

# 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 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:** 400-600 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.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** provide a short bio of yourself in 20-50 words.

**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.

## **Svante E. Cornell**

Research Director; Editor, Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst

Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program

Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University

1619 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, USA. Tel. +1-202-663-5922; 1-202-663-7723;

Fax. +1-202-663-77

# KYRGYZSTAN'S KUMTOR MINE BECOMES POLITICAL FOOTBALL

John C. K. Daly

*Last month's demonstrations outside Kyrgyzstan's Kumtor gold mine have highlighted local and governmental dissatisfaction with the terms of its existing 2009 contract with Toronto-based Centerra Gold Inc. The Kyrgyz government has given the company until October 1 to offer revised terms, threatening to nationalize the company if it does not agree. Given the importance of the site to both Centerra Gold Inc. and the Kyrgyz government as a revenue source, a compromise would seem to be the eventual outcome. Whether or not that can be achieved will depend upon the protracted negotiations currently underway between Centerra Gold Inc. and Bishkek.*

**BACKGROUND:** On May 28 thousands of protesters demanding the nationalization of Kyrgyzstan's Kumtor gold mine, the nation's largest, seized the Tamga electricity substation and cut off power to the facility. The protesters demanded the nationalization of Kumtor and that Toronto-based Centerra Gold Inc., having operated the Kumtor mine since 1997, build a more environmentally friendly infrastructure and provide both medical facilities and more financial benefits for the inhabitants of three local villages. Following the demonstrators clashing with police, two days later the Kyrgyz authorities declared a state of emergency around the mine, which lies in the east of the country in the Tien Shan Mountains in the Dzhети-Oguz district. Local activists proclaimed, "Kumtor will either belong to us or stop its work."

The demonstration was the outcome of an opposition rally one and a half months earlier in Barskoon village near the mine, when then opposition leaders announced their intention to hold an indefinite protest action in the capital Bishkek's central square

to press their demands. Following discussions, they decided on a local protest.

The potential stakes are high for the Kyrgyz government. According to Kyrgyz government statistics, official assessment, Kumtor accounts for up to a quarter of the country's GDP. Kyrgyzstan has 430 tons of potentially recoverable gold, worth more than US\$ 105 billion at current prices. Kumtor is also responsible for more than 50 percent of Kyrgyzstan's exports and Kumtor is the Kyrgyz Republic's main resource of tax revenue.

In a bid to defuse the situation, on June 1 Prime Minister Zhantoro Satybaldiyev visited the site and updated protesters about the government's discussions with Centerra Gold Inc. but added, "The company Kumtor must work. Kumtor is the future of Kyrgyzstan. I can't promise you to change the existing (Kumtor) agreement in a matter of a day. I cannot, in a matter of one day, sort out all of these issues that have existed for the last 20 years. You have inspired me and I promise to defend the interests of Kyrgyzstan (regarding Kumtor)."



Centerra Gold Inc. estimated that the power cuts cost the company US\$ 4 million in lost production. Staking out its negotiating position, Centerra Gold Inc. released a press statement on June 4 commenting that it hoped to resolve “matters through constructive dialogue. However, there can be no assurance that any transaction will be consummated or that the company will be able to successfully resolve any of the matters currently affecting the Kumtor Project.”

While the Kumtor area has a history of intermittent Soviet exploration dating back to the late 1920s, the actual discovery of the deposit was made in 1978 with Moscow undertaking exploration, audit sampling, drilling and geological interpretation work the following year. A decade later an initial reserve statement was issued by the USSR State Committee on Reserves in March 1990, but the Soviet government was too preoccupied with political events and a lack of advanced Western technology to begin exploiting the reserves prior to the collapse of the USSR in December 1991.

**IMPLICATIONS:** Kumtor is the largest foreign-owned mine in the former Soviet Union and remains essential to the Kyrgyz

economy. The money that Kumtor generates is desperately needed by the Kyrgyz government, which has seen two presidents overthrown in popular actions since 2005, with powerful local clans defying the authority of central government. According to the CIA, in 2013 33.7 percent of the Kyrgyz population lives below the poverty line, while the country suffers from an inflation rate of over 7 percent.

Trouble between the Toronto-listed Centerra Gold Inc. and the Kyrgyz government broke into the open in Bishkek in January, when Economy Minister Temir Sariyev, who heads a state commission on Centerra Gold Inc.’s work in the country, remarked that “agreements the government signed with Centerra Gold Inc. between 1992 and 2009 were dubious. They were all approved by a narrow circle of persons, without wide public discussion and not entirely in Kyrgyzstan’s interests.” Sariyev added that Centerra Gold Inc. “unjustly enjoys special conditions” under a “murky” 2009 agreement, signed when fugitive President Kurmanbek Bakiyev was in power. Under the 2009 contract, Centerra Gold Inc. paid the Kyrgyz government a 14 percent tax on gross revenue from Kumtor, which Kyrgyzstan wanted to increase to 17-20 percent, as paid by other mining companies working in the country. Sariyev added, “If they pay in line with our laws ... they will pay 5 billion soms (US\$ 105 million) more than they have been paying under the current agreement. In case there is no agreement ... then we will recommend that the government cancel the current concession agreement.” The following month the Kyrgyz Parliament requested that

the government renegotiate the 2009 deal by June.

In 2009 Centerra Gold Inc. acquired the site from Cameco, which in 1992 began to develop the deposit with the Kyrgyz government. Development of the Kumtor gold deposit began in 1994 and was completed in early 1997 at a cost of about US\$ 450 million.

A further pressure point that the Kyrgyz government is applying to the Kumtor mine is charges that it is damaging the local environment. A state commission has accused Centerra Gold Inc. of damaging the environment at Kumtor with its mining activities and in February sent Centerra Gold Inc. a claim for US\$ 315 million relating to alleged environmental damages at Kumtor. Kumtor has long raised environmental concerns about the safety of downstream water supplies, as the facility uses “heap leaching” to extract the gold from the ore, which is crushed into pebble-sized fragments and then sprayed with a dilute alkaline cyanide solution to separate the gold. The mine sits atop glaciers whose springtime melt-water feeds fresh water into the Naryn River, which flows towards Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan and authorities fear that pollution from the mining operations and massive tailings heaps could leach toxic materials.

The protests had no significant effect on Kumtor’s output, with Centerra Gold Inc. reporting that the facility is on target to meet its production goals for 2013. However, Centerra Gold Inc.’s troubled relationship with the Kyrgyz government has had a significant impact on its share price, which

has fallen 54 percent since January. Centerra Gold Inc. is the largest Western-based gold producer in Central Asia, and the Kumtor mine has produced more than 8.6 million ounces of gold between 1997 and the end of 2012. In 2012 alone, Kumtor produced over 315,000 ounces of gold.

Centerra Gold Inc. is currently holding talks with the Kyrgyz government about a new ownership arrangement, telling reporters that the two sides are considering a swap to shift ownership of Kumtor from Centerra Gold Inc. to a joint venture with the government whereby the Kyrgyz government’s Kyrgyzaltyn JSC would exchange its 32.7 percent equity interest in the Kumtor gold mine for a stake of equivalent value in the new joint venture.

On June 4, after an appeal from Deputy Prime Minister Joomart Otorbaev requested more time for talks, the Kyrgyz Parliamentary foreign affairs, agrarian policy and the fuel and energy committees extended the government’s negotiations with Toronto-based Centerra Gold Inc. to change the Kumtor Project Agreements by four months to October 1. The new joint venture will be registered in Kyrgyzstan, managed by a board of directors split equally between Centerra Gold Inc. and KyrgyzAltyn, with an annual rotation of the chairman of the board by each partner.

**CONCLUSIONS:** While the situation at Kumtor has been defused for the moment, the facility’s future depends on the negotiations between the Kyrgyz government and Centerra Gold Inc. over the next three months. The one thing that seems certain is that both parties need one another,

and that a face saving compromise would be the best way forward. For Centerra Gold Inc. to give the government a direct share in Kumtor would go a long way towards quelling the nationalism that has roiled the situation, while the Kyrgyz government is well aware that it cannot operate the facility

on its own. Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, it seems certain that operations at Kumtor will not proceed as before.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Dr. John C. K. Daly is a Nonresident Research Fellow of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and President and CEO of Central Asian Biofuels Ltd.



# ATTACKS IN DAGESTAN SUGGEST INEFFICIENCY OF ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Valeriy Dzutsev

*Hopes for improvement of the security situation in Dagestan gradually dissipate as attacks intensify in the republic. In spite of an anti-corruption campaign introduced by Dagestan's new acting president, harsher government tactics appear to be matched by more exasperated attacks by the militants, while new anti-insurgency jamaats are formed to avenge the casualties of terrorist attacks. As an impressive administrative reshuffle ensues in the volatile republic, few substantive reforms are promised that could improve the situation in the long run, such as granting the Dagestani public more influence in the republic's government.*

**BACKGROUND:** On May 25, a female suicide bomber exploded in Dagestan's capital Makhachkala, killing one person and injuring at least 15 others, about half of which were police officers. The acting president of Dagestan, Ramazan Abdulatipov, cut short his visit to Moscow and returned to the region to hold emergency meetings. Even though violent attacks in this republic are very common, suicide bombings still remain rare events that attract special public attention. The suicide bomber was identified as 25-year-old Madina Aliyeva. According to the Russian National Antiterrorist Committee, Aliyeva's two husbands had been members of the insurgency and were killed in previous clashes with government forces. On May 20, a double bomb attack with an interval of 15 minutes killed four and injured over forty in Makhachkala. The attack took place by the office building of the Russian state bailiff service.

The security situation in Dagestan has been tense in the past several years. Moscow replaced the republican leadership three

times since 2006, but cadre experiments have not yielded the desired results. The last change took place in February 2013, when Abdulatipov, a Moscow-based politician of Dagestani origin, replaced Magomedislam Magomedov as head of Dagestan. Hopes were high that Abdulatipov would reverse the violent trend in the republic. According to some polling organizations, a vast majority of Dagestanis still express a high level of trust in Abdulatipov. The recent attacks, however, suggest that Abdulatipov's leadership may not be destined for much greater success than his predecessors.

Blaming the continuing instability on unnamed forces, Abdulatipov stated after the latest suicide attack that the process of "renewal and redemption of Dagestan was objective and no one could disrupt it." He vowed to fight terrorism, banditry and corruption unswervingly. In the realities of the North Caucasus, official vows "to fight terrorism" even more uncompromisingly than before normally mean more human rights abuses, less regard for public opinion, and more propaganda efforts on the



government side. Abdulatipov's predecessors also tried many devices to suppress the insurgency, but the republic did not stabilize.

On June 1, the Kremlin took another drastic step in governing restive Dagestan. The Dagestani veteran politician and mayor of Makhachkala Said Amirov was arrested by the Russian security services and taken to Moscow for trial. Amirov is accused of involvement in the murder of an investigator, but many observers have opined that the charges are just a formality and that the primary goal of Amirov's arrest was to make him step down from the position he has occupied for 15 years. Amirov was considered to be one of the most powerful politicians in Dagestan, but apparently lost in an invisible struggle against Abdulatipov. The removal of a strongman from the mayor's office does not warrant peace, but is likely to prompt internal fighting among Dagestani elites.

**IMPLICATIONS:** One of the possible innovations under Abdulatipov, apart from an administrative reshuffle, appeared in the Dagestani city of Buinaksk in April. Leaflets spread throughout the city, announcing the establishment of a jamaat, a Muslim community, specifically to target the

relatives of the militants. A photocopy of the leaflet, published by the Caucasian Knot website on May 20 said: "If anyone ever kills another resident of the Buinaksk zone, relatives and close friends of the devils will be killed in the first place." Another excerpt said: "We do not pay attention to age, we kill one close relative of a devil from the forest [insurgent] for one killed normal Muslim." The anonymous authors of the leaflets threatened to kill not only people close to the insurgents, but also businessmen funding the militancy. The leaflet provided a list of dozens of nicknames that would be targeted "in the first place," among which was 27-year-old Magomed Mukhumaev who was found dead on April 18 in his car. According to human rights activists, three households in Buinaksk belonging to relatives of persons mentioned in the leaflet were blown up by the security services on May 6. The law enforcement agents claimed that explosive devices found in the houses could not be removed, so they had to explode them.

The emergence of anonymous groups that vow to take "revenge" on militants is not new for Dagestan. Such groups have previously appeared in places such as the Kizilyurt and Levashi districts. The novelty is that the authors of the message want to communicate that a Muslim jamaat was established to fight other Muslims. The insurgency's members often belong to Salafi teaching in Islam, while Sufism is the officially approved version of Islam that enjoys many privileges from the government. Hence, the new group declaring war on the relatives of insurgents is likely associated with Sufis, while their

opponents are evidently Salafis. In previous cases of such “vengeance groups,” the security services were implicated in crafting and protecting them. Locals in Buinaksk also allege that the security services stand behind the jamaat of avengers, according to Caucasian Knot’s report from the town.

The government’s inability to install social order in Dagestan pushes it to adopt “divide and rule” tactics. A conflict between Sufis and the Salafis in the republic could turn violence in Dagestan into a full-fledged civil war with Dagestanis on both sides fighting each other for years to come. The authorities apparently hope that this situation would help them root out the insurgents. This seeming tactic is unlikely to work, however, because the conflict in Dagestan is not primarily over ideological differences between Salafis and the Sufis but between social groups. Some Sufis work for the government and enjoy certain privileges, while the Salafis are opposed to and disfavored by the government. The dividing line is therefore between those in power and those who are excluded from power and not between Sufis and Salafis per se. Unless the political system in Dagestan becomes more participatory, the government is unlikely to succeed in winning over people of the republic or even in gaining the support of a majority of the population to fight violent groups.

Abulatipov puts a special emphasis on fighting corruption in Dagestan, which he claims is the driving force of instability in the republic. Presumably, corruption makes the prospects of young people so bleak that they become receptive to the recruitment

calls of violent entrepreneurs. In the end of April, Abulatipov announced the preliminary results of his anti-corruption campaign, saying that a special commission of the Russian Interior Ministry from Moscow was in the process of purging the Dagestani Interior Ministry along with some other administrative structures in the republic. Embezzlement cases involving millions of dollars were uncovered; while police gangs engaged in drug dealing, killings and kidnappings were exposed, according to Abdulatipov. He replaced several heads of districts and the prosecutor general of the republic. Further, Abdulatipov stated that more women should be appointed to government positions.

**CONCLUSIONS:** Abdulatipov hence appears to be a progressive, modern leader who should have high chances of succeeding. Yet, the top-down approach that Moscow has adopted to resolve multiple issues in Dagestan is almost bound to fail, because the public is largely excluded from the decision-making process and there are no signs of changes to this rigid political construct. Many Russian experts examine in detail causes of instability in Dagestan and in the wider region of the North Caucasus, such as high unemployment, corruption, clan structure and so on. There is almost no discussion, however, of the fact that power does not belong to the public in any of the North Caucasian republics, which is in itself a major destabilizing factor in the region.

**AUTHOR’S BIO:** Valeriy Dzutsev is a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at Jamestown Foundation and Doctoral Student in Political Science at Arizona State University

# PAKISTAN CONCERNED OVER AFGHANISTAN-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

*Naveed Ahmad*

*Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai is a shrewd politician, even more so as his term in office nears completion and uncertainty prevails. After a spate of words with Pakistan following a border skirmish, he left for India to seek military assistance against aggressive neighboring troops. For a change, Islamabad kept its cool and welcomed China's Prime Minister Li Keqiang, who was also flying in after a "handshake across the Himalayas" in New Delhi. As for Karzai, it was not his first flight to India for military hardware or training. However, his action is largely seen as aimed to pressure Pakistan's newly elected leaders prior to the exit of NATO forces in 2014.*

**BACKGROUND:** The Afghan leader has been wary of Pakistan since he assumed power in December 2001 and his obvious choice for a friend has been India, one of the three nuclear powers in the region. While employing a public aggressive tone against Pakistan, the Afghan leader signed a strategic partnership with India in October 2011.

After his two later visits and one by his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh, this time Karzai may be aiming higher than originally discussed and broadly agreed. Though there is no clarity about the financial aspect of the defense deals, the war-torn, landlocked nation is eyeing light and heavy artillery, fighter and supply aircraft, modern small arms and ammunitions.

India is already educating the Afghan military's young officers in its institutes and training the mid-level command of the Afghan National Army besides imparting knowledge of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism to its soldiers. Moreover,

Afghan military men serve in Indian units for a certain period of time.

For senior operation command, Afghan officers are detailed in the Commando School in Belgaum (southern India), the Counter-Insurgency & Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram (northeastern India) and the High Altitude Warfare School in Sonamarg region of the disputed Jammu and Kashmir. At any given time, Delhi can train 2,500 Afghan soldiers simultaneously in its 25 infantry regimental centers.

Prime Minister Singh has stated that "The bilateral agreement creates an institutional framework for our future cooperation." Besides, the two nations also signed separate agreements on energy and mining with far reaching and long term consequences.

India awards 2,000 scholarships for Afghan students besides building the Zaranj-Delaram Highway and other roads, erecting electric transmission lines from northern Afghanistan to the capital. Delhi has already completed construction of the Parliament building.



Fluid security conditions notwithstanding, the Indian plan to lay a 900 kilometer railway line connecting the Delhi-financed Chabahar Port in Iran, about 72 kilometer from Pakistan's Gwadar Port whose management control has been given to a Chinese firm recently, is in the works to ease shipment of minerals while bypassing Pakistan.

Kabul has already granted licenses to three blocks of the huge Hajigak iron ore concession in central Afghanistan to the Steel Authority of an India-led consortium. The Indian state company acquired an estimated 1.8 to 2 billion tons of iron ore. The composite plan to extract the minerals, build roads and rail links could cost Delhi over US\$ 6 billion. India is vying for more than the US\$ 6 billion share in the overall estimated reserves worth US\$ 1.3 trillion.

Though this cooperation is aimed at countering Pakistan's military power, a direct attack on the eastern neighbor's economy and agriculture could prove more explosive from a regional security perspective in the long run.

With the technical help of Indian engineers, Afghanistan is in the process of building twelve dams on the Kabul River with a 5,8

billion cubic meters storage capacity. Besides existing security concerns, acquiring US\$ 7.079 billion in World Bank funding remains a massive challenge. The construction of a dozen dams on a river shared by Pakistan is fraught with risks of renewed tension. The neighbors share nine rivers with a total water volume of 22,5 bcm.

Afghanistan is already questioning the legitimacy of British-era Durand line border demarcation, which Pakistan considers a settled issue.

**IMPLICATIONS:** President Karzai apparently expects a few clashes between border guards from the two countries, a routine matter in the case of India and Pakistan along the Line of Control in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region. The last incident claimed the life of an Afghan policeman while Kabul accused Islamabad of resorting to using heavy artillery and tanks during the skirmish in eastern Nangarhar province.

Whatever the cost of a massive security apparatus in Kabul's green zone may be, Taliban attacks remain a serious problem. This week, two Afghan police officers who had defected but later returned to their jobs killed seven colleagues while they were asleep. President Karzai's hawkish stance risks becoming self-defeating given the fact that over two million Afghans still reside in Pakistan with no substantial humanitarian assistance by the UN, and most of the vital agricultural, livestock and hydrocarbon needs of his country are met through imports and smuggling from the eastern neighbor.

Afghanistan's expanding military ties with India are naturally a cause of anxiety in Pakistan. Scholarships to Afghan students, training and equipment of its armed forces and allegedly "clandestine" activities of India's consulates add to the already existing mistrust in Pakistan towards the elite in Kabul, which predominantly excludes the majority Pashtun ethnic group while symbolically showcasing Hamid Karzai as one.

The Afghan side is wary that Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies have not abandoned their clandestine plans of controlling their landlocked country, using their proxies within the Pashtun population. Though a tripartite commission comprising Afghanistan, Pakistan and the U.S. has been an effective forum to address complaints and develop confidence-building measures, mutual suspicion has only grown with a clear Indian role in Afghanistan.

The Indians find Afghanistan not only strategically important for encircling Pakistan but also from a trade and commerce point of view. India's symbolic and pragmatic support for Afghanistan's institutions as well as infrastructure is aimed at both.

China has its own non-political and low-profile role in Afghanistan. State-owned China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) has been awarded a license to explore oil fields in northern Afghanistan's Amu Darya basin with potential reserves of 80 million barrels of crude oil. China acquired the rights to the US\$ 80 billion Aynak copper deposit in 2007. China is as involved in

infrastructure development in Afghanistan as India.

When foreign powers compete over resources, Afghanistan has nothing to lose. However, far greater risks are involved if the country becomes involved in the existing dispute between two nuclear powers. Pakistan has generally pursued quiet diplomacy with the U.S., NATO and China over President Karzai and his team's aggressive posturing. Islamabad has assured its allies behind closed doors as well as in public that only Afghans should determine their future course.

China and other friendly countries also want an improving law and order situation in the war-ravaged country owing to their own political and commercial interests. India remains the only regional power uneasy with the U.S. idea of talks with the Taliban and sorting out issues prior to a full exit of NATO troops. New Delhi's concerns have resulted in a strategy for exploiting Karzai's anti-Pakistan approach and propagating an Indian view of the region to the Afghan armed forces.

**CONCLUSIONS:** In spite of its continued Pakistan-specific training and hardware support to Afghanistan's armed forces, India may not achieve its much desired goal of a transit route to Central Asia. The Pakistan-India normalization process may have been institutionalized but remains far from achieving significant credibility and results. Pakistan's relations with the U.S. are returning to normal as NATO ships military hardware to Karachi without trouble. Islamabad has already released Taliban prisoners in coordination with

NATO's and Kabul's renewed policy of engagement with the militia. President Karzai's adventurism can jeopardize the emerging consensus for the country's peaceful transition from foreign-led security arrangements to an Afghan-managed affair.

Many in Pakistan believe that Karzai's recent moves stem from a desire to install his older brother Qayum Karzai as the country's president after his two-term limit expires on April 4, 2014. India may openly

support Qayum's candidacy, while Pakistan will either stay silent or at best back Karzai's sibling for the position of vice president.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Naveed Ahmad is an investigative journalist and academic, focusing on security, diplomacy and governance. He is founder of the 'Afghanistan 2014' project. He can be reached at [ideas@ideas360.org](mailto:ideas@ideas360.org); and Twitter [@naveed360](https://twitter.com/naveed360).

## POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS: IS THIS PAKISTAN'S SPRING?

*Rizwan Zeb*

*For the first time in the country's history, a smooth democratic transition has taken place in Pakistan. Pakistan is facing a number of domestic, regional and international challenges which will have serious implications for the future of the country. However, whether this is the beginning of a Pakistani spring or not will mostly depend on how effectively the central government and the newly elected opposition government in Khyber Pakhtunkwa will conduct business in the days ahead.*

**BACKGROUND:** Pakistan's 2013 elections were rightly called an historical event since for the first time in the country's history, a democratically elected government was able to finish its term and a democratic transition took place.

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government which started its term after gaining a majority in the 2008 elections failed to provide any relief to the masses which suffered power shortages, hiking electricity and gas prices and sky rocketing commodity prices. The law and order situation, terrorism and ethnopolitical problems in Baluchistan intensified. Numerous stories of alleged corruption among government officials including the prime ministers and their sons added to the public resentment.

By the time elections were announced, it was obvious that the real contest would be between the Pakistan Muslim League (PML N) led by two-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Pakistan Justice Party, PTI) led by former cricket super star and philanthropist Imran Khan. Another development was that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) after offering peace talks, openly threatened to

attack political campaigning and told Pakistanis to stay away from elections as it is against their interpretation of Islam. It particularly targeted Awami National Party (ANP) in Khyber Pakhtunkwa. As a result, a number of ANP leaders and supports were killed and the party was pushed to restrict its election campaign to corner meetings.

While PPP almost had no election campaign, it was widely believed that PTI would emerge as a major player in the coming parliamentary setup. A number of observers also stated that PTI might emerge as the majority party by a clean swipe the elections. Under Khan's leadership, PTI promised to build a new Pakistan (naya Pakistan), and focused on eliminating corruption, reviewing Pakistan's relations with America and its role in the war on terror, financial, land and agricultural reforms and expanding the tax base in the country. Pakistan's youth overwhelmingly supported the PTI and it was widely believed that if the youth actually came out on Election Day and cast their votes, PTI would actually win the elections.

Perhaps the most important thing is that Pakistan resisted the threat posed by the TTP. Despite TTP threats and terror attacks,





resulting in 51 deaths on Election Day, the turnout was above 60 percent, the second highest in Pakistan's election history after the first elections in 1970.

**IMPLICATIONS:** PML (N) emerged as the majority party in the elections, which is not surprising. The PML (N)'s over 100 seats in the national assembly has diminished the possibility of a hung parliament. Apart from a significant presence in the national assembly, PTI has emerged as the majority party in the strategically significant and troubled province of Khyber Pakhtunkwa and will be establishing the provincial government. Although Sharif will make history by becoming prime minister for a third time, it is not going to be a joyride for him as the country is facing immense challenges. PTI will also be tested as it made excessive promises in its election campaign. It remains unclear whether it can deliver on these and make Khyber Pakhtunkwa a success story, and whether it will be willing to support the central government on important issues such as relations with the U.S. and India and Pakistan's role in the war on terror and the 2014 withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The PML (N) government will face a number of problems and challenges at the domestic, regional and international levels. In the last few years, Pakistan's domestic problems have multiplied. Pakistan is currently facing a major law and order and security challenge from groups like TTP and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Recent attacks on the Shia minority in Baluchistan and in Karachi indicate that this problem is worsening. PML (N) favors a dialogue with the TTP and Sharif soon after winning the elections stated that he would negotiate with the TTP. Although TTP withdrew its peace talks offer after the recent drone attack which killed its deputy chief, Wali-ur-Rehman Mahsud, PML (N) believes that a meaningful dialogue is still possible. This step will have serious implications as TTP is a terrorist group allegedly entertaining links with the Taliban in Afghanistan and is responsible for terror attacks throughout the country. TTP also rejects Pakistan's constitution and aims to occupy the state's territory, implement their interpretation of sharia in Pakistan and then merge it with what is their ultimate objective, the Islamic Emirate of Khurasaan. Whether PML (N) would be able to get all factions of the TTP to the negotiating table and whether all stakeholders will support such a move remains to be seen. However, this would most likely create further divisions in Pakistani society.

Another challenge is the increasing energy shortage, especially of electricity and gas, creating problems for the industrial sector and affecting the economic and financial situation of the country, which is already in a dismal condition. In the next few months,

Pakistan has to pay its loan installment. It is facing an increasing fiscal deficit, an extremely low tax to GDP ratio of less than 9 percent, and its lowest ever GDP growth at 3.6 percent. Above all, Pakistan's public debt has grown to Rs 14,561 billion. (ca. US\$145 billion)

Regionally, Pakistan's situation is not favorable. Relations with India continue to be in a stalemate. In the past, Sharif has sought to improve Pakistan's relations with India and under his leadership, the bilateral relationship will likely inch towards normalization. However, a breakthrough is impossible until a new government is installed in New Delhi after next year's elections. The India-Pakistan rivalry recently expanded into a new theatre: Afghanistan. And it is in Afghanistan where most of Pakistan's foreign policy challenges lie. In 2014, the U.S. will withdraw from Afghanistan and Pakistan will have to play a significant role in the withdrawal, as Sharif has acknowledged.

However, the PML (N) government's biggest challenge will not be regional or international but the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkwa. PTI has emerged as the majority party in the province and will be forming the government in the province. PTI contested the elections on a platform of

detaching Pakistan from the war on terror; banning drone strikes and performing extensive social and financial reform. After the recent drone strike, Khan challenged Sharif to clearly state his policy on drone strikes and shoot down drones if the U.S. does not quit the operations, an indication that the relationship between the central and provincial government will be complicated in the days ahead.

**CONCLUSIONS:** It is a positive development in Pakistan's political culture that a smooth democratic transition has taken place. However, how this will effect Pakistan's domestic, regional and international relations will largely depend on whether PML (N) and PTI can work together. If PTI follows the same rhetorical stance on which it contested the election, it will not only further complicate the situation in the country, it will also be detrimental for the future of democracy in Pakistan.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Rizwan Zeb is based at the Centre for Muslim States and Societies, University of Western Australia. He is a former visiting scholar at the Foreign policy program, Brookings Institution and a Benjamin Meaker visiting Professor, University of Bristol, UK.

## FIELD REPORTS

### GEORGIAN SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN

*Eka Janashia*

The death of seven Georgian soldiers in Helmand province of Afghanistan on June 6 gave rise to diverse concerns among the Georgian public. Some Georgians think the price the country has to pay for NATO integration is extremely high while others point to the growing risks beyond the incident in Afghanistan, linked to recently released videos declaring a jihad on Georgia.

A suicide bomber identified as Abdul Ghafar from Kandahar province attacked the Georgian military base using a truck loaded with explosives in Helmand Province in the evening of June 6. The assault killed seven and injured nine Georgian servicemen. This was the second truck bomb attack on the Georgian base in Helmand in less than a month. On May 13, a suicide bomber accompanied by a group of insurgents rammed a truck bomb into the same base, killing three Georgians. The Taliban has assumed responsibility for both attacks.

A day before the most recent event, a person named Hammad Zaman uploaded a video on YouTube video titled “Taliban Jihad against Georgian troops in Afghanistan,” showing images of “punished Georgian crusaders”

who died during the mission. A man’s voiceover in English pledges that the families of killed soldiers will share the same fate. “We will come to Georgia and we will take revenge,” a voice says. Another video, which has already disappeared from the internet, focused on president Saakashvili personally, depicting him as a bloodthirsty and cowardly dictator who acted against Georgia’s national interest by sending troops to Afghanistan. Showing images of the August 2008 war and a well-known episode in which Saakashvili chews his tie, a man’s voice narrates that Georgia had been a prosperous country before Saakashvili came to power.

It later became known that this video footage was posted from Georgia. On June 7, Interior Minister Irakli Gharibashvili stated that a probe was underway to explore the source of the video. “Our foreign partners are actively helping us,” he said.

The videos triggered suspicions among experts and ordinary citizens due to their political content, which is otherwise unusual in Taliban video postings. The NATO liaison officer in Georgia, William Lahue,

said that “at this stage, experts believe that this is only a part of propaganda and it does not come from Afghanistan.”

Most Georgian specialists also agree that the features and editing style of the videos indicate that they were prepared by a professional media group and have nothing to do with the Taliban.

Meanwhile, The New York Times, quoting an elder from Landy Nawa in the north of Helmand province, wrote on June 7 that Georgian troops were not welcomed by local Afghans as they were frequently abused and arbitrarily searched by Georgian servicemen. “Georgians are like our warlords, they don’t behave well with people,” the elder said.

Rejecting the report, Brigadier General Vakhtang Kapanadze said in the Talk Show Accents on Georgian public TV that each Georgian serviceman was acting fully in line with local customs and rules of engagement and termed the report an “aggregation of foolishness.”

The fact that the attack on the Georgian base and the video postings occurred almost simultaneously can of course be a coincidence. However, these circumstances certainly work against Georgia and compromise the strategic benefits of its military presence in Afghanistan.

Another troubling factor is that the number of killed Georgian soldiers in the mission has grown considerably in a very short timeframe, from the May 13 to the June 6 attacks. In the last four years only 20 servicemen died whereas 10 soldiers have now been killed in less than a month.

The Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff of the Georgian Armed Forces Lasha Beridze said in the Talk Show Position on Rustavi 2, that Taliban fighters usually intensify their attacks in late spring or early summer, resulting in the two consecutive attacks on the Georgian base. Nevertheless, this does not completely explain such a dramatic growth in the number of killed soldiers in such a limited period.

President Saakashvili termed the recent developments “extremely alarming” and called a Security Council session. He also blamed the Interior Ministry for delaying the probe which should have determined the origins of the videos. “It is very easy to investigate it,” he said and added that “there is a high probability that these videos have been commissioned and produced in Georgia, by Georgians for concrete political purposes.”

The deaths of soldiers have not yet diminished the strong public support for Georgia’s participation in the ISAF mission. Only around 50 individuals gathered in front of the parliament on June 8, demanding a complete withdrawal of Georgian troops from Afghanistan.

Such a decision, however, would be very costly politically for the country and also lacking a clear rationale, given the fact that from 2014 Georgian troops will not be engaged in combat operations but will work in Afghanistan as trainers or consultants. Whereas a considerable part of society does not doubt the importance of maintaining a contingent in Afghanistan, the government’s inability to prevent such extensive attacks on the Georgian base or provocations at home could change the public attitude.

## TUKMENISTAN-AFGHANISTAN-TAJIKISTAN RAILWAY PROJECT INAUGURATED

*Sergei Medrea*

The inauguration ceremony of the ambitious Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway project took place on June 5, 2013 in Lebap province of Turkmenistan. It marked the official launch of the construction of the 400 kilometer railway that will connect gas-rich Turkmenistan with neighboring Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Tajik president Emomali Rahmon attended the ceremony on the invitation of Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhammedov.

Earlier in March 2013, the three leaders signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the construction of the joint Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway project. The first phase of the railway line, Atamyrat-Imamnazar in Turkmenistan to Andhoi-Akina in Afghanistan, was initially a standalone project. From Andhoi-Akina the railroad is planned to extend further to Mazar-e-Sharif and then to Khulm, also in Afghanistan.

Tajikistan joined the project later. The construction of the railway line from Khulm, Afghanistan to the Tajik border is still under discussion, with at least four different schemes on the table. Officially, Afghanistan wants to extend the railroad line to the city of Kunduz in the north of the country and then continue it to the Afghan-Tajik border. Yet, Tajikistan advocates a direct route from Khulm to the Tajik-Afghan border, which would be 60 kilometers shorter.

There are multiple benefits to the grandiose Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway project. The project is of regional importance. Economically, it will increase investments and the trade turnover among countries in the region. The project will also open bigger markets for domestic products and increase both exports and import levels since it will connect Central Asian countries, via Afghanistan, to South Asian markets, like Pakistan and India. The project will also create many much-needed jobs and significantly improve infrastructure.

The long-term implication is the renewed importance of Afghanistan as a transit country. Greater economic integration may contribute to regional security in this way. At the same time, the lingering doubts regarding the construction and implementation of the Turkmen-Afghan-Tajik railway is the Afghan political situation, the risk of renewed war, drug trafficking and the spread of religious movements. This said, the new railway would end Afghanistan's transportation isolation.

The project would also diversify the transport routes of landlocked Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Tajikistan would benefit tremendously by overcoming its current transportation deadlock and its dependency on Uzbek railroads for transit. Uzbekistan has been blocking the once common Soviet-era railway and uses this transit dependency as leverage for political pressure on

Tajikistan. Relations between the two countries have been strained for an extended period of time. The new railway route will bypass Uzbekistan's Surhondarya region and connect Tajikistan directly to Turkmenistan. Finally, it will allow Tajikistan to import oil products and other important goods without the obstacles imposed by Uzbekistan.

Ironically, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan's largest Central Asian trading partner, recently constructed the middle of the railway project, the Afghan segment connecting Hayraton (the Afghan town opposite Termez, Uzbekistan, across the Amu Darya river) to Mazar-i-Sharif and further to Akina. Hayraton-Mazar-i-Sharif was completed in 2011. Uzbekistan announced that it is considering building an extension of the existing line to the new Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan route. This again demonstrates the interconnection between Central Asian countries, despite their poor bilateral relations as in the case of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The new railway project demonstrates awareness on part of these

actors that they need each other to fruitfully coexist and develop on a faster pace.

The estimated cost of the planned 400 kilometer railway project is US\$ 1.5-2 billion. Gas-rich Turkmenistan is financially secure and is the driving force behind the project. Turkmenistan plans to finance the construction of the segment in its territory independently, though it will seek external funding for other infrastructure. Depending on the availability of funds, Turkmenistan also offered to build a 35 kilometer rail from the Turkmen-Afghan border to the Afghan town of Andhoi. Tajikistan and Afghanistan will in turn have to seek additional funding in order to realize the ambitious project. The obvious funding sources are the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and Japan. But the countries could also request funding from China, which would benefit from the railway's new access to mining resources in Afghanistan and a shorter route to Central Asian markets.

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## ARMENIA'S PRESIDENT FACES A DIFFICULT SECOND TERM

*Haroutiun Khachatryan*

Armenia's President Serzh Sargsyan, who officially won the presidential elections held on February 18, gained another five-year term in office. At the same time, his party has a safe majority in the parliament. Sargsyan thus has a good chance of fulfilling his programs aimed at improving Armenia's competitiveness. This is even more

important given the fact that Sargsyan has managed to tackle many of the domestic political problems Armenia has faced since 2008. However, during the second term he will face a range of serious challenges in several areas.

Armenia's domestic political situation has changed since 2008. Many of the previous challenges are now either resolved, or are less acute. In 2008, many supporters of former President Levon Ter-Petrosian, who was then Sargsyan's main rival, were in jail. These prisoners are now released and many of them participated in the parliamentary elections of May 6, 2012, and established the HAK faction in the National Assembly. Although the HAK faction declares the removal of Sargsyan to be a principal goal, the problem of the tragic events of March 1, 2008, when ten people were killed, is not as acute as it was previously.

The latest elections in Armenia have been conducted in an orderly fashion, despite minor technical problems. This was especially evident after the Yerevan municipal elections on May 5, 2013, when the results were recalculated in more than one third of electoral constituencies at the request of opposition parties. Thus, the elections have been competitive and previous problems such as vote buying and ballot-stuffing did not play a significant role. This is an important change since Armenia's elections since the mid-1990s have been accompanied by opposition complaints of election fraud. It also demonstrates that Sargsyan enjoys solid political support in Armenia, as his Republican Party (RP) alone holds 69 seats in 131-seat Parliament.

The Prosperous Armenia party (PAP), formerly a coalition partner of Sargsyan's RP, did not fulfill the agreement signed on February 17, 2011, according to which the three coalition parties would support Sargsyan in the 2013 presidential elections.

While this did not prevent Sargsyan from winning, it opened the possibility of PAP becoming an independent player. As for the parties currently considering themselves to be in opposition, they are very weak.

In parallel, the government under Prime Minister Tigran Sargsyan was reappointed almost without changes.

The problems Sargsyan faces in 2013-2018 are generally not new to Armenia, although certain specific political challenges may emerge, including the possibility that the HAK party could force the RP to investigate the events of March 1, 2008. In addition, PAP and the Country of Law party, which remains in coalition with RP, could separate from RP and become individual players. This is despite the fact that PAP terms itself an "alternative" party rather than opposition. Also, splits could emerge within the RP itself.

Economic challenges are numerous and are mostly addressed in a program recently presented by the government to the parliament, whose tasks largely echo the previous program approved by the National Assembly last June. Yet, the new document has more specific features, including an estimated growth of annual GDP by 5-7 percent, and a target of 7 percent growth for 2013. This is a very high estimation value compared to most Western countries.

In addition, poverty will be reduced by 8-10 percentage points in response to a corresponding increase in 2009 due to the global economic crisis; a new block will be built for Armenia's nuclear power plant, a project that is far behind schedule due to the

incident of March 2012 in Fukushima, Japan. Armenia still has ambitions to become a regional energy hub. Also, Armenia will soon issue its first Eurobonds, and will implement a cumulative pension system next year.

Armenia also faces a set of external challenges, most of which have existed since Armenia's independence. Nagorno-Karabakh remains a constant source of tension between Armenia and neighboring Azerbaijan, which considers Armenia itself, not the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, to be its main opponent. Armenia maintains that the status of Nagorno-Karabakh must be determined by negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group and no breakthrough is foreseen to this problem in the near future.

Armenia also needs to balance the interests of Russia, Armenia's political and military ally, and of Western partners. In particular,

Armenia is a relatively successful member of the EU Eastern Partnership initiative. Armenia has so far managed to accommodate the expectations of these partners, but their interests could be subject to change. Turkey keeps its border with Armenia closed in solidarity with Azerbaijan and no changes are expected on this issue until 2015, marking the highly sensitive hundredth anniversary of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire.

More recent issues problems include the civil war in Syria, where Armenia may have to address the interests of Armenians residing in the country, and future relations with Iran in the aftermath of its June 14 presidential election.

Armenia thus faces a broad range of issues during Sargsyan's second term as president in 2013-2018, most of which are beyond Yerevan's control. Hence, the small country may face a difficult period in the years ahead.

## HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE SCHEDULED TO REVIEW KYRGYZSTAN

*Aigul Kasymova*

The 108th Session of the UN Human Rights Committee is scheduled to take place July 8-26, 2013 in Geneva, Switzerland. During the session, the committee will review Kyrgyzstan, where the human rights situation has changed significantly since its last review 13 years ago. Kyrgyzstan has experienced two revolutions leading to the overthrow of two governments and the establishment of a Parliamentary system, and a violent inter-ethnic conflict between

ethnic Kyrgyz and the Uzbek minority in southern Kyrgyzstan in the summer of 2010. The session will also review two other post-Soviet states, Ukraine and Tajikistan. The last review of Kyrgyzstan by the UN Human Rights Committee took place in July 2000 during its 69th session in Geneva.

On April 26, 2013, Human Rights Watch submitted recommendations on Kyrgyzstan to the UN Human Rights Committee in



advance of a Pre-Sessional Review of the country. As stated in the Memorandum, torture and ill-treatment in places of detention remains a persistent problem throughout Kyrgyzstan. Perpetrators of violent acts frequently go unpunished despite the fact that the government has enforced necessary reforms of the criminal code in adherence to international standards on the prevention of torture and ill-treatment and new legislation has been adopted. Kyrgyzstan ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) on December 29, 2008.

In December of 2011, Kyrgyzstan hosted a UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan E. Mendez. At the end of his mission, Mendez advised the Kyrgyz government to urgently prevent abuse, torture and ill-treatment. Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur urged the government to put a stop to impunity by making sure that perpetrators are punished accordingly by the law. One of the main concerns of the Special Rapporteur dealt with the fact that there is a serious lack of proper, sufficient and impartial investigation into accusations of torture and ill-treatment, especially when it comes to effective investigation and prosecution of law enforcement officials.

Concerns over torture and ill-treatment in Kyrgyzstan are not new. In 2007 the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the Kyrgyz human rights organization Kylym Shamy expressed concern over suspected use of torture by law enforcement officials in Kyrgyzstan. Both

organizations stated that law enforcement officials in the northern city of Naryn were suspected of torturing at least three detainees to death.

According to the Human Rights Watch report, torture and arbitrary detention continues to be a problem in Kyrgyzstan. In August 2011, Human Rights Watch stated that an ethnic Uzbek died two days after his release after being tortured by the police in southern Kyrgyzstan. According to the U.S. Department of State 2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Kyrgyz Republic which was published in April 2013, at least one person died while in detention in southern Kyrgyzstan. Following the death of the victim, the Prosecutor's Office began a criminal investigation into the incident and two police officers were suspended on the order of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The report furthermore states that despite the fact that at least five persons died in detention in 2011 and investigation and trials followed in certain cases, no law enforcement official has been punished for these acts.

Arbitrary arrests and detention greatly increased after the inter-ethnic conflict in 2010, despite being prohibited by law. Both local and international human rights organizations have recorded cases where law enforcement officials used the ethnic clashes of June 2010 in order to extract money from ethnic Uzbeks. The police officers would threaten ethnic Uzbeks to either pay the requested amount or be charged with involvement in the conflict. Despite repeated arbitrary arrests, most cases went unreported. Certain human rights activist

argue that victims see no point in reporting these arrests as the perpetrators are unlikely to be punished and it could lead to further arrest and abuse of the victims.

Despite the enforcement of necessary reforms in the criminal code and new legislation to prevent torture and ill-treatment by the Kyrgyz government, the reality remains very different. Even when cases of torture and ill-treatment by law

enforcement officials make it to court, frequent delays in trials and failure to present proper evidence leaves little hope for victims to obtain rulings in their favor. For example, on April 18, 2013, court hearings in Bishkek of police officers accused of torture of a female accused of abducting two children were postponed due to the medical conditions of the defendants. The hearing has been rescheduled three times for various reasons.