

Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

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*Central Asia- Caucasus Institute
Silk Road Studies Program*

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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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KEY ISSUE: A short 75-word statement of your conclusions about the issue or news event on which the article focuses.

BACKGROUND: 300-450 words of analysis about what has led up to the event or issue and why this issue is critical to the region. Include background information about the views and experiences of the local population.

IMPLICATIONS: 300-450 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

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

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 700-800 words.

Those interested in joining *The Analyst's* pool of authors to contribute articles, field reports, or contacts of potential writers, please send your CV to: <scornell@jhu.edu> and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

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RUSSIAN COUNTER-INSURGENCY SUCCESSSES FORESHADOW CHANGES IN NORTHERN CAUCASIAN REBEL LEADERSHIP

Kevin Daniel Leahy

On June 9, the director of Russia's federal security service, the FSB, announced that his organization had detained Emir Magas, the leader of the rebel insurgency in Ingushetia. The capture of Magas comes on foot of a series of recent successes by security forces against the insurgent organization in the Northern Caucasus. In February, security forces accounted for Seif Islam, a military counsellor to rebel leader Doku Umarov. In March, Anzor Astemirov and Said Buryatsky, two leading rebel ideologists, were eliminated. These losses have created vacancies in at least two key leadership positions within the Caucasus Emirate organization.

BACKGROUND: The rather shadowy background of Emir Magas has been explored at length by other observers. Suffice it to say that very little information is known for certain about this individual apart from the fact that under his stewardship, from 2004 to 2010, the rebel movement in Ingushetia became more deadly and more efficient in general. It is believed that Magas was an associate of the late Shamil Basayev, the famous Chechen guerrilla leader, and Russian officials have repeatedly claimed that these two men conspired to orchestrate the mass rebel attack on Nazran in 2004. Magas' military successes were acknowledged in 2006 when Doku Umarov, the rebels' supreme leader, promoted him to the rank of brigadier-general and appointed him 'Emir of the Caucasus Front'.

In effect, this made Magas responsible for the rebels' overall military campaign, from Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia in the east, to the Circassian territories in the west. Magas' political profile had also grown in recent times. Unlike other young, up-and-coming rebel leaders – for example Anzor Astemirov – Magas had little interest in public relations,

preferring instead to concentrate on his military duties.

Nevertheless, in his capacity as Emir of the Caucasus Front, Magas was undoubtedly among the most powerful figures in the Emirate. On June 9, 2010, however, Russia's intelligence services arrested him in the town of Malgobek, Ingushetia. Magas, or Ali Taziev as he has since been identified by the FSB, has been transferred to Moscow for further interrogation. Russian sources have previously implicated Magas in the 2004 Beslan school siege, the abduction of a well-known Ingush parliamentarian in 2006, and the attempted assassination of Yunus-Bek Yevkurov, president of Ingushetia, in June 2009.

Magas' detention means that two high-ranking posts in the Emirate's political hierarchy are currently vacant: overall military responsibility for the Caucasus Front and the chairmanship of the Sharia Court. The latter post has remained unoccupied since March, when Russian security forces shot and killed Anzor Astemirov in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria. Theoretically, the chairmanship of this body is the second most influential post in the Emirate.



Emir Magas

This consideration, and the apparent dearth of suitably qualified candidates for the post, might explain why the rebel leadership has not yet announced a replacement for Astemirov. The post vacated by Magas is also a lucrative one and will be highly sought after. By contrast with the vacant chairmanship of the Sharia Court, there are plenty of suitably credentialed candidates for the role of military commander of the Caucasus Front.

IMPLICATIONS: Among the front-runners to replace Magas are two of his deputies: Tarkhan Gaziyeu, a Chechen guerrilla leader operating in south-western Chechnya, and Muhanned, an Arab field-commander who is the recognized patron of foreign fighters in Chechnya and elsewhere in the Northern Caucasus. Gaziyeu

and Muhanned were appointed to these posts by Umarov in July 2007.

Gaziyeu would appear to have the edge in the contest to succeed Magas, however. It is generally believed that Gaziyeu is on excellent terms with Umarov. In March 2007, Umarov appointed Gaziyeu chief of the Emirate's *Mukhabarat*, or intelligence service. In mid-2008, Umarov and Gaziyeu narrowly escaped capture when they became encircled during a counter-insurgency operation in Chechnya's Shatoisky District. Gaziyeu is also believed to have links with Ingushetia's rebel organization, which will surely aid him in the contest to succeed Magas.

Muhanned, meanwhile, is not known to be particularly close to Umarov and there is a sense that top-tier posts in Umarov's Emirate

have been ring-fenced for members of the rebel movement who are indigenous to the Northern Caucasus. Moreover, the financial support foreign fighters in the Northern Caucasus once enjoyed from wealthy financiers in the Middle East has been significantly reduced since the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The process behind the selection of a new *Qadi*, or chairman of the Sharia Court, is even more difficult to discern. There are no obvious candidates for this position – at least nobody obvious to non-indigenous observers of the situation in the region. The pool of potential candidates is further reduced by Umarov's insistence that those holding leadership roles within the rebel movement should reside in the Northern Caucasus, and not in exile in Europe, the Middle East, or anywhere else. The late

Sheikh Said Buryatsky, killed in Ingushetia in March, would have been a ready-made replacement for Astemirov. A charismatic Islamic theologian with no overt political ambitions, at the time of his death Buryatsky represented a genuine – and arguably a less querulous – alternative to Astemirov.

Certainly Buryatsky's self-effacing, yet highly effective, public relations style stood in stark contrast to that of Astemirov, who publicly boasted of how he persuaded a reluctant Umarov to declare the formation of the Caucasus Emirate. One possible candidate to succeed Astemirov might be Umarov's current *naib*, or deputy, Supyan Abdullayev. Abdullayev was a founding member of the Islamic Renaissance Party in the late 1980s. He has impeccable Islamic credentials, being associated with the Chechen independence movement during the 1990s and with the Caucasus Emirate project since its more recent inception in 2007. Of course, appointing Abdullayev as *Qadi* would necessarily open up another leadership position, thereby leaving the critical deputy leadership position void.

It is more likely that Astemirov's replacement will be plucked from relative obscurity, much in the same way that the unknown Islamic theologian, Abdul-Khalim Sadulayev, was appointed rebel leader in 2005 following the death of Aslan Maskhadov. It is probable that this person will be a non-Chechen given the

movements' evident eagerness to demonstrate the broad nature of its ethnic composition.

CONCLUSIONS: For the wider rebel movement, replacing departed leaders at a local level has not been a serious problem. Anzor Astemirov, for example, has already been replaced as leader of Kabardino-Balkaria's rebel organization by his associate Asker Dzhappuyev. Magas' main legacy is the generation of young militants he has trained in Ingushetia, and it is doubtless from this growing constituency that a suitable replacement for him will be chosen. While Gaziyeu seems to be the most likely to succeed Magas as Emir of the Caucasus Front, the identity of the new *Qadi* is more difficult to predict and is certain to surprise even the closest observers. The recent high attrition rate among leading personages in the rebel movement invites speculation as to what might happen were Umarov, or Abdullayev, captured or killed by state forces. Umarov and Abdullayev are notable for being the only two rebel personalities in top leadership positions who have been under arms against the Russian state since 1994. Sooner rather than later, young men from a different generation will be taking over the political-military directorship of the Caucasus Emirate.

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MOUNTING TENSIONS OVER NAGORNO KARABAKH

Nina Caspersen

The ceasefire in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh has for the past two years appeared ever more fragile and a recent shootout, which left six soldiers dead, once again demonstrates that the conflict is far from frozen. This incident was explained as a consequence of a breakdown in the ongoing peace talks, but it also reflects mounting tensions ever since the recognition of Kosovo in February 2008. Kosovo's recognition, the war in Georgia and Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia stirred things up and led to a change in the dynamics of the conflict.

BACKGROUND: A serious incident on the Nagorno Karabakh line of contact on June 18 left four Azerbaijani and two Armenian soldiers dead. The shootout occurred the day after the Armenian and Azerbaijani Presidents had met in St Petersburg and although there was deep disagreement over the sequence of events, there was widespread consensus that the violence was linked to the failed talks. Armenia argued that Azerbaijan had launched a night-time raid in order to derail the flailing peace process, while Azerbaijan reciprocated by accusing Armenia of using the incident to cover up its diplomatic defeat and its lack of support for the principles underlying the talks.

While the timing of the violence therefore appears linked to these high level talks, it also reflects the mounting tensions that have characterized the conflict since Kosovo's recognition. Shootings across the line of contact also occurred previously, but the recognition of Kosovo and subsequent international developments changed the dynamics of conflict and led to a gradual thawing of the conflict. The most serious incident occurred a few weeks after Kosovo's recognition when more than a dozen soldiers were killed (the exact number is contested) and heavy artillery reportedly was used.

The recognition of Kosovo led to fears in Azerbaijan that an unwanted precedent had been set: the recognition of autonomous provinces against the will of their 'parent states'. The President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, spoke out strongly against Kosovo's recognition and declared that, if necessary, force would be used to regain control over Karabakh and that weapons and military equipment had been acquired for that purpose. The fear of a precedent was reinforced by Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which was – as one would expect – welcomed by the *de facto* authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh. The war in Georgia demonstrated the danger of trying to reintegrate breakaway territories through the use of force, but it also illustrated the fragility of unrecognized states. South Ossetia was only able to withstand the Georgian offensive due to Russian military backing, and although Karabakh can rely on support from Armenia, this is no substitute for great power backing. Moreover, Russia made clear that it had no intention of recognizing Karabakh.

These developments therefore resulted in insecurity on both sides and a reassessment of strategies, and combined with increasing international pressure, this revitalized the peace



(Photolur)

process. Meetings become increasingly frequent, a declaration of principles was signed in November 2008 and a breakthrough was declared to be imminent. At the same time, however, the ceasefire continued to appear decidedly fragile. Shootings across the line of contact continued, large-scale military exercises were staged and warnings of military offenses or pre-emptive strikes became commonplace.

And after a flurry of optimism, the peace process slowly ground to a halt.

IMPLICATIONS: Observers nevertheless argue that the international environment is currently favorable for a settlement or at least for a framework agreement, which would essentially amount to a public acceptance of the principles underlying the talks. This optimism is based on the increased great power attention following the Georgian war, and the pressure from both the U.S. and Russia for a settlement. This attention has not diminished, despite lack of progress, as evidenced by Hillary Clinton's recent visit to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Another cause for optimism is the gradual, if problematic, rapprochement between Turkey and Armenia. This process of normalization was recently suspended, but it has been argued that by linking the opening of borders to progress in the Karabakh talks, Turkey might be holding out a necessary carrot for the Armenian leadership.

However, conditions were arguably more opportune shortly after the war in Georgia. That war, along with the recognition of Kosovo, created an urgency on both sides which has otherwise been missing since the 1994 ceasefire. Azerbaijan feared a precedent, but also the possible consequences of a military offensive. Meanwhile, in Karabakh the *status quo* suddenly seemed a lot more fragile

and the leaders were faced with a fearful population and doubts over how best to pursue their goal of international recognition. But this urgency has now all but disappeared: the war did not spread and no new basis for the recognition of states appears to have been created. The dynamics of conflict have consequently moved closer to where they were before February 2008. International pressure still creates a sense of nervousness of both sides, but the favorable international environment now runs up against significant internal constraints.

One of the main obstacles is found in a lack of domestic preparedness for compromise; the leaders of both Armenia and Azerbaijan have for years described the conflict in highly emotive zero-sum terms and the population is consequently unprepared for the difficult compromises that a settlement would entail. When combined with politically insecure leaders, such as the Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan – who looks unlikely to be able to bring his followers with him in compromise – this raises the specter of a backlash. Sargsyan has attempted to ensure greater internal cohesion by reaching out to both opposition parties and NGOs, and similar initiatives have been seen in Azerbaijan, but in none of the cases does the internal situation bode well for a settlement. The politics of Nagorno-Karabakh is less often examined, but the Karabakh leaders should be considered veto players and they have

in the past demonstrated their power to bring down an Armenian president they considered too moderate. The entity's internal dynamics are therefore also of significance. However, the problem here is not a gap between the leaders and the population, or between the government and the opposition. Instead we find consensus on the intransigent position: opposition is as good as non-existent and the government, like the population, rejects compromise. The uncertainty which followed the war in Georgia could have spurred the leaders to look for alternatives, but they now again appear to have little reason to compromise.

CONCLUSIONS: Violence is not always a bad sign for peace processes. It can also signify that an agreement is getting closer, that more is at stake, and that the leaders have to assure their followers that they are not compromising from a position of weakness. Given the secrecy of the Karabakh talks, we cannot know how well they are progressing, but the signs are not promising. The latest meeting appeared to have ended in failure, but more importantly, the urgency created by the Georgian war has largely been squandered and internal obstacles remain significant. This does not mean that the deliberate launch of a military offensive is likely, but it does suggest a more volatile stalemate with all the risks that this entails.

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TURKMENISTAN DIVERSIFIES GAS EXPORT ROUTES

Robert M. Cutler

Turkmenistan has broken Russia's stranglehold on its gas exports by opening a pipeline through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. The country's president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has just made his first trip to New Delhi where the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India natural gas pipeline project was discussed. Earlier this year a short pipeline was opened in order to increase exports to Iran, and gas is in the process of being identified for eventual export to Europe via a Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline and the EU's Southern Corridor. The era of Russian control over the country's exports is over, and Ashgabat is taking care to make certain that it is not squeezed between Moscow and Beijing.

BACKGROUND: Under the regime of Turkmenistan's former president Saparmurad Niyazov, the country's gas production for international export was dedicated nearly entirely to Russia and Gazprom. Besides being consumed domestically in Russia, it was also exported through Ukraine to Europe. Turkmenistan's exports to Russia declined throughout the 1990s, but Niyazov did not show any practical interest in further diversification of its exports, despite its near-total dependence on the Russian pipeline system and the low prices that Moscow's monopsony enabled it to impose on the gas trade with Ashgabat. Indeed, he signed long-term contracts for the delivery of large quantities even exceeding the volumes that it was believed, at the time, the country was capable of producing.

The one exception was a relatively small-quantity pipeline to Iran. In 1997, Turkmenistan cooperated in the construction of the 120-mile Korpeje-Kordkuy pipeline to northeastern Iran, linking the Korpeje field north of Okarem in western Turkmenistan to Kordkuy in Iran. However, it rarely functioned at its design capacity of 8 billion cubic meters per year (bcm/y), and Turkmenistan frequently

falsified export statistics (although this may have originally started at lower levels in order to escape administrative punishments for not fulfilling planned quotas). After Berdimuhamedov succeeded to the presidency, these problems appear to have been ameliorated. At the beginning of this year a second pipeline was opened between the two countries with the goal of expanding Turkmenistan's exports to 20 bcm/y.

Towards the end of the 1990s, negotiations with two American companies concerning the construction of a Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCGP) foundered over Niyazov's insistence on leading the Turkmenistani delegation to the negotiations, his lack of expertise in understanding the myriad technical problems involved, and his posing of unacceptable conditions to his interlocutors. At the same time, the Shah Deniz deposit offshore from Azerbaijan was discovered to have large quantities of natural gas instead of the oil that had been expected, and Azerbaijan's then-president Heydar Aliiev decided to build the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP, also BTE for Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum) for exporting Shah Deniz gas without waiting to resolve



(Tehran Times)

complicated issues with Turkmenistan, including delimitation of subsea natural resource rights sectors under the Caspian Sea.

In 2003, Niyazov suggested to then-president Vladimir Putin of Russia to refurbish and reconstruct the Caspian Coastal Pipeline (CCP, “Prikaspiiskii” and sometimes, erroneously, “Pre-Caspian”) running through Kazakhstan between the two countries, but a trilateral agreement was not signed until 2007. By then Berdimuhamedov had succeeded Niyazov in the office of the president in Ashgabat.

IMPLICATIONS: The signature and ratification of implementing documents were continuously delayed, but in April 2009 Berdimuhamedov visited Moscow with the purpose, according to Russian media, of once and for all finalizing the necessary arrangements. However, to the surprise and shock of his hosts, he returned to Ashgabat without signing anything. The next month, in May 2009, an explosion occurred in the gas pipeline on Turkmenistan’s territory, and mutual accusations flowed. Moscow blamed a poor level of technical expertise among Turkmenistan’s industrial workers, while

Ashgabat insisted that they had been given insufficient notice of the closure of valves on the Russian side: only a day or two rather than the necessary week.

Underlying all these recriminations was the fact that the British firm Gaffney Cline had been conducting an audit of Turkmenistan’s gas reserves according to international standards and verified the existence of enormous new fields. All of a sudden, the international market prices that Russia had guaranteed to Turkmenistan were no longer a good deal for Gazprom. Not only had

general demand decreased because of the global slowdown; Gazprom also no longer had all of Turkmenistan’s production locked up in existing contracts. The pipeline explosion effectively permitted a cancellation of those contracts.

At the same time, the Turkmenistan-China pipeline project (which equally breaks the Russian monopoly) was coming to fruition. Niyazov had signed the framework agreement for this with China’s president Hu Jintao in April 2006 in Beijing. Originally planned as an add-on to a Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline, it will supply 30 bcm/y from Turkmenistan, and will later be expanded to 40 bcm/y and possibly more. The route will include refurbishing and expanding the Bukhara-Tashkent pipeline inside Uzbekistan and the construction eastward through Almaty to the Chinese border, where a second West-East Gas Pipeline will take the gas from Xinjiang to the coast. It is already operating at the initially planned 10 bcm/y volume, which will progressively be ramped up. The gas for the pipeline to China will come from a deposit that does not even

belong to the new ones verified by Gaffney Cline, the Bagtiyarlyk fields estimated by Chinese geologists to contain 1.6 trillion cubic meters of gas altogether, and which Chinese firms will participate in developing within the framework of a production sharing agreement.

Last month, Berdimuhamedov made his first visit to New Delhi to discuss general bilateral relations, including the long-planned Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline project. No progress was made, but an intergovernmental economic commission was established and energy questions will figure in its mandate, as India declared its interest in implementing the project without delay. India has also brought up the possibility of gas swaps from Iran, specifically from the South Pars deposit that figured in the defunct Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) project in return for increased Turkmenistani exports to northeastern Iran. However, Iran needs those imports for domestic consumption, and moreover suspended all oil swaps with foreign partners just two weeks ago. So it is unlikely that the swap scheme will be implemented, all the more so in view of the inability of Iran and India to agree over prices, quantities, and quality of gas in the negotiations over the IPI project.

Not only is the project to refurbish the Caspian Coastal Pipeline dead, but also Turkmenistan announced two months ago that it will rebuild the East-West Pipeline within the country using national resources and without contracting the work to any foreign entity. Over seventy international companies had responded to a tender for the work before Ashgabat made this announcement. Gazprom was only one of them, and had wished to own the gas in the pipeline as a condition for

completing the work. This will now not be the case.

CONCLUSIONS: Originally intended to feed the Caspian Coastal Pipeline, the East-West Pipeline terminates not far from Turkmenistan's coast on the Caspian Sea. Ashgabat has announced that the volume of the reconstructed East-West Pipeline will be 30 bcm/y, which the author's sources inform is the minimum volume necessary to make an undersea gas pipeline to Azerbaijan economically viable. The gas will come from the South Yolotan field, which Gaffney Cline estimates to hold between four and 14 trillion cubic meters, and most likely six trillion.

Moreover, the German company RWE, which is a Nabucco shareholder, is reported to have detected gas in one of the offshore blocks that it is exploring. Also the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been exploring for oil for a decade through the Dubai-based Dragon Oil. It therefore has good chances to win exploration rights for offshore gas blocks and, as a 20 percent shareholder in the Austrian company OMV, which leads the Nabucco project, will find an easy export route for any gas that it discovers.

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QUAGMIRE IN KYRGYZSTAN: CAN THE OSCE STABILIZE THE SITUATION?

Rafis Abazov

The ferocity of the interethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan has caught many international players off guard. The OSCE could be an obvious candidate for an unbiased and trusted mediator and a key international coordinator for the stabilization efforts, however, Kyrgyz experts are deeply divided over its role. Some believe that this organization has played a positive role in stabilizing the country, pointing to the quick response in negotiating a deal with ex-President Kurmanbek Bakiyev to leave the country and thus averting a possible civil war. Others believe that the OSCE was quite ineffective in responding to the conflict in Kyrgyzstan, as it failed to prevent conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities.

BACKGROUND: The intensity of the interethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in Kyrgyzstan in June exceeded anything the newly independent republics in the region have seen since their independence in 1991. The number of deaths, according to international estimates, reached more than 200 (although acting President Dr. Roza Otunbayeva has stated the number could reach 2,000), and between 100,000 and 220,000 people were forced to abandon their homes; these numbers are considerably higher than during the interethnic conflicts in Osh and Uzgen in 1990. The scale of the humanitarian disaster, even though concentrated to a few days, might well exceed most of the separate episodes of the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997). This is not, of course, to deny that the civil war in Tajikistan, which dragged for five long years, remains one of the most tragic events in the history of post-Soviet Central Asia. And exactly because of the memory of the atrocities of that civil war, many Central Asian players expected that international organizations, especially the OSCE, would be in a position to prevent conflict escalation in Kyrgyzstan or to play a stabilizing role in preventing the country from sliding into a large-scale confrontation.

The OSCE does indeed have a large presence in Central Asia, with offices in every republic of the region, and there is even an OSCE Academy in Bishkek. However, the OSCE's past experiences in dealing with interethnic conflicts have produced mixed results: It was quite slow in reacting to the tragic development and escalation of conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, but fairly successful in conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in the 1990s.

Many observers expected the OSCE to be effective in Kyrgyzstan. After all, the Organization has accumulated extensive experience and expertise in mitigating various interethnic conflicts in the former socialist world. On top of this, Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan's neighbor and a country with very close cultural, social and political links – has held the rotating chairmanship since January 2010 and has been promoting what OSCE Chairman Kanat Saudabayev called a 'Four-T model' in conflict resolution (development of *Trust, Traditions, Transparency and Tolerance*). It was widely expected that Kazakhstan, which knows and understands the nuances of the political development in Kyrgyzstan better than

anyone, would be able to effectively address the conflict – in sharp contrast to the actions of the OSCE in Yugoslavia where it was blamed for its inability to understand and address the nuances of political developments.

Thus, the expectations were high from the beginning of the political coup in April 2010. As Kyrgyzstan continued experiencing instability and growing confrontation in April and May, some experts expressed frustration at the slow progress made by the OSCE. Freedom House's experts publicly accused Kazakhstan's OSCE leadership of "failing" and being unable to deal effectively with the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Other experts disagreed, pointing out several important developments and efforts in stabilizing the country. First, it was the OSCE which brokered concessions from ex-president Kurmanbek Bakiyev and arranged his departure from the country, thus preventing the escalation of the conflict into a civil war. Second, the OSCE coordinated humanitarian assistance to Kyrgyz communities, especially in spring 2010. Third, the OSCE continued providing training to government entities and NGOs at all levels in both northern and southern Kyrgyzstan even at the height of the political confrontation in April and May 2010, including on "policing in multi-ethnic communities." Yet, like in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the intervention lacked speed and depth, which some experts explained by the absence of peacekeeping units under the OSCE's auspices.

IMPLICATIONS: The ethnic clashes and violence in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 have raised concerns about the effectiveness of the OSCE's conflict monitoring, conflict prevention and conflict mediation systems and mechanisms. Many experts and politicians in Bishkek, Jalalabad and Osh still ponder the question,

how could it have happened that a small street fight – or dispute over business and property deals – or provocation (a special commission is still investigating the events) escalated into such violence in communities that had lived side by side for centuries? At the same time, there is much worry and uncertainty about the effectiveness of international intervention and the role of international organizations, especially the OSCE, in conflict mediation and stabilization of the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

Political and international evaluation of the developments in Kyrgyzstan, and of the OSCE's relations with the interim government and major partners in the country, is open for discussion. However, it is clear that the Organization has to deal with several major implications of the June 2010 events in Kyrgyzstan. First is a fundamental issue of potential long-term destabilization of the political situation and interethnic relations in Kyrgyzstan, as the very fabric of delicate relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities and numerous checks and balances were significantly undermined if not destroyed. Second is an issue of trust and building working relations between various communities in Kyrgyzstan on the one hand and the OSCE and Kazakhstan on the other hand, as at least at the local level many community members have lost their trust in international organizations, specifically in their ability to prevent conflicts and stabilize the situation. Third, the political turbulence, which shook the very foundation of the Kyrgyz state and society, significantly weakened both political institutions and institutions of the civil society. In addition, the continuing instability contributed to the weakening of human capital in the country as many professional and business people left for foreign countries thus



(The Economist)

creating enormous shortages of much-needed highly qualified experts in various fields.

CONCLUSIONS: Political stabilization is a very difficult process, especially in a country divided by many lines of conflicts – not only political but also interethnic, regional and clan – as well as a deep urban–rural divide.

In this environment, the role of international unbiased players is critical, as it seems that Kyrgyzstan faces a great struggle to stabilize the situation and to transform itself from what political scientists call a 'super-presidential political system' into a parliamentary democracy. In this regard, the OSCE may play a key role, especially if it works on its strengths.

The first step is to mobilize assistance and all possible resources to prepare and organize fair parliamentary elections. The OSCE's strength and authority in the post-Soviet space have

been in providing various forms of assistance – from training and monitoring to evaluating and reporting of the electoral process. Only fair elections accepted by all competing political and ethnic groups can stabilize the country in the long run. The second step is to mobilize and coordinate international humanitarian assistance to forced migrants and communities affected by violence before the coming winter, especially training and preparing local communities to become self-efficient and independent entities capable of restoring some form of normal life with help from international communities. The third step is to establish effective and efficient conflict monitoring, conflict mediation and prevention mechanisms, not only to stabilize the situation now and achieve some level of reconciliation but also to prevent escalation and outburst of conflict in the future, particularly during the parliamentary elections. The fourth step, for Kazakhstan as head of the OSCE, is to draw important lessons from the conflict, to develop a new model for conflict prevention and conflict resolution and to update the OSCE's standard operating procedures in the region to be prepared to respond more effectively and quickly.

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FIELD REPORTS

ARMED INCIDENT IN NAGORNO-KARABAKH DOES NOT STOP THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Haroutiun Khachatryan

Late in the night on June 18, a major armed incident took place on the contact line between Azerbaijan and Armenian-controlled territories in Azerbaijan, which resulted in casualties. As usual, each party accused the opposite side for violating the cease-fire. However, all casualties were sustained in Armenian-held positions, near the village of Chaylu in Mardakert region. This led the Armenians side to conclude that it was the Azerbaijani side which initiated the clash by attacking the Armenian positions.

The unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh authorities claim that its positions were attacked by a group of twenty Azerbaijani Special Forces at 11.30 PM on June 18, and the Karabakh soldiers forced them out after a night of fighting. The details of the incident cannot be checked against independent sources. Meanwhile, the incident itself had strong political repercussions.

The incident took place only 24 hours after the meeting of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan in St. Petersburg, brokered by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev left Saint Petersburg immediately after the tripartite meeting ended, although he was initially expected to attend the St. Petersburg Economic Forum starting the next day. This led to speculation that the June 18 incident was organized as a signal to Dmitry Medvedev, the host and broker of the June 17 summit. This impression was supported by official statements from Azerbaijan, which was seen as an attempt to use the incident as a tool for blackmailing Armenia at the negotiations, and also to pressure the mediators of the OSCE

Minsk Group, whose positions Azerbaijan considers excessively pro-Armenian.

For example, according to one Azerbaijani official “this incident showed that the Karabakh conflict is not frozen”. Another statement from the Azerbaijani side stated that “these incidents would not occur if Armenia adopted the amended version of the Madrid Principles” (a recent version of the mediators’ settlement proposal, which Azerbaijan supports and which Armenia allegedly rejects). Hence, the incident seemed to have endangered the negotiation process and increased tensions in the region. The Armenian parties, both the Republic of Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh authorities declared their commitment to continue the peace talks “despite all provocations”.

The reaction of interested foreign players was aimed to force the sides to keep the negotiation process on track. They all called on the parties to preserve the peace, to prevent casualties, to continue negotiations, to refrain from using force or threaten to use force. Similar statements were made by the U.S., Russia, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and even by Iran.

Armenian authorities, including President Serzh Sargsyan, expressed their discontent with the fact that in no case was Azerbaijan mentioned as the initiator of this incident. This line of the external players continued in the June 26 statement of the Presidents of the U.S., France and Russia and finally, during the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to the region on July 4-5.

Clinton stated in Yerevan on July 4 that “This was an unacceptable violation of the 1994 cease fire agreement as it is also contrary to expressed commitments of both sides ... So we call on everyone to refrain from the use of force or threat of force ... We do not want to see the peace process hurt”.

These efforts have eventually proven successful, as the negotiations are reported to continue after the St. Petersburg summit, with a meeting of the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan on 16 July in Astana as the next step.

IS THE EU READY TO PAY THE BILL FOR THE AZERBAIJANI-TURKISH GAS AGREEMENT?

Inessa Baban

On June 11, Bulgaria announced its defection from Russia's Burgas-Alexandroupolis project planned to carry Russian and Caspian oil from a Bulgarian Black Sea port to a Greek port in the Aegean Sea, bypassing the Turkish Straits. Considered by Russian experts as an outcome of European and American pressure, the Bulgarian initiative was actually the first immediate effect of the Azerbaijani-Turkish gas agreement signed on June 7, which opened the door for accomplishing the EU-backed energy projects Nabucco, ITGI and TAP. The second effect of this agreement was the conclusion on June 17 of a memorandum of understanding between three Italian, Greek and Turkish gas companies for the ITGI gas pipeline, which according to its signatories “will enhance European energy security”.

These actions could turn out to be significant in reducing Russia's energy monopoly on European markets, especially in Eastern Europe. Yet the achievement of this long-term goal depends on the EU's internal cohesion and Brussels' approach to Azerbaijan and Turkey who are key actors for current European energy projects.

Lately, Azerbaijan has enjoyed special treatment from the EU, receiving more attention from EU member states than ever before. High ranking officials of European states have visited Baku weekly, and their discussions with Azerbaijani counterparts have focused largely on two issues:

energy security and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. On June 23, the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs led a delegation to Baku at the opening of the Austrian embassy, and was accompanied by the Managing Director of the Nabucco Gas Pipeline International GmbH who underlined once again the importance of Azerbaijani gas for the achievement of the Nabucco project.

One week later, the President of Bulgaria, whose country will be transited by the Nabucco pipeline paid an official visit to Azerbaijan. Bulgaria gathered Baku's support especially after the adoption on May 20 of a European Parliament Resolution on the South Caucasus, which was the initiative of a Bulgarian deputy.

The EU member states thus understand that Azerbaijan expects a “win-win” situation, from which all participants can profit in one way or another. While the EU needs to improve the energy security of its citizens, Azerbaijan is interested in resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and secure its territorial integrity. However, as long as the EU is not directly involved in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, it is difficult to speak of any efficiency or cohesion in European efforts. The EU could greatly increase its role in the conflict resolution process by using the prospects of future pipelines as a tool for enhancing its political role in the South Caucasus.

A second prospect for the EU regards Turkey, whose participation in European energy projects is driven by its own political interests. The conclusion of the Azerbaijani-Turkish gas agreement should have implications for the EU's approach to Turkey's European integration, which is running short on time. On June 12, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stressed that "the EU has trifled with Turkey for the past 50 years and continues to do so", reminding that "Turkey is doing the best it can to join the EU as a full member". The allusion is that Turkey's future control of all pipelines projected by EU from the Caspian Sea and Central Asian region could rearrange Brussels' energy map if Turkey's interests are not taken into account. In the same vein, on June 17 the General Manager of the Turkish state pipeline company BOTAŞ stressed that "with the signing of today's MoU for ITGI we once more underlined Turkey's unique role in the interconnection of Eastern rich gas reserves with Europe's growing demand".

As one Russian expert has recently emphasized after the Bulgarian announcement on June 11, Turkey could replace Bulgaria in Russian energy projects, becoming an alternative partner of Moscow. In light of the special Turkish-Russian partnership, which was reflected in the energy field by the construction of the Blue Stream gas pipeline, and Turkey's dissatisfaction vis-à-vis the European reluctance to process its candidacy, the EU risks finding itself in a more complex situation than before. This context which could either split or consolidate the cohesion of EU has one big advantage: it provides an opportunity for the EU to put into effect its new institutional changes and affirm itself as a full political actor in the Eurasian game alongside experienced players like Russia and Turkey.

SUKHUMI TAKES TIME OUT FROM GENEVA TALKS

Maka Gurgenidze

Sukhumi temporary withdraws from the five-party Geneva talks due to disagreements over key security issues, the head of the Abkhaz presidential administration Nadir Bitiyev declared on June 23rd. Tbilisi appraised this move as an attempt on Moscow's part to undermine the Geneva talks through its proxy regime in Sukhumi.

The Geneva process is one of the provisions of the ceasefire agreement between the French, Russian and Georgian presidents on August 12, 2008, which was restated through an agreement on September 8, 2008. The process deals with security and stability in the region and addresses questions related to displaced persons and refugees. The format of negotiations was established with mediation of the EU, OSCE and UN and involves Georgia, Russia,

and the U.S., as well as representatives of Sukhumi and Tskhinvali as parties.

The Abkhaz delegation refused to attend the next round of talks scheduled for July 27 after the most recent, eleventh round of the Geneva process on June 8. The withdrawal would last unless "a concrete document that includes propositions from all parties" on the non-use of military force is worked out, Bitiyev said.

In his statement Bitiyev acknowledged the significance of the Geneva talks but lamented that the question of signing a binding agreement among Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia on the non-use of military force is highly neglected by Georgia.

Georgia, in its turn, considers the ceasefire agreement of August 12, 2008 (brokered by French

President Nicolas Sarkozy and signed by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili) legally binding. Though the agreement already contains a commitment not to use force, Tbilisi is ready to sign a new agreement on the same commitments with Russia, but not with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia fully implements its commitments under the agreement and expects Russia to act in the same manner, said Giga Bokeria, Georgia's first deputy foreign minister.

In contrast, Bokeria's Russian counterpart, Grigory Karasin claims that the August 12 and September 8 agreements insufficiently meet the security concerns of the Abkhaz and Ossetian populations and thus do not ensure that hostilities in the conflict zones will not recur.

Russia, therefore, insists on the need for a new trilateral agreement on non-use of force between Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Not considering itself one of the conflicting parties, Moscow refuses to be a signatory of such a security treaty.

The U.S., like Georgia, does not see the expediency of such a formal document, since the first point of the Sarkozy-Medvedev cease-fire agreement encloses a pledge not to use force. Furthermore, a statement of the U.S. delegation, issued in the wake of the latest Geneva talks, outlines that Russia's commitment to withdraw its forces from Abkhazia and South Ossetia to positions held before the 2008 war has not so far been met.

The EU, a co-mediator of the Geneva process, maintains a more moderate stance regarding the conflict regions, which is reflected in its "engagement without recognition" strategy. Before the last Geneva meeting, the EU co-chairman of the Geneva talks, Ambassador Pierre Morel, said that he considered an agreement on the non-use of force as a key issue of the Geneva process, but did not mention which parties should sign it.

Divergence on who should sign the proposed treaty on non-use of force places the Geneva talks in a

deadlock, which is signified by Abkhazia's decision to keep out of the next meeting.

Several rationales underpin these problems. Russia categorically wants Georgia to arrive at an agreement on non-use of force along with Sukhumi and Tskhinvali, thereby indirectly forcing Tbilisi to acknowledge its breakaway regions as independent states.

The Georgian strategy regarding the rebel regions is conversely based on non-recognition of those regimes and the enlargement of international security mechanisms such as international police and peacekeeping missions to the occupied territories. Tbilisi's "State Strategy on Occupied Territories" in addition, intends "to take active steps to provide the local population [of the conflict zones] with an opportunity to have normal education, healthcare, to engage in economic projects". In this way, Georgia seeks to find direct channels to the Abkhazian and South Ossetian populations to mitigate Russian influence. The chief irritant to Moscow is Georgia's insistence that the conflict resolution processes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia be internationalized, meaning that the conflict zones be opened to international observers. From a Georgian perspective, Abkhazia's withdrawal from the Geneva talks mirrors Moscow's frustration with such pressure on its client regime and motivates its insistence on a binding agreement on the non-use of military force as a key issue at stake, whereas Tbilisi, in line with its priorities, persistently puts forward the question of displaced persons in accordance with the "recognized principles and practice of post-conflict settlement".

Though official Tbilisi does not consider Abkhazia to be an independent actor, its exclusion from the Geneva talks may anticipate a crisis for the Geneva process. This could well imply that the only international mechanism where the all conflict parties can exchange ideas and close their positions is endangered.

KYRGYZSTAN'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM

Joldosh Osmonov

On June 27, the national referendum on the new Constitution was held in Kyrgyzstan. According to the Kyrgyz Central Election Commission, almost 70 percent of eligible voters came to the polling stations, 90 percent of whom supported the proposed changes. Only 8 percent of all voters were against the draft Constitution. Around 200 international and 5,000 local observers monitored the voting in the nation's 2,280 polling stations.

In light of the recent, bloody inter-ethnic conflict in the southern part of the country that left around 300 people dead (the real death toll could be several times higher), thousands injured and hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, the vote was held under less than ideal circumstances. The Interim Government remained firm that despite the likelihood of new outbreaks of violence, the Referendum would take place on June 27. The government's plan to prevent violence included adding 8,000 policemen and 12,000 volunteers to guard the polling stations. This strategy proved effective as no violence broke out during the elections.

Meanwhile, the Interim Government went to unprecedented measures to assure high voter participation. These efforts included letting refugees and internally-displaced people, who were forced to leave their homes during the ethnic conflict, vote without any form of identification. Moreover, the authorities organized mobile polling stations for the ethnic Uzbeks still living in isolated neighborhoods in Osh city that were afraid of visiting ordinary voting stations.

As the new Constitution passed, most of the international organizations, including the OSCE/ODIHR Observation Mission, positively evaluated the way in which the elections were held. Local independent observers generally agreed that though there were minor violations during the voting process, the elections were largely free and fair. The Coalition "For Democracy and Civil

Society", a local NGO which deployed roughly 1,000 independent observers to more than 500 polling stations, claimed these minor violations were not significant enough to influence the results of the referendum.

However, a number of political parties and public organizations made statements accusing the Interim Government of falsifying the results. "We have video materials of cases where some citizens voted several times in different polling stations and there were buses that were taking these people to the different voting stations", stated the leader of the Ata Jurt Party, Sadyr Japarov.

It is important to note that the new Constitution significantly increased the powers of the Parliament while diminishing the power of the President. This event transformed Kyrgyzstan into the first parliamentary state in Central Asia. Another change to the governmental structure was that the number of seats in Parliament was increased from 90 to 120. The political party that wins the most seats will have the right to form a government headed by the Prime Minister. However, according to the new changes in the Constitution, no single party can get more than 65 seats. Furthermore, the President will play an insignificant role in the decision-making process and is elected for a single six-year term.

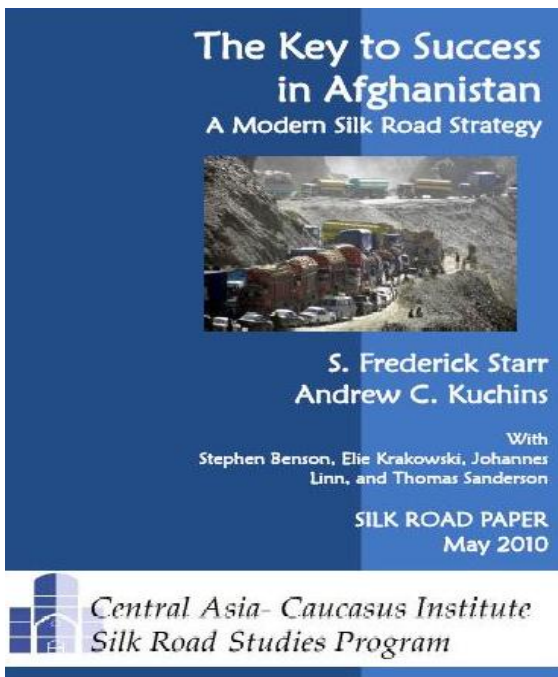
Due to the structure of the Referendum question, those that voted in favor of the new Constitution were also voting to approve the Interim Government's leader, Roza Otunbaeva, as the President of Kyrgyzstan for the transitional period leading to the Presidential elections in 2011. The question of Otunbaeva's candidacy, with no alternative candidates offered, was included as an additional provision in the law "On giving effect to the Constitution of Kyrgyz Republic". The approval of the draft Constitution automatically endorsed the Interim leader's candidacy and vice-versa.

Many political experts claim that voters were “unpleasantly surprised” to see only one question on the ballot. “If people supported the draft Constitution it does not necessarily mean that they approve Otunbaeva’s candidacy”, said Marat Kazakpaev, a local political analyst. “All of these misunderstandings around the referendum question confused voters, and eventually led to a situation where people were not sure what they voted for”, he concluded.

As the official results were published, the newly-elected President Otunbaeva made a statement saying that “the people of Kyrgyzstan put behind them the authoritarian family-based regimes of the previous two Presidents”. She promised to announce the dates of the parliamentary elections within ten days and announced her intention to form her temporary cabinet of ministers on July 10, 2010. Also, Otunbaeva plans to form a Legislative

Assembly to be entrusted with legislative powers until the new Parliament is elected. It is important to note that the previous Constitution remains valid until the upcoming parliamentary elections with President Otunbaeva standing at the head of the executive branch, whereas the assembly will be responsible for legislative affairs.

In light of general international support for the Constitution and the Interim government’s efforts to legitimize its power, the Russian President Medvedev disputed the appropriateness of the parliamentary system in Kyrgyzstan. During President Medvedev’s visit to Canada for the G20 summit he stated, “I cannot imagine how a parliamentary system will work in Kyrgyzstan”. Medvedev expressed his concerns about the vulnerability of this system to extremists. However, he added that it is an internal concern of Kyrgyzstan.



New Silk Road Paper:

***The Key to Success in Afghanistan: A Modern
Silk Road Strategy***

**By S. Frederick Starr and Andrew C.
Kuchins**

This Silk Road Paper examines the prospects for trade and infrastructure development as key features of U.S. and NATO strategy in Afghanistan.

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

NEWS DIGEST

POLIO OUTBREAK IN TAJIKISTAN A CONCERN

25 June

A polio outbreak in Tajikistan raises concerns the disease could spread to other regions in the world, an editorial in a Canadian journal says. The editorial, published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, says this is the first persistent outbreak of polio in a country that was previously certified to be polio-free and it is imperative that health agencies try to limit further spread by ensuring high vaccination rates. Cases are appearing in Russia and Uzbekistan. The current outbreak accounts for 75 percent of the world's polio cases and far exceeds that of India and Nigeria, which has had polio outbreaks. "Too many regions and communities have ceased to worry about polio," Dr. Paul Hebert, editor in chief of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, says in a statement with Dr. Noni MacDonald, public health editor. "As a consequence, vaccine uptake rates are all too often well below effective prevention levels." For example, in Ontario, childhood immunization rates are only in the high 70 percent to low 80 percent range -- comparable to rates in Tajikistan -- because of concerns about vaccine safety, anti-government views and religious strictures against vaccinations, the editorial says. (UPI)

MOST REFUGEES HAVE RETURNED TO KYRGYZSTAN

26 June

About 71,000 of the more than 100,000 refugees who fled to Uzbekistan have returned to their homes in Kyrgyzstan, interim Defense Minister Ismail Isakov said. "Nearly all the refugees who were in Uzbekistan's territory have returned to Kyrgyzstan," Isakov said at a meeting Saturday with the Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Nikolai Bordyuzha, RIA Novosti reported. The refugees had fled to escape Kyrgyzstan's worst ethnic violence in two

decades, which the United Nations says has displaced 400,000 people. Isakov said the country is becoming more stable, while Bordyuzha called Kyrgyzstan the CSTO's strategic partner. "Everybody is interested that there is stability here, that mass unrest stops, but this needs help," Bordyuzha said. A police assessment mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe arrived in Kyrgyzstan Friday to help stabilize the situation in the country ahead of the June 27 referendum on constitutional reform. Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbeks began fighting June 11 in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh. The clashes lasted several days and spread to the neighboring Jalalabad region. Officials put the death toll at 275 but Kyrgyz leaders say it could be 10 times higher. More than 2,000 people were injured in the violence. (UPI)

MORE THAN 90 % OF VOTERS IN KYRGYZSTAN APPROVED NEW CONSTITUTION

29 June

According to the preliminary results, more than 90 % of voters have approved the new Constitution. The chairman of the Central Election Committee, Akylbek Sariiev, informed at the press conference, the agency reports citing the news agency AKIpress. According to A. Sariiev, "99.96 % of referendum protocols has been processed, as of today." According to A. Sariiev, 90.57 % of all protocols - pro, 8.05 % - against, and 1.5 % of bulletins have been recognized void. A. Sariiev considers that the preliminary results do not raise doubt and reflect a reality as people have voted positively to stabilize the situation in the Republic. (Kazakhstan Today)

NEAR-CASPIAN STATES TO SIGN PROTOCOLS CONCERNING OIL EXTRACTION SAFETY

30 June

Kazakhstan, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Iran intend to sign the protocol on safe oil extraction in the Caspian Sea, the agency reports

citing the information portal Oil and Gas Eurasia. "We plan to sign two protocols in addition to the Teheran Convention this year, including one - concerning safe oil extraction in the Caspian Sea," Minister of Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan, Nurgali Ashimov, said on Monday in Astana. Earlier this day, during the governmental hour in the Parliament, N. Ashimov said, "This year, we plan to accept two more protocols and to sign them in Astana. It will be a full package of documents including all possible aspects of the environmental contamination in the Caspian Sea directed at protection of the environment of the Caspian Sea." Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan signed the frame convention in 2003. The document obliges the states to struggle with pollution of the Caspian Sea, to rationally use their resources, and to cooperate with each other and the corresponding organizations. (Kazakhstan Today)

CHECHNYA: SUICIDE BOMBING TARGETS LEADER

1 July

A suicide bomber detonated explosives near a music hall where the leader of Russia's Chechnya region was attending a concert, leaving him unharmed but injuring five servicemen. "Those bandits cannot destroy the peace in the Chechen republic," Kremlin-backed Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov told reporters after leaving the concert hall in the provincial capital, Grozny. He did not say if he believed he had been a target. It was the first Islamic insurgency bomb in the city in almost a year. The bomber was a young Grozny native, a local law enforcement official told Reuters. (The Independent)

PETRAEUS CALLS FOR UNITY IN AFGHANISTAN

3 July

The new U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan called today for unity between the civilian and military efforts in the Afghan war. General David Petraeus told a crowd of about 1,700 Afghan, American, and international guests at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul that cooperation between the military and civilian sides "is not optional." "This is a tough mission; there is nothing easy about it," he said. "But working together, we can achieve progress and we can achieve our mutual objectives." Petraeus spoke as he made his first public appearance since arriving in the Afghan capital on

July 2. He landed a day after his appointment was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and just hours after the U.S. House of Representatives approved \$33 billion in funding for a troop surge he hopes will turn the tide of the war. An amendment demanding an exit timetable from Afghanistan failed, but got 162 votes -- the biggest antiwar vote in the House on Afghanistan to date. He is taking over from the dismissed U.S. General Stanley McChrystal, who publicly disparaged the level of cooperation between U.S. civilian and military leaders in Afghanistan in interviews printed in an American magazine. A formal change-of-command ceremony will be held on July 4. The Taliban showed on July 2 just how capable they are of operating outside their traditional strongholds by launching a daring commando-style raid on the office of an American company that provides logistical support for U.S. government aid in relatively peaceful Kunduz, in the north. A Briton, German, Filipino, and two Afghans were killed in the pre-dawn attack, provincial officials said, as well as the six insurgents who mounted the raid. Also on July 2, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that Petraeus now commands said two service members had died after separate insurgent attacks in the south and east. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZSTAN SWEARS IN CARETAKER PRESIDENT

4 July

Kyrgyzstan's provisional leader Roza Otunbayeva has been sworn in as president, ushering in what the Central Asian nation's government hopes will be a new era of stability and democratic freedoms. Otunbayeva said at her inauguration Saturday that her government would do everything in its power to ensure the country overcomes the consequences of the ethnic bloodshed that last month claimed hundreds of lives. Over the course of her tenure as caretaker president, which lasts through to the end of 2011, Otunbayeva will oversee the implementation of a new constitution that dilutes presidential powers in favor of a European-style parliamentary system. Her government came to power after former President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was deposed in a bloody popular uprising in April. (AP)

OSH PROTESTERS WANT INTERNATIONAL OVERSIGHT OF KYRGYZ FORCES

4 July

Some 200 protesters in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh held a protest calling for the "internationalization" of the Kyrgyz army and law enforcement agencies, RFE/RL's Kyrgyz Service reports. The demonstration was held in front of the Osh city administration building on July 2. Protesters want international oversight of the army and police forces. They also called for an objective investigation into the ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan and for an intensified search of the people still reported missing. Protesters met with Osh Deputy Mayor Alymjan Baygazakov, who promised to pass on the demands to the Osh mayor. Political analysts say the ethnic Uzbek community in the Osh region lacks confidence in the Kyrgyz Army due to its largely monoethnic composition. Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbaeva has also cited this problem among Kyrgyz security forces and said the army and police must include more ethnic minorities. About 15 percent of Kyrgyzstan's population is made up of ethnic Uzbeks. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has discussed the idea of sending an international police force to Osh to help restore confidence in the security forces. More than 50 people went missing during the ethnic violence in the Osh region. Others are also still missing in Jalal-Abad. At least 300 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of people, mainly ethnic Uzbeks, fled their homes during the days after the fighting started on June 10. (RFE/RL)

US SECRETARY OF STATE GIVES NEWS CONFERENCE ON RESULTS OF HER AZERBAIJAN TRIP

4 July

Azerbaijan has achieved enough progress, said US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov on the results of her official visit. Clinton pointed out the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict must be resolved for the progress in the South Caucasus region. She expressed consent with the results of her talks with the country's officials. Hillary Clinton said she favors peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict based on the principle of territorial integrity of states. According to her, the

United States may not directly solve the problem but can provide assistance.

On the joint statement of the US, Russian and French Presidents on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the Secretary of State stressed the problem must be solved very soon and there is progress on the matter.

On the Section 907 of the United States Freedom Support Act, Clinton pointed although President Barack Obama is working on the waiver of the section he will also try to repeal it. The top US diplomat underlined Azerbaijan supported her country in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Hillary Clinton noted the United States supports and is ready for cooperation with respect to the upcoming parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. She said US-Azerbaijan cultural, educational and trade ties have developed deeply.

Foreign Minister Mammadyarov highlighted US's backing huge projects implemented by Azerbaijan. The Minister underlined all South Caucasus countries can participate in the regional projects after the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. (AzerTAc)

CLINTON URGES ARMENIA-AZERBAIJAN PEACE

4 July

Peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan is needed for both nations to create safe and flourishing futures, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Sunday. Peace "is a prerequisite for building a secure and prosperous future in both nations," Clinton told reporters in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku. The two nations are in conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a 3,200-square-mile landlocked enclave of Azerbaijan that has been under control of Armenian troops and ethnic Armenian forces since a 1994 cease-fire ended the six-year Nagorno-Karabakh War. Tensions between the countries rose in recent months and at least four Armenian and two Azerbaijani soldiers were killed in fighting over the region in June. Clinton first met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev for lunch, then flew to Armenia's capital, Yerevan, for a dinner meeting with Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan. She told reporters June's clashes were "unacceptable" cease-fire violations and contrary to the stated commitments of both sides, Voice of America reported. She said Washington urged both sides to refrain from force and to work out basic principles leading to a settlement. "Everyone knows these are difficult steps to take,

but we believe they are important ones and we have expressed our concern to both presidents today that the return to violence is unacceptable," Clinton said. Clinton also called on Armenian neighbor Turkey to normalize ties with Armenia. And she reaffirmed a U.S. call for Russia to end what she called the "continuing occupation" of the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia since the 2008 war with Georgia. Clinton is to spend several hours in Georgia Monday, ending a four-day trip to five countries that started in Ukraine and Poland. (UPI)

KYRGYZSTAN WILL NOT RELY ON FOREIGN AID – OTUNBAYEVA

5 July

Kyrgyzstan plans to use its own resources to recover from a wave of violence that hit the country in June, the country's new president said on Monday. "We will help ourselves, we will not rely on aid or handouts," Roza Otunbayeva told reporters after a session of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) in Astana. Otunbayeva was sworn in as president for a transitional period until December 31, 2011 earlier on Saturday, after a new constitution was approved by a national referendum on June 27 "We are sure that a small amount of aid from all countries will help us regain our footing, and the EurAsEC's crisis fund comes in handy," Otunbayeva said. Inter-ethnic clashes in the south of the Central Asian state claimed the lives of more than 280 people, according to government figures, and made thousand homeless. However, Kyrgyz officials acknowledge that the real death toll may be 10 times higher. Otunbayeva, who came to power amid large-scale opposition protests that overturned president Kurmanbek Bakiyev in April, said on Saturday that Kyrgyzstan was going through "one of the most dramatic periods in its history." She called on the international community to help avoid a "humanitarian catastrophe," but also pledged that all those made homeless by the unrest would receive new housing by the onset of winter. (RIA Novosti)

RUSSIAN-KAZAKH-BELORUSIAN CUSTOMS UNION COMES INTO EFFECT

5 July

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev says a customs union joining Russia, Kazakhstan, and Belarus has come into effect after the presidents of the three countries signed documents today. Medvedev made the announcement at a summit of the Eurasian

Economic Community (Eurasec) in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana. Eurasec unites Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

The leaders of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan said their countries were also considering joining the customs union. Eurasec leaders are scheduled to consider the formation of a Eurasec court to replace the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Customs Court and approve a budget for 2011. Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev announced that the next Eurasec summit will be held in Moscow in late December. Nazarbaev noted in his opening speech that the group is marking its 10th anniversary. Medvedev is also scheduled to meet with new Kyrgyz leader Roza Otunbaeva to discuss the recent violence and referendum in Kyrgyzstan. (RFE/RL)

CLINTON: GEORGIA CAN COUNT ON U.S.

6 July

The United States is committed to Georgia's "sovereignty and territorial integrity" as it continues to grow, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said. Clinton, winding down her visit to several former communist countries, said she brought a specific message to Georgia from U.S. President Barack Obama. "The United States is steadfast in its commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The United States does not recognize spheres of influence," she said during a joint news conference Monday with Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili. Russia must abide by the August 2008 cease-fire reached after it invaded Georgia and signed by Saakashvili and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Clinton said. That means providing humanitarian aid, and "ending the occupation and withdrawing Russian troops from South Ossetia and Abkhazia to their pre-conflict positions," she said. She also thanked Georgia for its "significant contributions" in Afghanistan, noting that Georgian soldiers are fighting alongside of U.S. troops in Helmand province. Clinton also reiterated U.S. support for Georgia's political and economic reform. "We are committed to supporting Georgians, Georgians who are working to build a future that is freer, more democratic, more prosperous and more secure," America's top diplomat said. The United States has been "decisive in protecting Georgian independence, helping our democracy to grow," Saakashvili said, "especially ... in the recent critical period after the invasion of our

country in 2008" by Russia. The Georgian leader said his talks with Clinton "confirms to all of us that the support we receive, the partnership we have built, is growing in substance and form." While much needs to be done to ensure Georgia's security, "we want to tell the world that Georgia is a model of political and economic reforms," he said. (UPI)

BRITISH FORCES TO WITHDRAW FROM DEADLY AFGHAN DISTRICT

7 July

British troops are to withdraw from one of southern Afghanistan's deadliest areas and hand responsibility over to U.S. forces. Britain's defense secretary, Liam Fox, announced the pullout of 1,000 soldiers from the district of Sangin in Helmand Province starting later this year. Sangin, a valley in northern Helmand, has accounted for 99 out of 312 British soldiers killed in Afghanistan since military operations began there in 2001. Fox told Parliament that British forces in Helmand had been spread too thinly to mount effective counterinsurgency exercises, but presented the withdrawal as part of reorganization of NATO troops in the province. "ISAF intends to restructure its forces in Farah and Nimroz provinces so it can consolidate a U.S. marine brigade in northern Helmand, which will assume responsibility for security in Sangin, later this year," he said in a reference to NATO's International Security Assistance Force. "This will simplify current command arrangements and enable U.K. troops to be redeployed to reinforce progress in the key districts of central Helmand. The theater reserve battalion will then withdraw." Fox said the withdrawal was enabled by the recent arrival of more than 18,000 U.S. Marines and would result in a "coherent and equitable division" of allied forces in Helmand's main population areas. British forces account for about a third of foreign troops in Helmand, but are responsible for protecting a larger share of its population. Some 8,000 of Britain's 9,500 troops in Afghanistan are stationed there. Britain is the second-largest contributor to the NATO war effort in Afghanistan after the United States. (RFE/RL)

NATO AIR STRIKE ACCIDENTALLY KILLS 5 AFGHAN TROOPS

7 July

NATO mistakenly killed five of its Afghan army allies in an air strike Wednesday while the Afghans were attacking insurgents in the country's east, officials said. Three American soldiers were

also reported killed Wednesday in a roadside bomb in the south. An Afghan defense official condemned the latest "friendly fire" deaths, which came at a time when international troops are trying to improve coordination with Afghan security forces in hopes of handing over more security to them nearly nine years into the war. Three American soldiers were also reported killed Wednesday in a roadside bomb in the south. The Afghan soldiers were launching an ambush before dawn against insurgents reportedly on the move in Ghazni province when NATO aircraft began firing on them without warning, Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Gen. Mohammad Zahir Azimi said. Five Afghan soldiers died and two more were wounded in the air strike in Ghazni's Andar district, he said. "This is not the first time such an incident has happened, but we wish that at least this would be the last one," Gen. Azimi said. NATO spokesman Josef Blotz confirmed the botched air strike. He said he regretted the Afghan National Army deaths, telling a news briefing that a joint investigation has been launched. "The reason for this is perhaps a coordination issue," Mr. Blotz said. "We were obviously not absolutely clear whether there were Afghan national security forces in the area." He extended the personal condolences of U.S. Gen. David Petraeus, the newly arrived commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, to the families of the victims. The Afghan soldiers' deaths at the hands of their allies was another setback in the U.S.-led force's goal of training and coordinating with the Afghans, one of the cornerstones of its counterinsurgency strategy. (AP)

KYRGYZSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN INTEND TO JOIN CUSTOMS UNION

7 July

The President of Republic of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, and the President of Kyrgyzstan for the transition period, Roza Otunbaeva, following the results of the session of the Interstate Council of the Eurasian Economic Community, in an interview to journalists said that they intend to join the Customs Union, the agency reports. "As for Tajikistan joining the Customs Union structure, we are seriously working over this question," E. Rahmon said. R. Otunbaeva informed, "Kyrgyzstan, being a WTO member, has created a working group, which is now studying all the conditions for joining the Customs Union." "We are determined to join the Customs Union. We need to correlate the

conditions, taking into account all the benefits," she said. (Kazakhstan Today)

BP COMMITTED TO AZERBAIJAN

7 July

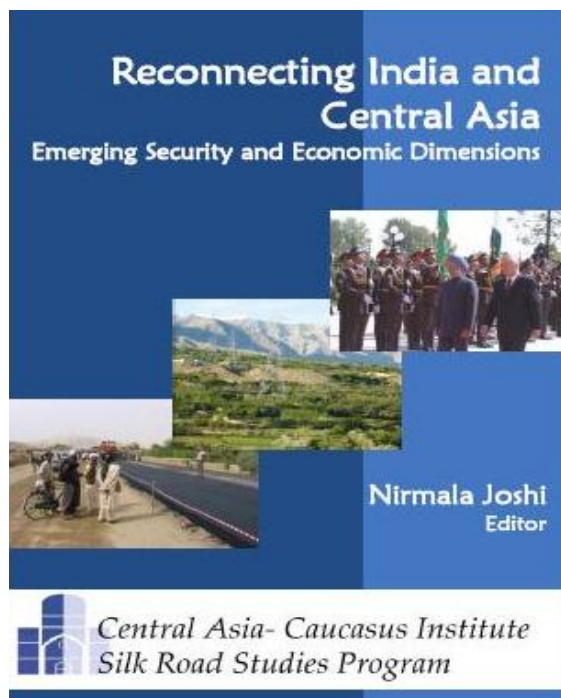
British energy company BP is committed to exploring the vast natural resources available in Azerbaijan, state oil executives said. Embattled BP chief Tony Hayward arrived in Azerbaijan this week to discuss operations in the energy-rich country. Hayward during his visit met with the top executives at the State Oil Co. of Azerbaijan Republic. Rovnag Abdullayev, the head of the state-owned SOCAR, said Hayward expressed his commitment to work in his country, the Trend news agency reports. Hayward, he said, "noted that the company remains committed" to energy projects in the country "and will do everything for their further development." BP is active in the development of the giant Azeri-Chirag-Guneshli oil complex in the Caspian Sea and the Shah Deniz gas field. It also serves as the operator of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil pipeline, one of the longest in the world. (UPI)

AZERBAIJAN PRESIDENT RECEIVES GEORGIAN FM

7 July

President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has today received Georgia's foreign minister Grigol Vashadze.

The President expressed confidence the Georgian FM's visit would be fruitful and successful. President Ilham Aliyev said Azerbaijan and Georgia were actively cooperating in all fields, adding he believes the bilateral cooperation would be continued. Grigol Vashadze stressed the importance of discussing with the Azerbaijani leader the ways of developing the bilateral relations, and cooperation, in particular within international organizations, on the issue of territorial integrity, which, he said, was of particular significance for both Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Azerbaijani leader emphasized the importance of continuous consultations for expanding the bilateral cooperation. (AzerTAc)



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