But even integrated Central Asian states are not likely to resist effectively Chinese economic, cultural expansion. At the summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Astana, Hu Jintao said that the Central Asian states should determine their policy without outside interference. China will try to use the Shanghai group, now strengthened by new observer states India, Pakistan and Iran, to its best advantage in China's advance into Central Asia.

KYRGYZSTAN PRESIDENT-ELECT RAISED ISSUE OF U.S. BASE WITHDRAWAL

Aida Baltabaeva

On July 10, 2005, in the early presidential elections held in Kyrgyzstan, acting president Kurmanbek Bakiyev won with almost 90% of the vote, leaving five rivals far behind. The Election Day when temperature reached its record peak, 7 out of 10 registered voters attended polling stations to elect a new president after former president Askar Akayev was ousted from his position and the country when the opposition seized power on March 24, 2005.

International watchdogs noted tangible improvements toward free and fair elections, but pointed to new ways of rigging election results. Bakiyev himself, in a July 11 press conference, promised as his first geopolitical action to raise the issue of withdrawal of the U.S. military base deployment at Manas airport in accordance with a demand from the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Initially, presidential elections were slated by the Central Election Commission (CEC) for October 2005. But the extreme degree of manipulation of the parliamentary election results of February 2005, which left the opposition without seats in the new Parliament, led to public protests that finally culminated in the seizure of the Government building on March 24, later recognized as revolution day. Askar Akayev fled to Russia without officially relinquishing ruling power. As an emergency action, the opposition appointed its leader Kurmanbek Bakiyev in charge of both the posts as acting president and prime minister until the situation clarified. As a result, the official resignation of Akayev, who feared political persecutions by returning, was held in the Kyrgyz Embassy in Moscow and a recording was shown to Kyrgyz parliamentarians and the public. The CEC decided to conduct early elections to stabilize the situation in the country after the post-revolutionary

looting, land seizures and numerous cases of doubtful property redistributions.

“Those 88% of votes for Bakiyev confirm that the March 24 revolution was a popular revolt and that the resignation of the previous authoritarian and corrupt regime was right. In general, people voted not for the candidate, but against the previous regime and corruption. The voice of the nation came out for decisive steps for changing the old regime and changing the state nomenclature”, the leader of the NGO “Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society” Edil Baisalov state in a press conference Monday.

Michael Trend, representative of the International Republican Institute’s (IRI) election observation mission noted that the “July 10 election demonstrated measurable progress in Kyrgyzstan’s democratic movement. Improvements in election administration contributed to increases in transparency and fairness. The elections were a significant improvement over the parliamentary elections of February and March 2005, and provide an important example in democratic development for other countries in the region”.

In the meantime, international observers pointed to the large number of Kyrgyz citizens who voted by additional list. The OSCE noted the “removal of persons on the basis of their known absence from the country, despite retaining formal residence registration and outside the provisions for out-of-country voting. The objective appeared to be to increase the percentage turnout by decreasing the number of registered voters”. On Tuesday, first-ever in Central Asia female presidential candidate Toktayim Umetalieva said, “If CEC will compare basic and additional voters’ lists and recalculate voter turnout, it will find out that Bakiyev had taken 65% of votes”.

The same day, President Bakiyev in Bishkek and Kyrgyz Ambassador in Moscow Apas Djumagulov noted the need to specify a deadline for the U.S. presence in country. "The U.S. air force base will be gradually withdrawn, while the Russian military base in Kant city should stay", Djumagulov said at a press conference. Observers started to speak about a possible shift in Kyrgyz-Russian relations and a departure from Akayev's policy of a balanced approach to all strategic partners.

However, on July 12, acting deputy premier Feliks Kulov tried to clarify the situation. In an interview to Russian analyst Arkadiy Dubnov, the deputy premier said "I do not see anything terrible about the request of the SCO summit, because it discussed only the deadline of military base withdrawal, not about reconsideration of relations with the U.S. Demands are growing for resolving this issue in the nearest future".

ARMENIA PLANNING TO REVISE ITS CONSTITUTION

Grigor Hakobyan

On June 5, 2005, the Armenian people celebrated the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the country's Constitution. The event was underscored by renewed efforts on behalf of the Armenian government and the opposition to draft a proposed set of constitutional amendments intended to improve the most important and controversial body of laws in the country. The amendments will be voted on in the upcoming constitutional referendum to be held in late November of 2005.

The current form of the Armenian Constitution has been frequently criticized by the political opposition in Armenia and most recently underwent strong criticism by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe's (PACE) European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) for not providing enough checks and balances between the various branches of government. As a result of this constitutional structure, there is an enormous concentration of power in the office of the president of the country. To monitor the compliance of Armenia's proposed constitutional amendments with PACE requirements for Armenia's integration into European structures, the AGO group (the monitoring group of the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe), lead by

permanent German representative to the Council of Europe Roland Wegener, paid a visit to Armenia.

According to a June 29 report by Azg, "Roland Wegener stated that progress is looming in all 3 spheres of Armenia's obligations to the CoE: balancing the authority of executive and legislative powers, reforming the judicial system, and establishing an electoral system for Yerevan's mayor." Azg continued stating that "In fact, President Robert Kocharian and the ruling coalition are making concessions exposed to pressure from the CoE. If in the past the Armenian authorities used to resist particularly in the issue of elective mayoralty, then they are surrendering in the last few weeks."

On June 29 during a meeting with the head of the AGO Group and German Ambassador to CoE Roland Wegener, President Kocharian said that the "Full-scale introduction of the constitutional reforms project to the Armenian people will ensure the success of the referendum".

PACE's Resolution 1458 (2005) had put forth many strict conditions for implementing constitutional reforms in Armenia, including a requirement that "...constitutional amendments must be approved by more than 50% of the votes but not less than one third of all registered voters." Additionally, the

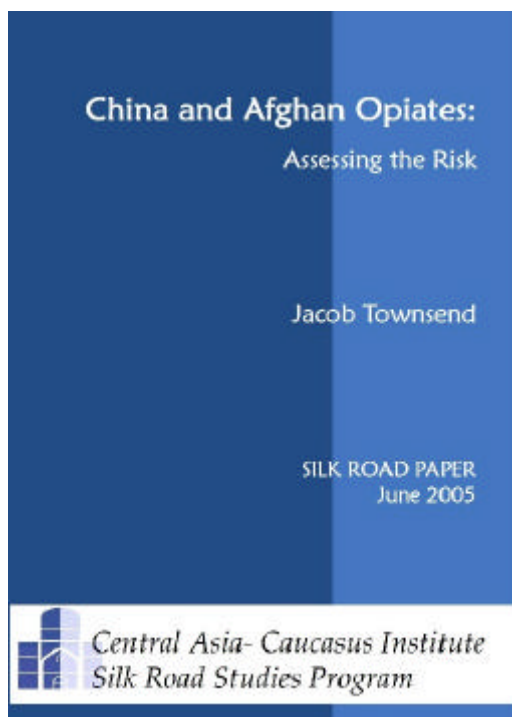
above-mentioned PACE resolution called on the Armenian government to: “ i. fully implement the recommendations of the Venice Commission; ii. undertake clear and meaningful steps in order to resume an immediate dialogue with the opposition; iii. adopt the text at the second reading without altering the agreement reached with the Venice Commission on the above-mentioned points and no later than August 2005; iv. provide live broadcasting of the parliamentary sittings where the constitutional amendments will be discussed and voted; v. start a well-prepared and professional awareness-raising campaign immediately after the adoption of the text at the second reading; vi. implement without delay the Assembly recommendations with regard to media pluralism in order to guarantee the broadest possible public debate; vii. urgently update voters' lists; viii. hold the referendum no later than November 2005; ix. and to provide for the coming into force of the constitutional reform as soon as reasonably possible.”

Point 14 of the PACE's resolution called “...on the opposition to stop its parliamentary boycott and do everything possible to promote the recommendations of the Council of Europe with

regard to the constitutional reform.” However, some opposition party members rejected PACE's call to end their boycott. Opposition lawmaker Hrant Khachatrian told *Haykakan Zhamanak*, “the opposition should not end its boycott of parliament sessions and endorse Kocharian's constitutional reform.” He argued that the coalition government “did not willingly embrace key constitutional amendments suggested by the Council of Europe.”

A more extreme position was held by the Armenian National Movement which ruled Armenia between 1991-1998 and was heavily criticized for the conduct of fraudulent presidential elections and constitutional referendum in 1995 and 1996. Through their media outlet, *Aravot*, they expressed continued support for the existing constitution and strong opposition to any constitutional amendments to be undertaken by the government or opposition.

Meanwhile, the 6/27/05 issue of *Golos Armenii* expressed hope that the coalition government of Armenia and the opposition would adhere to the call of the PACE resolution and begin to cooperate on constitutional reforms and that Armenia “will take yet another step toward democratizing political and public life and bringing it closer to European standards.”



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This timely policy paper discusses the link between Afghan opiates and China, focusing on the risk to China from the increase in Afghan drug production, the decline of Southeast Asian production, and changing political and economic patterns in China's relationship with Central Asia.

NEWS DIGEST

GUNMEN ROB TAJIK NATIONAL BANK CHAIRMAN'S FATHER

30 June

A group of three gunmen broke into the residence of the father of Tajik National Bank Chairman Murodali Alimardonov in the early morning hours of 30 June. The gunmen killed one bodyguard and injured two other guards during the attack and seized more than \$7,000 in cash, Interfax reported. Tajik Interior Ministry Major General Tohir Normatov set up a special police unit on 30 June to conduct an investigation, but stressed that it was a robbery with no political motives. (Asia-Plus)

TAJIK VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING FREED IN SPECIAL OPERATION

30 June

A joint operation by Tajik police and United Arab Emirates special services freed a group of 40 Tajik women on 30 June in Dubai. The Tajik women, ranging between the age of 14 and 25, were victims of an organized human-trafficking network that preys on impoverished females from Central Asia and other former Soviet states. The operation also resulted in the arrest of an undetermined number of traffickers. (Asia-Plus)

KAZAKH PARLIAMENT ADOPTS STRICTER NATIONAL SECURITY LAWS

30 June

The lower house of the Kazakh parliament on 29 June passed several new amendments to the Kazakh law on national security. The amendments imposed new restrictions in several areas, including the Criminal Code and the laws regulating the activities of religious groups, the media and political parties. Some of the more controversial amendments include criminal penalties for "foreign citizens" engaging in the "financing" of political parties or conducting "activities to promote candidates and political parties" throughout the electoral process. An amendment covering the media specifically prohibits a "foreigner" from holding an editorial position in a Kazakh media outlet. (Interfax)

AVAR VILLAGERS RETURN TO CHECHNYA

30 June

Almost all of the several hundred Avar villagers who fled last month from the Chechen village of Borozdinovskaya to neighboring Daghestan following a sweep operation by unidentified security forces returned to their homes on 29 June. The villagers were transported in a convoy organized by Chechen First Deputy Prime Minister Ramzan Kadyrov, whose security force has been tasked with guarding the village. Pro-Moscow Chechen administration head Alu Alkhanov has pledged that "everything will be done" to locate the 11 villagers abducted during the 4 June sweep operation. (ITAR-TASS)

KYRGYZ SUPREME COURT REVOKES MANDATE OF FORMER PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER

1 July

The Kyrgyz Supreme Court issued a ruling on 30 June upholding the decision of the Central Election Commission to revoke the parliamentary mandate of former Kyrgyz President Askar Akaev's daughter Bermet Akaeva. The ruling marks the last in a series of appeals lodged by Akaeva, who protested the decision as "a politically motivated ruling" and vowed to "appeal to an international court." She secured the parliamentary seat by a small margin during the second round of the March 2004 parliamentary election. The Kyrgyz parliament has postponed any consideration of the mandate held by her brother, Aidar Akaev, until September. (RFE/RL)

KARABAKH ELECTS NEW PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP

1 July

The newly elected parliament of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic held its first session on 30 June and elected a new leadership. The new parliament elected former Foreign Minister Ashot Ghulian as speaker and Rudik Hyusnunts as deputy speaker. Ghulian resigned as education and culture minister, a position he assumed following his tenure as foreign minister from October 2002 to December 2004. The composition of the new Karabakh parliament reflects changes in the parliamentary election of 19 June that resulted in an overwhelming pro-government majority. The main opposition group, an alliance comprised of the local branch of the Armenian

Revolutionary Federation-Dashnaktsutiun (HHD) and the Movement 88 party, secured only three seats in the new 33-seat parliament and another eight deputies are officially independent. Ghulian is the head of the pro-government Democratic Party of Artsakh (AZhK), which holds 12 seats, and Hyusnunts is a senior member of the pro-government Azat Hayrenik (Free Fatherland) party, which holds 10 parliamentary seats. The Karabakh election was tainted, however, by an assault on HHD candidate Pavel Manukian by senior military officers. (RFE/RL)

TURKISH PREMIER REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR AZERBAIJANI POSITION ON NAGORNO-KARABAKH

1 July

Visiting Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan pledged on 30 June to uphold Turkish support for Azerbaijan's position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Erdogan reaffirmed that any normalization of Turkish-Armenian relations will continue to remain conditional on the withdrawal of Armenian forces from all areas of Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev also promised to "help northern Cyprus to find a way out of isolation" by granting diplomatic recognition of passports issued by northern Cyprus and announced that a delegation of Azerbaijani businessmen will be sent to northern Cyprus. In response to a question during a press conference on the last day of his state visit to Azerbaijan, Erdogan said that the transfer of Russian military equipment from bases in Georgia to Armenia is "an internal affair of Russia." (RFE/RL)

RUSSIA, KAZAKHSTAN TO SIGN ENERGY AGREEMENTS WEDNESDAY

5 July

Russian and Kazakh presidents Vladimir Putin and Nursultan Nazarbayev are expected to sign a package of energy agreements Wednesday, which they think will promote trade between the two countries and draw their economic interests closer. "We will sign major energy agreements which will increase trade and help draw Russia and Kazakhstan's economic interests closer together," Nazarbayev told Putin in Astana on Tuesday. Putin said in turn that the agreements are the outcome of joint work and would mark a major step forward. "This is a solid foundation for building future relations," Putin said. (Interfax)

DATE SET FOR AZERBAIJANI PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION

5 July

President Ilham Aliyev issued a decree on 4 July scheduling the upcoming parliamentary election for 6 November. Meeting in Baku on 5 July, the Central Election Commission set a 24 July deadline for the nomination of candidates, who must submit the required lists of signatures in support of their nomination by 28 August. The election campaign will last from 7 September-5 November. (Turan)

U.S. CENTRAL ASIA PRESENCE SET BY BILATERAL DEALS – EMBASSY

6 July

The presence of U.S. bases in Central Asian countries is determined by bilateral agreements with these countries, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow said in a statement. "Our presence in those countries is stipulated by the terms of our bilateral agreements, under which both sides came to the conclusion that these actions are beneficial to them," the embassy press service told Interfax on Wednesday. (Interfax)

'COLOR REVOLUTIONS' BROUGHT NO GOOD TO CIS PEOPLES - AKAYEV

6 July

The so-called color revolutions in former Soviet republics have brought troubles to the peoples where they occurred, ex-Kyrgyz president Askar Akayev said in a Wednesday interview with Interfax. "I believe that on the whole, the color revolutions that have happened in the post-Soviet territory have not done anything good. On the contrary, they have turned out to be troubles for the peoples of the countries where they have taken place," Akayev said. (Interfax)

RUSSIA, KAZAKHSTAN SIGN \$23 BLN OIL DEAL

6 July

The Russian and Kazakh state oil firms, Rosneft and KazMunaiGas, signed a deal on Wednesday to invest \$23 billion in a 55-year production sharing agreement for the Kurmangazy oilfield in the Caspian Sea. Kazakh first deputy energy minister Baktykozha Izmukhambetov told reporters recoverable oil reserves at Kurmangazy were estimated at 980 million tons (more than 7 billion barrels). If confirmed Kurmangazy would prove to be one of the world's largest deposits and help Kazakhstan join the league of top oil producers as the country wants to triple production to over 3 million barrels per day by 2015. Once under way, the project will be the fourth biggest in Kazakhstan, a sprawling Central Asian state, after the onshore Tengiz and Karachaganak fields and the offshore Kashagan field, all led by

Western majors such as U.S. major Chevron, Italy's ENI and Britain's BG. Rosneft and Kazakhstan had disputed the terms of the Kurmangazy PSA for more than a year after Kazakhstan toughened rules on production sharing agreements and raised oil taxes. Izmukhambetov said the Kazakh state budget would receive more than \$30 billion from the 50-50 PSA over the course of the project, which will include 10 years of exploration followed by 45 years of extraction. Rosneft had wanted Kazakhstan to cut the bonus for the PSA to \$5 million from \$150 million and the firm's chief executive Sergei Bogdanchikov told a news conference Kazakhstan had agreed to accept \$50 million from the Russian and Kazakh firms. The Kurmangazy field lies in what were disputed areas of the shallow Caspian Sea but which, along with two other fields, Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to develop jointly in 2003. (Reuters)

AZERBAIJAN SAYS BRITON, OTHER FOREIGNERS JAILED FOR TERROR PLOT 6 July

Azerbaijan said on Wednesday it had jailed a group of Afghan, British, Jordanian and Russian citizens for plotting terrorist acts. A court sitting in closed session last month convicted the nine men of planning terrorism, of illegal arms possession, crossing borders illegally and of forging documents, the National Security Ministry said in a statement. Sentences handed out to the group, which also included three Azeris, ranged from 15 years in jail to three-year suspended sentences, the ministry said. The ministry named one British citizen, 27-year-old Ali Fadil Eldrissi, who was sentenced to 12 years in jail. He was recruited to the group as an expert in building remote-controlled bombs, the ministry said. Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic, lies just south of Russia's North Caucasus region which includes separatist Chechnya. Azeri officials say it has been used as a transit route by militant Islamic fighters on their way to join anti-Moscow rebels in the north. (Reuters)

EX-KYRGYZ LEADER AKAYEV MAY BE STRIPPED OF IMMUNITY - PROSECUTOR GENERAL 7 July

Ex-Kyrgyz president Askar Akayev might be deprived of his immunity status, said Kyrgyz Prosecutor General Azimbek Beknazarov. "I cannot rule out that, when the parliament considers depriving ex-president's son Aidar Akayev of his immunity in the fall, the Prosecutor General's Office might also file a request on depriving former president Akayev of his

immunity," Beknazarov said at a press conference on Thursday. (Interfax)

U.S.-FUNDED MEDIA NGO FACES CHARGES IN UZBEKISTAN 7 July

The Uzbek government has filed criminal charges against the staff of Internews, the U.S.-based media organization announced in a 5 July press release on its website (<http://www.internews.org>). Local staff members have been charged with "conspiracy to engage in productions of videos and publications of informational materials without the necessary licenses," the press release said. Internews described the government moves as "Upping the stakes in a year-long campaign to limit the activities of western nongovernmental democracy organizations." Joshua Machleder, Internews director for Central Asia, told RFE/RL's Uzbek Service on 6 July, "This seems, very much to me, like the Uzbek government taking revenge or taking an attack out on the employees of a U.S.-funded organization because of a disagreement with the U.S.'s position that an independent, international and open investigation should take place into what happened in Andijon." (RFE/RL)

MILITANT LEADER REPORTED KILLED IN DAGHESTAN 7 July

Police stormed a house in Makhachkala early on 6 July, killing two militants including Rasul Makasharipov, leader of the Shariah Djamaat believed to be responsible for a string of assassinations and other terrorist acts. Two other militants escaped. The Shariah Djamaat claimed responsibility for a bomb attack at a public bath house in Makhachkala on 1 July that killed 10 Russian special forces troops, "The New York Times" reported on 3 July. A political scientist loyal to the current leadership of Daghestan was killed in Makhachkala on 5 July when gunmen opened fire on his car. "Nezavisimaya gazeta" on 5 July quoted Daghestan's interior minister, Adilgirei Magomedtagirov, as estimating the number of terrorist attacks in Daghestan since the beginning of this year at 68, of which 40 took place in Makhachkala. (RFE/RL)

OSCE ASSEMBLY REJECTS AZERBAIJANI AMENDMENTS TO KARABAKH RESOLUTION 7 July

Meeting in Washington from 1-5 July, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe adopted a

resolution drafted by Swedish parliamentarian Goran Lennmarker that called on both Armenia and Azerbaijan to intensify their efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh (NKR) conflict peacefully, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. The assembly overwhelmingly rejected amendments to that resolution proposed by Azerbaijan that called for the OSCE to affirm Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the NKR and to demand an unconditional withdrawal of Armenian troops from all occupied districts of Azerbaijan. (RFE/RL)

KARZAI SAYS BIN LADEN NOT IN AFGHANISTAN

8 July

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said today that Osama bin Laden is not in Afghanistan, but gave no suggestion of where he thinks the Al-Qaeda leader may be hiding. His comment came three days after Pakistani Interior Minister Aftab Khan Sherpao said bin Laden is not in Pakistan and could be hiding in southeastern Afghanistan. U.S. officials believe bin Laden is somewhere in the rugged mountains between the two nations. Also today, Karzai joined condemnation from around the Muslim world of yesterday's bomb attacks that left at least 49 people dead in London. British officials say the blasts bear all the signs of an Al-Qaeda attack. Karzai called the bombings an attack "against all of mankind." "This is an attack, not against the city, this is an attack, not against a nation, this was an attack against the whole of mankind," Karzai said. Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Taliban, Abdul Latif Hakimi, said the British people are paying the price for what he called the "evil deeds" of their rulers. (AP)

KYRGYZ PROSECUTOR-GENERAL RAISES EXTRADITION PROSPECT FOR SOME UZBEK ASYLUM SEEKERS

8 July

Prosecutor-General Azimbek Beknazarov told a news conference in Bishkek on 7 July that Kyrgyz authorities have received requests from Uzbek authorities to extradite 231 Uzbek asylum seekers, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reported. While noting that Kyrgyzstan intends to honor its international obligations, Beknazarov stressed that Kyrgyzstan will check the information it has received from Uzbekistan. He said that 29 Uzbek citizens "are at a detention center in Osh. According to the information from the Uzbek side, they are accused of having committed serious crimes. On 13 May 2005, 14 of them escaped from the prison in Andijon. There is also

information [according to Uzbek authorities] that they were not only members of the banned religious extremist group Akramiya but that they had also murdered policemen, attacked government buildings, and carried out terrorist acts on Uzbek territory." Beknazarov noted that 426 Uzbek asylum seekers are at a refugee camp in Kyrgyzstan. Rights organizations, other governments, and the United Nations have repeatedly asked Kyrgyz authorities to refrain from handing over any asylum seekers to Uzbekistan. (RFE/RL)

UZBEK FOREIGN MINISTRY RAISES QUESTIONS ABOUT U.S. BASE

8 July

In a 7 July press release, the Uzbek Foreign Ministry raised questions about the continued presence of U.S. troops in Uzbekistan, official Uzbek news agency UzA reported. Noting the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization declaration asking for a timeframe for a withdrawal of U.S. troops from Central Asia, the Foreign Ministry stressed that it made the air base at Karshi-Khanabad available to U.S. forces in 2001 in order to help remove a threat to Uzbekistan from Afghanistan and for that purpose only. The statement also emphasized that the United States has made "virtually no payments" to compensate the Uzbek side for expenses associated with operations at the base. Uzbekistan has reportedly limited flights out of the base in response to the U.S. reaction to Uzbek President Islam Karimov's use of force to quell unrest in Andijon on 13 May. (RFE/RL)

'NATIONAL' DISTRICTS CREATED FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN KARACHAEVO-CHERKESSIA

8 July

Meeting in emergency session on 8 July, the parliament of the Karachaevo-Cherkessia Republic adopted a resolution creating national districts for the Abazin and Nogai minorities. The two ethnic groups account for 4.6 and 3.1 percent, respectively, of the republic's total population of 440,000. The parliament also voted to suspend controversial legislation on redistricting that resulted in the transfer of land near a largely Abazin-populated village to an adjacent, predominantly Karachai, municipality. That transfer triggered protests by representatives of the Abazin minority, who stormed the parliament building on 29 June to demand the law be annulled. (RIA-Novosti)

RUSSIA SHOULD SEEK MORE EFFICIENTLY ZAKAYEV EXTRADITION - PARLIAMENTARIAN

8 July

Chairman of the Russian State Duma International Affairs Committee Konstantin Kosachyov called on Russian law enforcement agencies to be more efficient in seeking the extradition of Chechen separatist leader Akhmed Zakayev, who was granted political asylum by Britain. British judicial authorities might consider another extradition request from Russian law enforcement agencies irrespective of the Thursday bombings in London, Kosachyov said at a press conference on Friday. A British court earlier declined Russia's request to extradite Zakayev, who has been charged, in particular, with involvement in terrorist activities. Kosachyov agreed that the British authorities apply "double standards" in their attitude to the problem of international terrorism but also suggested that the Russian extradition request might have not been convincing enough. (Interfax)

AZERBAIJANI COURTS ANNUL VERDICT AGAINST ANOTHER OPPOSITION LEADER

9 July

Baku's Nasimi District Court annulled on 8 July the guilty verdict handed down in October 2004 to DPA First Deputy Chairman Serdar Djalaloglu on charges resulting from the clashes in Baku between police and opposition protesters in the wake of the disputed October 2003 presidential election. Djalaloglu is the fifth of the seven oppositionists sentenced in that case to be exonerated. However, the Sabail District Court on 8 July declined an appeal by National Democratic Movement Chairman Iskander Hamidov to annul the charges of abuse of power and embezzlement on which he was sentenced in 1995 to 14 years' imprisonment. Hamidov was pardoned and released from jail in December 2003. (Turan)

KYRGYZSTAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE FAIR - BAKIYEV

10 July

Kyrgyzstan's acting President and presidential candidate Kurmanbek Bakiyev said the early presidential elections being held on Sunday will be fair and transparent. "For the first time in recent years, elections offer each citizen the right to choose," Bakiyev told journalists at a polling station. "Our citizens have an opportunity to support the leader they think is best for the country. No one is putting pressure on anyone. There haven't been any threats or instructions how to vote. My campaign showed that

despite a heat wave, voter turnout will be high on July 10," Bakiyev said. "I'm sure the presidential elections will be fair and transparent, and will fully comply with the national election code and requirements of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe," he said. Bakiyev thanked the UN, the OSCE and the European Union for providing material and technical assistance in organizing the early elections. "I hope a worthy president will be elected today," he said. Bakiyev said the situation is quiet in Kyrgyzstan. (Interfax)

TEN THOUSAND DEMONSTRATE AGAINST GOVERNMENT IN AZERBAIJAN

10 July

Some 10,000 opposition members, many dressed in orange, demonstrated Sunday in the centre of Azerbaijan's capital Baku to call for fair parliamentary elections in November. Participants at the rally, organised by the opposition Azadlyg (Freedom) Bloc, shouted: "freedom" and called on President Ilham Aliyev to ensure that the November 6 poll is free. Many wore orange clothing, a symbol inspired by last year's "orange revolution" that brought pro-Western opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko to power in Ukraine. Isa Gambar, head of the opposition party Musavat, told the crowd that "this year we will free the country from the Aliyev regime." Aliyev, who took over the presidency from his father Heydar Aliyev in controversial 2003 elections, has only recently allowed opposition protests to take place. (AFP)

187 KILLED IN MAY RIOTS IN ANDIZHAN - PROSECUTOR

11 July

One hundred and eighty-seven people were killed in the riots in Andizhan on May 13, Andizhan region Prosecutor Bakhadir Dekhkanov said. "Among the victims are 94 terrorists, 20 law enforcement officials, 11 servicemen and 57 civilians. Five victims have yet to be identified," Dekhkanov said at a meeting in the Andizhan region administration on Monday. (Interfax)

U.S. EMBASSY IN TAJIKISTAN RESPONDS TO SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION STATEMENT

11 July

The U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan has issued a statement in response to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's recent call for a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from bases in Central Asia,

RFE/RL's Tajik Service reported on 9 July. The embassy noted that the bases were set up with the approval of host governments and will remain active as long as those governments consider the bases a factor beneficial to their national security. U.S. military facilities are located in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. (RFE/RL)

WORLD BANK EXPRESSES CONCERN AT RUSSIAN PURCHASE OF ARMENIAN ENERGY-DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS

11 July

Roger Robinson, head of the World Bank's Yerevan office, expressed concern over the reported acquisition by Russia's state-run Unified Energy Systems (EES) of the Armenian Energy Network (AEN), RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported on 8 July. News of the alleged sale of AEN -- which the Canadian-owned Midlands Resources holding company acquired for \$40 million in September 2002 -- to EES for \$73 million surfaced late last month, but a spokeswoman for AEN rejected them, explaining that AEN has simply signed a management agreement with EES. But an announcement posted on the EES website on 7 July confirmed that an EES subsidiary has acquired AEN. The terms of the 2002 sale oblige Midland Resources to obtain permission from the Armenian government before reselling AEN. The Armenian government has not yet commented on the rumored sale. (RFE/RL)

SLAIN MILITANT'S GROUP NAMED RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGH-PROFILE KILLINGS IN DAGHESTAN

11 July

Daghestan's Interior Minister Adilgirey Magomedtagirov told journalists in Makhachkala on 11 July that the so-called Shariat Djamaat group of militants is responsible for the murders of Nationality Policy, Information, and External Ties Minister Zagir Arukhov in May and of political commentator Zagid Varisov on 5 July, and for the 1 July bomb attack in Makhachkala that killed 10 Russian servicemen. Shariat Djamaat was headed by Rasul Makarsharipov, who was killed in a shootout with police in Makhachkala last week. Also on 11 July, police in Daghestan apprehended another member of Shariat Djamaat. (lenta.ru)

KYRGYZ PRESIDENT-ELECT SUGGESTS U.S. BASES MAY BE CLOSED

12 July

Addressing a press conference on 11 July, Bakiev voiced his support for the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization's recent call for a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Central Asia. Bakiev noted that the U.S. bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan were opened in 2001 to support military operations in Afghanistan. Addressing the issue of military operations, he said, "This is no longer the case. Parliamentary and presidential elections have taken place in Afghanistan. Now we can begin reviewing the issue of the advisability of the U.S. military presence. How and when this will be -- time and the appropriate procedures will show." (RFE/RL)

KAZAKHSTAN TURNS UZBEK HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST OVER TO UNHCR

12 July

Kazakhstan turned an Uzbek human rights activist, who Uzbekistan claims to be one of the instigators of the May 13 violence in the Uzbek city of Andizhan, over to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Tuesday, the UNHCR said. The activist, Lutfullo Shamsudinov, was charged with terrorism and of "spreading information with the aim of provoking panic among the population" by Uzbekistan. He received refugee status from the UNHCR late last month. Shamsudinov fled to Kazakhstan, where he was arrested in Almaty on July 4 at the behest of Uzbekistan, which was demanding his extradition. Redmond said that, by handing over Shamsudinov to the UNHCR, Kazakhstan reaffirmed its loyalty to the 1951 international convention on refugees. (Interfax)

ARMENIA SAYS KARABAKH SETTLEMENT CLOSE

12 July

Armenia and Azerbaijan have reached agreement on the key points of a formal peace accord ending the Karabakh conflict, and that agreement could be signed by the end of this year, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported on 11 July, citing unnamed senior officials. Under that deal, Armenia would return to Azerbaijani control five of the seven districts adjacent to Karabakh currently controlled by Karabakh Armenian forces, not including the strategic Lachin corridor. A peacekeeping force composed of troops from countries that are not members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group would be deployed in the conflict zone. Then, after 10-15 years, the population of the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh Republic would be required to vote in a referendum on whether the region should become independent, become a part of Armenia, or revert to Azerbaijan. (RFE/RL)

ARMENIAN OPPOSITION BLOC REJECTS PROPOSED DRAFT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

12 July

Following a three-hour discussion on 11 July, representatives of the nine Armenian opposition parties aligned in the Artarutian bloc said the most recent version of the proposed amendments to the constitution, which were submitted to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission last week, do not fully meet the opposition's three key demands, RFE/RL's Armenian Service reported. Opposition representatives pointed out that under the revised amendments, the president cedes to the parliament the power to sack the prime minister, but remains empowered to dissolve the parliament if legislators twice reject his successive proposed candidate for prime minister. They also noted that the revised amendments provide for the mayor of Yerevan to be elected by the municipal council, whereas the opposition insists that the mayor should be elected by the city's population. (RFE/RL)

PROTESTERS STORM LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICE IN INGUSHETIA

12 July

An unspecified number of outraged local residents stormed the office of Karabulak Mayor Ibragim Arsamakov on 11 July after he refused to meet with them to discuss their complaints about the distribution of land plots and about corruption among local officials. The authorities responded by blocking all roads leading to the town; Prime Minister Ibragim Malsagov traveled to Karabulak to meet with the protesters, who dispersed following the announcement of Arsamakov's dismissal "due to his incorrect approach to resolving the population's problems." Opposition leader Bekbulat Gorchkhanov told ingushetiya.ru that people are so angered by high-level corruption and by President Putin's renomination last month of Murat Zyazikov to serve a second term as Ingushetian president that a revolution could erupt at any time. The Ingush opposition pledged after the republic's parliament confirmed Zyazikov's renomination that it will continue to observe the three-month moratorium on protest actions against Zyazikov that it announced in early June. (RFE/RL)

AFGHAN ROLE FOR AUSTRALIA FORCES

13 July

Australia is to send 150 special forces troops to Afghanistan by September to help counter increasing rebel attacks. Prime Minister John Howard said the deployment would begin in the run-up to Afghanistan's parliamentary elections and would last 12 months. Canberra sent more than 1,500 troops to Afghanistan in 2001 but they were withdrawn the following year. The decision to send soldiers back followed requests for support from the Afghan government, Britain and the US. "It's fair to say that the progress that's been made in the establishment of a legitimate government in Afghanistan has come under increasing attack and pressure from the Taleban in particular and some elements of al-Qaeda," Mr Howard told reporters. He said Canberra would also consider dispatching to Afghanistan up to 200 soldiers as part of a reconstruction team early in 2006. Australia currently has one engineer in Afghanistan involved in mine clearance. (BBC)

GUNMEN KILL FOURTH AFGHAN CLERIC

13 July

Suspected Taleban militants have shot dead a pro-government cleric in southern Afghanistan, the fourth such killing in the past two months. Maulvi Saleh Mohammad was shot by gunmen on a motorcycle in Lashkargar, the capital of Helmand province. A leading cleric in Paktika province and two in Kandahar have also been killed in recent weeks. Separately, the US military said it had killed 17 suspected militants in two days of clashes in the south. Maulvi Saleh Mohammad was the head of the powerful clerics' council, or ulema, in Helmand. No one has yet said they carried out the attack, but Haji Mohammed Wali, spokesman for the provincial governor, blamed Taleban fighters. "He was on his way home from the mosque after prayers and he was shot and martyred by two gunmen on motorcycles," Mr Wali said. "The attackers fled the area." The killing follows the murder of leading cleric Agha Jan and his wife in eastern Paktika province last Friday. On 3 July, Maulvi Mohammad Musbah was shot dead in Kandahar and in late May gunmen there killed another supporter of President Hamid Karzai, Maulvi Abdullah Fayaz. Taleban spokesman Mullah Abdul Latif Hakimi said its fighters carried out the three attacks. More than 500 people, most of them suspected militants, are estimated to have lost their lives in bloodshed in the south and east in the past four months. (BBC)