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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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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.

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A DEAL AT LAST: A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR AZERBAIJANI GAS IN EUROPE?

Samuel Lussac

The gas negotiations between Azerbaijan and Turkey finally seem to have come to an end. According to a statement made by the Turkish Energy Minister Tamer Yildiz on April 27, 2010, Ankara and Baku have agreed on the amount and the price for the sale of Azerbaijani gas to Turkey. Such a deal not only paves the way for further progress in gas pipeline projects between the Caspian and Europe, it also provides for a warming of Azerbaijani-Turkish relations after the tensions arising from the signature of the Turkish-Armenian Protocols in October 2009.

BACKGROUND: In March 2001, Ankara and the Shah Deniz consortium signed a purchase and sale contract for the delivery of 6.6 billion cubic meters (bcm) a year of Azerbaijani gas beginning in 2007. This gas comes from the Shah Deniz field, which is the most important gas field in Azerbaijan. It is operated technically by the London-based company BP and commercially by Norwegian Statoil. The other shareholders are Azerbaijan's SOCAR, Russia's Lukoil, Iran's NIGC, and the Paris-based Total.

The contract signed in March 2001 only dealt with the first phase of production at Shah Deniz. The gas price agreed was US\$ 123 per thousand cubic meters (tcm). There are two main explanations for this fairly low price. First, it was calculated on the basis of the price Russia then paid for Turkmen gas since in 2001, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan were competing to supply the Turkish gas market and the price was the result of relatively short negotiations. The Shah Deniz shareholders were concerned over the Turkish law on the Natural Gas Market that was supposed to enter into force in spring 2001. According to this law, BOTAS would no longer be allowed to import foreign natural gas. The two main negotiators – BP and

Statoil – were thus willing to find an agreement before this law was passed.

However, in order to make this low price more acceptable, it was agreed that it would be renegotiated one year after the start of gas deliveries to Turkey. In April 2008, BOTAS and SOCAR thus started to discuss a new price. But the Azerbaijanis insisted on negotiating a package deal rather than pricing alone. This package was composed of the Turkish purchasing price for the gas from both Shah Deniz Phase 1 and Shah Deniz Phase 2 and of the fee Ankara would pay Baku for the transit of Azerbaijani gas through Turkey. Such a mix of issues did not help moving forward in the negotiations. Until spring 2009, Turkish Energy Minister Hilmi Güler rejected discussions about any transit fee for Azerbaijani gas. He insisted that Turkey should buy all this gas and sell it to Europe, according to a price decided by Ankara. Such a deal was unacceptable for Baku and the negotiations reached a deadlock.

In May 2009, the replacement of Hilmi Güler by Tamer Yildiz was warmly welcomed in Azerbaijan. But at this time, another issue blocked the negotiations: the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement. In October 2009, Ankara and Yerevan signed two diplomatic



(BP)

protocols, indicating plans to reopen the borders between their two countries. Turkey's mere consideration of this issue was outrageous for Azerbaijan, as the border was closed in 1993 as an act of support to Baku in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. The commercial gas negotiations between BOTAS and SOCAR then became highly political and in December 2009, SOCAR rejected a Turkish proposal, which both BOTAS and the Shah Deniz shareholders found acceptable.

IMPLICATIONS: To accept any Turkish proposal, Baku was waiting for two important moves. First, it wanted to be sure Turkey would not open its border with Armenia. This was ensured after Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan several times asserted Turkey's commitment not to open this border before a withdrawal of Armenian troops from occupied territories in Azerbaijan. Second, Baku closely monitored the attitude of the U.S. administration, and especially whether President Obama would avoid using the word 'genocide' in his April 24

speech for the commemoration of massacres of Armenians in Turkey in 1915. As neither an opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, nor an official U.S. recognition of the 1915 massacres as genocide took place, an agreement could be found between BOTAS and SOCAR.

Such a deal was announced on April 27. On the one hand, BOTAS has agreed to pay around US\$ 360 per

tcm of Azerbaijani gas, i.e. a price in accordance with European ones. On the other hand, SOCAR has accepted a lower transit fee than originally expected. This compromise demonstrates that both parties know the importance of Azerbaijani gas flows through Turkey to Europe. Despite the start of gas deliveries to Russia in January 2010, Baku was not willing to sell all its gas to Russia. It did not want to re-establish a dependency it had rid itself of with difficulty in the early 2000s. Sending gas from Georgia to Bulgaria and Romania was another option considered but SOCAR knew it would be commercially viable only for small volumes (around 2 bcm a year). Therefore the only credible option to sell gas to Europe is to go through Turkey. Meanwhile, Ankara was aware that if it wanted to ensure its position as a transit point for gas deliveries to Europe, it needed to achieve a deal with Baku. When accomplished, Turkey will establish a key position for itself European energy markets.

Indeed, Turkey is at the cornerstone of the European-backed Southern Corridor, composed of four gas pipeline projects: the Interconnection Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI), Nabucco, the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and White Stream. Only the latter does not cross Turkey. The three others start in Turkey and were anxiously waiting for a deal to be found between Baku and Ankara. At least legally, they are well advanced. For instance, intergovernmental agreements have been signed for ITGI and Nabucco. The only main question that remains to be addressed relates to the gas supplies for the pipelines. Without Azerbaijan, none of them would ever be viable. Once an agreement between Ankara and Baku would be signed, the shareholders in these projects would start negotiating with SOCAR to increase Azerbaijani gas supplies to Europe.

Politically speaking, this deal suggest Azerbaijan's increasingly prominent position of leadership in the South Caucasus. SOCAR is turning into a flagship oil and gas company not only in Georgia but also in Turkey and in the Eastern part of the European Union. In the recent gas discussions, SOCAR was representing the Shah Deniz consortium and is negotiating directly with BOTAS. Such a format was fairly new, especially compared to 2001 when SOCAR was only consulted in the gas discussions between BP, Statoil and BOTAS. Moreover, despite strong European and U.S. pressure, Azerbaijani president Aliyev has rejected to disconnect the Turkish-Armenian rapprochement and the Azerbaijani-Turkish gas negotiations. He has thus demonstrated the ability of Azerbaijan to resist international pressure.

CONCLUSIONS: After two years of tough negotiations, Azerbaijan and Turkey have

finally found an agreement on the sale and transit of Azerbaijani gas to and through Turkey. This deal is a breakthrough in the implementation of the European-backed Southern Corridor project, aiming at diversifying gas supplies to Europe. A legal framework will now exist for the delivery of Caspian gas to Europe.

In the meantime, this agreement highlights the warming of the relationship between Baku and Ankara. After the signature of the Turkish-Armenian Protocols last October, relations between the two countries deteriorated, raising new concerns about stability in the South Caucasus. While relations between the main negotiators of BOTAS and SOCAR remain poor, Prime Minister Erdogan and President Aliyev have made efforts to rebuild confidence between their two countries.

This agreement amounts to a win-win situation. Brussels would be satisfied with the final resolution of negotiations that have raised concerns about the feasibility of the Southern Corridor. Moreover, Azerbaijan and Turkey can assert their key positions within the project. The only losers in this game is Armenia, and in the very short term, the U.S. administration. Hopes for a Turkish-Armenian normalization now seem to be dying; but the responsibility for this failure also lays with the Armenian and Turkish leaders who failed to ratify the Protocols. Washington's sole focus on this issue to the detriment of other South Caucasian matters has damaged its credibility as an honest broker in the region, especially regarding energy.

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BAKIYEV, THE SECURITY STRUCTURES, AND THE APRIL 7 VIOLENCE IN KYRGYZSTAN

Erica Marat

Why did the unrest in Kyrgyzstan turn so violent? The violence on April 7 stands in bright contrast to the Tulip revolution of 2005. In fact, the vast majority of the victims were shot dead by foreign snipers dispatched on the rooftop of a government building in central Bishkek. They were allegedly hired by president Kurmanbek Bakiyev's brother Zhanysh. In the past five years Zhanysh played a key role in increasing the involvement of the security services in politics to protect the regime. To understand why the riots turned violent, one needs to examine the ways in which the Bakiyev regime became increasingly reliant on the security structures.

BACKGROUND: “The victims were shot in the chest, head, and neck”, say doctors who treated injured rioters on the night of April 7. “No one in the Kyrgyz military is trained to shoot from such a distance with such precision”, argues Ruslan Isakov, a former official in the Kyrgyz security structures. The scale of violence was unprecedented for Kyrgyzstan: 85 people died and over 1,000 were injured. A week after the riots, hundreds of Bishkek residents still pass by the central square where the shooting took place. Portraits of mostly young men hang on the fence protecting government headquarters’ building. A crooked signboard warning “No trespassing on government property, weapons will be used” is still attached to the building’s gates. There is hardly a place in Bishkek where the recent events are not discussed. While locals blame Bakiyev for his ruthlessness, many fear the changes will not bring about any visible progress.

The snipers were allegedly hired by Zhanysh Bakiyev specifically to suppress riots. But even President Bakiyev’s strongest critics think Bakiyev underestimated the people’s anger with his regime and relied too much on the support of the security structures. “He thought that he

could scare the public by killing one or two protesters, but bullets only invigorated the rioters”, says a Bishkek dweller who was at the central square during the riots. In effect, by relying on the support of the security structures, Bakiyev increasingly distanced himself from the public, in the false belief that he was invincible.

Over the past two years, Bakiyev implemented swift changes in the security structures. He replaced all power ministers, appointing his most loyal supporters and relatives to key positions. Zhanysh headed the National Security Service. However, he *de facto* exercised direct control over all military institutions and security services. Being a military officer himself, he was granted enormous political power. Under his patronage, the national army was allowed to intervene in domestic politics, the U.S.-funded Drugs Control Agency was dissolved, and a special armed unit was created to protect top government officials. Finally, Zhanysh is believed to have plotted the assassination of regime opponents, including the former head of the president’s administration Medet Sadyrkulov and Gennady Pavluk, a journalist. As a result of his intervention in politics, drug trafficking was

largely controlled by government officials, while opposition leaders and journalists were constantly threatened with physical attacks.

Such pervasive intervention of security officials in the political space marked a shift in Kyrgyzstan from the Soviet type of civil-military relations it had inherited, in which the military was a strong power, yet submissive to political control. Most other former Soviet states kept the military outside the political decision-making process. Under Bakiyev, however, the regime increasingly relied on the support of the military, and specifically of the security services that increasingly asserted control over military structures. Zhanysh was turning more and more independent in his position and there were signs that he would likely be the one to take political decisions at emergency situations such as mass demonstrations or natural disasters.

These predictions were confirmed on April 7 as police was dispatched to central Bishkek and ordered to shoot at protestors. According to current provisional government members, most rioters knew that they would be confronted by real bullets, not simply teargas or rubber bullets. Yet, most believed that the regime would dispatch local troops and police forces, which might not be willing to shoot at fellow citizens. No one expected that foreign snipers would be involved.

The protestors were mostly young to middle age men from Bishkek and its outskirts. They joined the riots after learning of the mass protests that took place in Talas city a day earlier – when a group of demonstrators were able to capture a local government building. All opposition leaders were arrested shortly after the Talas unrest. Since there was no one to coordinate the protests on April 7, the rioters acted chaotically, becoming ever angrier after

seeing they were confronted by real bullets. “I saw Kyrgyz men acting like in a real war, trying to shoot in the direction where the snipers were located and trying to help those wounded”, said one of the witnesses of the riots. A number of protestors possessed guns taken earlier from the police forces. Stocks of stones were also brought to the central square before the riots began. At this point, however, it remains unclear who directed the shipment of stones and whether weapons were seized from the police under any specific opposition leader’s command.

IMPLICATIONS: The provisional government is likely to disband most of Zhanysh Bakiyev’s changes. The new government issued a warrant for Zhanysh’s arrest, along with Bakiyev’s sons Maksim and Marat. Reports suggest that the new leadership in Bishkek will disband the National Security Service and the special agency to protect the national elite.

Importantly, unlike the police, Kyrgyzstan’s army never genuinely recognized Bakiyev’s authority. This is partly due to the still powerful Soviet tradition that restricts the army from intervening in domestic affairs. Armed forces remained at their places of permanent deployment when the riots turned violent. They also abandoned Bakiyev abruptly as Ismail Isakov, a former Defense Minister (re-appointed to the position after April 7), was released from prison. He was arrested by Bakiyev in early 2009 on fabricated corruption charges. Because he could not fully rely on the armed forces, Zhanysh had to rely on more cruel and shrewd ways of suppressing mass riots such as hiring foreign snipers.

After gaining the support of the military on April 8, leaders of the provisional government were considerably empowered. Ironically, at

this point the provisional government came to be based inside the Defense Ministry building, as all other major government buildings were looted shortly after the riots. Isakov was instantly appointed to head the defense ministry. During his service as Defense Minister in the Bakiyev government, he initiated sound reforms of the military, prioritizing the social needs of the military and promoting a semi-professional army. Importantly, he is strictly against military involvement in politics. Isakov was able to gain a strong positive reputation within the military, and was treated with respect and dignity by prison staff while imprisoned. Isakov is also among the few members of the provisional government who favors a presence of the U.S. Transit Center at the Manas airport.

Overall, Kyrgyzstan's provisional government has been moving steadfast in overturning Bakiyev's most illiberal decisions. This includes canceling the privatization of national hydropower sites, invalidating recent increases of electricity tariffs and extra charges for mobile communication, allowing the broadcast of Radio Free Europe and entry for foreign nationals who were previously banned from visiting Kyrgyzstan. It remains to be seen whether this positive trend continues. Some members of the provisional government clearly lack strategic thinking and are unable to even use appropriate terminology to describe democratic reform. While Kyrgyzstan's armed forces are currently in good hands, Isakov's efforts might potentially be challenged if the provisional government splits into competing factions. It is still unclear who will eventually

head the new government after the constitution is changed. Not everyone in the provisional government is ready to call Roza Otunbayeva their long-term leader.

CONCLUSIONS: Kyrgyzstan experienced a heavy intervention of the security services into public life, which in turn sought to assert control over the military. Bakiyev relied on the power of the security services to secure the continuity of his regime. But he lost control over some of the actions of his brother Zhanysh, which eventually led to unprecedented violence in the country. The current Defense Minister is perhaps best placed to overturn most of Bakiyev's destructive reforms. But the success with which democratic control over the country's armed forces and security structures will be established depends on the overall efficiency of the government. For now, the April 7 bloodbath in Bishkek serves as a powerful demonstration of the potential consequences of military intervention in politics. It is up to the new leaders to prevent further outbreaks of violence.

The international community should learn from the experience of Kyrgyzstan that overall security sector reform across the former Soviet space remains a key priority. Indeed, similar outbreaks of violence between civilians and security structures remains a distinct threat across the Central Asian region, as well as other parts of the post-Soviet space.

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AS WASHINGTON LOOKS TO YEREVAN, BAKU LOOKS ELSEWHERE

Tomas Zirve

In Azerbaijan, President Obama's sweeping and gesturing foreign policy has come unstuck. The White House's actions have concerned Baku so severely that Azerbaijan is looking to further hedge its already finely balanced international relationships. The last two years, which have witnessed the specter of Russian military intervention and the return of terrorism to the North Caucasus, mean that America's need for dependable allies in the broader region will likely increase. Washington's current treatment of Baku, and Azerbaijan's resulting search for other friends, will make this more difficult than is currently blithely assumed.

BACKGROUND: Recent U.S. engagement with Azerbaijan has been ill-considered and, too often, clumsy. Sober *realpolitik* induced by the unbalanced U.S. regional approach is encouraging the Government of Azerbaijan to look beyond Washington. The lessons of the August 2008 War in Georgia are clear – in the Caucasus, America increasingly seems to be a fair weather friend.

The Obama administration has given President Aliyev few reasons to allay such concerns. One incident is particularly revealing. In February 2009 David Plouffe, Obama's chief campaign strategist, visited Baku. In the course of his trip, Plouffe spoke to the Association for Civil Society Development in Azerbaijan (later alleged by Radio Free Europe of being one of the regime's mouthpieces) and also met with President Aliyev and Speaker of Parliament Asadov. However, when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Plouffe intended to give away his US\$ 50,000 speaking fee to pro-democracy groups, this began to unravel. Plouffe claimed that he was not in full possession of facts surrounding the funding of the

Association. White House spokesman Robert Gibbs intervened to state that Plouffe was travelling as a private citizen, asserting that if President Obama wished to make contact with President Aliyev, he would simply pick up the telephone. Interestingly, it would seem that the President has still not done so.

The damage caused by this poorly conceived trip can be seen at an everyday level. Rumors are currently circulating within Washington's beltway that the Government of Azerbaijan is engaging non-U.S. political consultants and



(David Plouffe)



2010

(Trend News / Reuters)

secretary. This is a message which will not have been lost in translation. As the Obama administration has yet to appoint an ambassador to Azerbaijan, the error is compounded. This vacancy is made even more glaring by the fact that the U.S. is one of the co-chairs of the Minsk process. The message is increasingly conspicuous – Baku is not a priority on the Potomac.

public relations practitioners to manage its international image and election campaigns. The shift in its international focus which this development seems to indicate should be troubling. While Washington will always matter to Azerbaijan, necessity drives foreign relations. Baku's turn to European capitals, when factored into its improving relations with Russia, should set alarm bells ringing.

Even diplomatic relations have suffered. The February 2010 visit by William Burns, under-secretary of state for political affairs, saw Azerbaijan praised for supporting the U.S. in Afghanistan. Burns also mentioned the BTC pipeline's help in circumventing Russian transit routes and, unlike both Plouffe and Gibbs, encouraged the Aliyev regime to move towards democracy without directly insulting the Azerbaijani Government. Despite this, Burns' somewhat ineffectual posturing stands in contrast to the approach of the Bush administration. In the course of his 2008 visit, Vice-President Dick Cheney assured Baku that the two countries had "many interests in common". While words matter, actions matter more – the appearance of an American Vice-President in Baku trumps that of an under-

IMPLICATIONS: The wider canvas of U.S. policy in the region endorses this conclusion. The Obama administration's relentless focus on Turkey and Armenia has left Azerbaijan smarting. The first move made by Washington towards a Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, in which the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh was neatly sidestepped, was deeply troubling for Baku. It provided a double insult – not only was the failure to deal with the question of the occupied territory problematic, but the implication of a Washington-led push to reshape the nature of Turkish relations in the Caucasus (which by inference meant a downgrading of Ankara's relationship with Azerbaijan) was taken very seriously.

Fazail Agamali, a member of Azerbaijan's Milli Majlis, observed that America's "efforts aimed at Armenian-Turkish reconciliation failed without taking into account Azerbaijan's position on the Karabakh issue ... The U.S. is trying to push resolution of the Karabakh conflict into the background".

Things have not improved with time. The deleterious effects on America's relationship with Turkey of the administration's failure to prevent the passage of House Resolution 252 are

clear. Less widely acknowledged has been the reaction in Azerbaijan. From Baku, where the memory of the Khojaly massacre is strong, this seems ample evidence of American double standards. To borrow from Tip O'Neill, this is yet more proof that under this administration 'all politics is local'. As a Senator, President Obama spoke in support of formal U.S. recognition of the 1915 massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman empire as genocide, and co-signed a letter to then President Bush asking for this acknowledgment. The one million refugees created by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have no such powerful supporters. Amidst the furor in Washington over the Armenian genocide question, few have noticed the debilitating repercussions in Baku and the wider region.

The implications for America's ability to project influence and power in the South Caucasus are serious. Azerbaijan's natural gas supplies, with their remarkable ability to encourage European diversification of energy supply, and the country's willingness to serve alongside America in its theatres of conflict should not be overlooked. Recent developments indicate that it would be presumptuous to assume that this support can be depended on indefinitely. Given Azerbaijan's improving relations with Moscow, there is a very real chance for American interests to be badly hurt in the region. This is not yet inevitable.

CONCLUSIONS: Not everybody is looking the other way. This March Congressmen Shuster, Conaway, Burton, Coble, Rehberg, Ortiz, McMahon, Boozman, Ryan and Congresswoman Myrick wrote to President Obama outlining the importance of U.S.-Azerbaijani relations. It would be wise for the White House to pay attention. While this administration may feel that it has the ability to treat allies poorly, confident in America's enduring authority, it is taking unwarrantable risks. Clearly questions remain over the state of democracy and power of the executive in the energy-rich country. However, embarrassing and ignoring an ally in such a vital strategic region makes for poor policy. In the last fortnight President Aliyev implicitly criticized Washington on Azerbaijani national television. Presidential Advisor Novruz Mammadov has been more explicit, arguing in an article for Radio Free Europe that American regional policy is redundant without an engaged Azerbaijan. The subtext is clear - Azerbaijan cares what Washington thinks, but is tired of being insulted. It is vital for Washington's ongoing regional interests that it re-casts this relationship in terms which strengthen, rather than weaken, ties between the two nations.

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INDIA SEEKS TO RE-ENTER NEW IRAN-PAKISTAN GAS DEAL

Robert M Cutler

Last month, after years of on-again, off-again negotiations, Iran and Pakistan signed an agreement for a bilateral natural gas pipeline to be sourced from the South Pars deposit. India has since asked to reopen negotiations, from which it had earlier withdrawn, to make the project trilateral. While pricing issues between Iran and Pakistan appear to be resolved, questions about pipeline security in Pakistan, pricing with India, and the role or non-role of China, are only three of the sets of problems still awaiting resolution.

BACKGROUND: The idea of exporting gas from Iran to India was first discussed by the two countries in 1993, when Indian relations with Pakistan ruled a tripartite arrangement out of the question. Russia's Gazprom would have been involved in constructing an underwater pipeline, but costs proved to be prohibitive. Following this, the possibility of including Pakistan was introduced. In 2001, Iran reportedly offered Pakistan US\$ 8 billion in transit fees over a 30-year period for such a three-way pipeline, which would run little more than half the distance from New York to Los Angeles, and which was then estimated to cost US\$ 5 billion.

Negotiations proceeded throughout the decade on a double bilateral basis, i.e. Iran-Pakistan and Iran-India, but never the three talking together. Pricing proved to be a stumbling block in both sets of bilateral talks. In 2006, the Indian petroleum minister stated that Iran wanted India to pay LNG (liquefied natural gas) rates for regular natural gas and without discounts for large-quantity purchases. Pakistan, which heavily subsidizes the domestic price of gas and also prospects for natural gas on its own territory, sought the right not to consume quantities it contracted to buy from Iran if these proved unnecessary to satisfy demand.

After India withdrew from the trilateral project in 2008, China has indicated an interest in expanding the bilateral Iran-Pakistan project into a trans-Pakistan route to Xinjiang and from there to eastern China. This interest became more solid after Iran and Pakistan agreed a pricing formula in March 2009. According to a bilateral Iran-Pakistan project proposal, the pipeline would begin from Iran's Assalouyeh Energy Zone in the south and stretch over 560 miles to Iranshahr, 120 miles west of the border with Pakistan. Construction would cost \$7.4 billion. The gas would be supplied from the South Pars field, where Russia's Gazprom is a big investor, and the pipeline would have an initial capacity of 22 billion cubic meters per year (bcm/y) that could be expanded to 55 bcm/y, half of which could go to India in the event. The price for Iran's gas to Pakistan would vary between \$260 per thousand cubic meters (tcm) and \$485/tcm as a function of the average price of Japanese customs-cleared (JCC, nicknamed "Japan Crude Cocktail") oil imports.

IMPLICATIONS: The Iran-Pakistan project still encounters difficulties, not least of which is uncertainty over which exact direction the gas might flow once it enters Pakistan. While there was for a long time much talk about a tripartite Iran-Pakistan-India project (which

organizationally never got past the stage of two simultaneous bilateral sets of negotiations between Iran and each of the other two individually), it had long been intended by the parties that a possible variant might be for the gas to go to the Pakistani port of Gwadar, on a small peninsula in the country's southwest at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, there for liquefaction and sea transport to China.

Four years ago, Pakistan's president Pervez Musharraf had offered China the possibility of constructing a pipeline through a corridor running the north-south length of the country. This corridor would have run from Gwadar into Xinjiang, following the path of the Karakoram highway (the highest paved international road in the world) linking Pakistan and China. A railway track was also in the preliminary planning stages. However, not only would the cost of construction have been enormous, but also once in China the oil would have required further transport eastward to the areas where energy demand is highest. In the absence of India's participation in a tripartite gas pipeline from Iran through Pakistan, China bruited the possibility of constructing a gas pipeline running parallel to the projected oil pipeline parallel to the Karakoram Highway.

During the past decade Beijing had helped to construct and develop Gwadar port, which opened at the end of 2008. It had planned to continue the development through constructing an oil refinery there that would have begun by producing 200,000 barrels per day (bpd), a figure later projected to double, sourced from the Persian Gulf countries and sent overland through Pakistan into western China for further eastward transshipment. Late last year, however, China shelved this project, a decision taken followed only a few months after the suspension of work at the Khalifa refinery

project, also in Balochistan, by a United Arab Emirates state company.

Although financial conditions and the global recession were invoked in both instances, the security situation in Balochistan also undoubtedly was a factor. Not only was the integrity of the pipeline running over the territory in question, in view of social unrest in the economically poor province, but also the physical safety of Chinese engineers and workers in particular could not be guaranteed. As presently designed, the gas pipeline project would bring no economic benefits to Balochistan or the people living there.

CONCLUSIONS: In the absence of further Chinese involvement in Gwadar, in either oil or gas, it is now reported that Russia's Gazprom would be involved in constructing the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. This makes sense, since India had earlier approached Gazprom while considering gas imports from Iran bilaterally by an undersea pipeline circumventing Pakistan, and also since Gazprom is heavily invested in the South Pars field from where the natural gas for the pipeline would be sourced.

Yet China's interest in the project is not fully dead, and the route through Pakistan, now planned through Balochistan and Sindh, will be subject to change should Beijing revive its willingness to make an offer. This means that none of the actual feasibility studies or technical surveying has even begun: actual construction, let alone delivery or consumption, cannot begin anytime soon.

The bilateral Iran-Pakistan agreement was signed in Ankara because, according to its own terms, Turkish law will govern it. The need for such a set-up by itself suggests that problems of implementation remain to be resolved: ten years ago, the parties had hoped to be able to

draw up contracts based upon European models to which they had access. From India's standpoint, one of the crucial issues is that it wishes to pay only for the gas that it transports from the border with Pakistan, while Iran wants to charge India for its share of the gas even if India does not receive it due to unforeseen disruption of transit through Pakistan. Against this "take-or-pay" arrangement India had in 2006 proposed a "supply-or-pay" arrangement whereby Iran would be obligated to deliver gas at the Indian border with Pakistan, or else pay for the quantity not delivered.

In the past, India had discovered that the Iranian side sought to reopen negotiations on previously settled points during subsequent rounds of discussions. All these elements, along with disagreements over the quality of the gas

to be imported, account for the final failure of the Iran-India talks two years ago, although some observers also point to the bilateral U.S.-Indian civilian nuclear accord. Further complicating the situation, the two parties disagreed over the quality of the gas to be delivered: India sought to receive gas rich in petrochemicals such as butane, propane and ethane, but Tehran rejected the idea. For these and other reasons, some voices within the Indian foreign policy establishment today argue against such a tripartite arrangement and seek to revive the project from the 1990s for a bilateral undersea pipeline.

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FIELD REPORTS

ARMENIA SUSPENDS RATIFICATION OF PROTOCOLS WITH TURKEY

Haroutiun Khachtrian

On April 22, Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan issued a decree whereby the ratification procedure of the Armenia-Turkey protocols on normalization of relations between the two countries is “suspended”. Accordingly, on April 26, the bill on ratification of these protocols was withdrawn from the agenda of the National Assembly. In a televised message on April 22, Sargsyan declared that this decision was made due to the policy of Turkey “to protract time” aimed at undermining the process of ratifying the protocols “in a reasonable time and without preconditions”, as previously agreed. In an interview with Armenian Public TV on April 26, Armenian foreign minister Edward Nalbandian commented this move as a refusal of Armenia “to continue the process for the sake of process only”.

Armenia is strongly interested in ratifying the protocols and normalizing relations with its mighty western neighbor, and Sargsyan’s move looks like a desperate effort to stimulate the process as he has done several times previously. The two protocols, “On the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations...”, and “On the Development of Relations...” between the two countries, were initiated (i.e., were ready for signing) as early as February 2009, but were kept secret for several months, largely on Turkey’s request. On April 23, 2009, the foreign ministries of the two countries issued a statement about a “road map” for the normalization process. Meanwhile, no progress was made in that process until Serzh Sargsyan stated in August that he would not pay the expected “soccer visit” to Turkey (reciprocal to the visit of the Turkish President Abdullah Gül to

Yerevan on September 6, 2008), unless progress was made in the bilateral relations.

This became a stimulus for making the protocols public on August 31 and signed in Zurich on October 10. However, as the protocols needed ratification by the parliaments of the two countries (evidently a requirement set by Turkey, while Armenia could establish normal relations without the legislature), they have not been enacted so far, with the Turkish side largely responsible for the delay. In particular, Ankara poses preconditions for ratifying the two documents, seeking to condition their ratification on progress in the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia is in conflict over this region with Azerbaijan, a close ally of Turkey. The Turkish government is also under strong pressure from its domestic opposition because normalization with Armenia in accordance with the Zurich protocols may expose the problems of the Armenian massacres of 1915 in the Ottoman empire, which Armenia consider to amount to genocide, as well as the Turkish-Armenian border, which are highly sensitive issues in Turkey.

In a rare display of solidarity, the Turkish-Armenian normalization process is supported by the U.S., Russia and France. All these players share the vision that Turkish-Armenian normalization should not be linked with Nagorno-Karabakh, which is a very complicated process per se and will only complicate the normalization process. In his April 22 address, Sargsyan expressed his gratitude to Nicolas Sarkozy, Barack Obama and Dmitri Medvedev, “as well as our colleagues in a number of

European organizations” for encouraging the process of normalization. The most recent effort in this regard was the U.S.-sponsored meeting between Sargsyan and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Washington D.C. on April 12. The meeting, which lasted 75 minutes, brought no progress and Sargsyan decided to suspend the Armenian part of the normalization process, saying that “the reasonable timeframes [for ratification] have, in our opinion, elapsed”, meaning that one year had passed since the joint statement about the “road map”. This can be considered a response to domestic critics saying that Armenia has made too many concessions and should revoke its signature of the protocols.

Armenia claims the suspension of the ratification process does not mean that the normalization process is over. As Sargsyan put it, “we shall consider moving forward when we are convinced that there is a proper environment in Turkey and there is leadership in Ankara ready to reengage in the normalization process”. The Turkish side also declared its commitment to the normalization as determined by the Zurich protocols. These statements provided for optimistic statements from Washington, Moscow and Paris – the latter in the form of a special letter by President Sarkozy – expressing hopes that the normalization process was

not dead and progress could be reached when appropriate.

There is an apparent heterogeneity in the positions of the Turkish leaders, or at least in their statements. Prime Minister Erdogan is the most categorical in his rhetoric to link the issue of Turkish-Armenian normalization with the Nagorno-Karabakh process, whereas the other leaders are more careful and leave room for maneuver. Sargsyan apparently referred to this in his address: “I express gratitude to President Abdullah Gül of Turkey for the political correctness displayed throughout this period and the positive relationship that has developed between us”.

The process of Armenian-Turkish normalization determined by the two Zurich protocols has hereby stopped, and the deadlock imposed in 1993 by the closure of the common border between these countries may remain indefinitely. Turkey’s leaders were not able to detach their policy toward Armenia from their commitments to Azerbaijan. Baku continues to follow the line that keeping the Turkish-Armenian border closed will force concessions from Armenia on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Further progress in Turkish-Armenian normalization is highly unlikely before the general elections in Turkey next year.

MAEVKA UNREST THREATENS INTER-ETHNIC STABILITY IN KYRGYZSTAN

Joldosh Osmonov

Mass disorder in the Maevka village near Bishkek led to lootings and the death of several people. Attempts by unknown land squatters to illegally seize land that belonged to the ethnic Turks of Maevka resulted in tensions between the titular nation and members of the ethnic minority. A number of attacks on the property and rights of the minority are seen as increasing the risk of violent inter-ethnic conflict, especially in light of the weak

Kyrgyz government. However, some claim this possibility is exaggerated and, in some cases, artificially stirred up.

On April 19, a crowd of ethnic Kyrgyz illegally seized nearly 700 hectares of land near Maevka village that belonged mostly to Meskhetian Turks. Squatters demanded that the Interim Government re-distribute the farm plots among ethnic Kyrgyz and justified their actions by saying that Kyrgyz

land should belong to the Kyrgyz people. Attempts by the land owners, mostly ethnic Turks residing in Maevka, to stop the seizure angered the crowd, eventually led to lootings and attacks on members of the minority and their property. Five people were killed and over 40 injured as a result of the violent night. Dozens of houses were destroyed, and several burned to the ground.

As police intervened, 120 people were detained during the night; however, most of them were released the next day. According to the Bishkek City Police Department, criminal cases were brought against only six detainees on charges of organizing mass disorder.

In light of the government's half-hearted measures, Bishkek residents have re-mobilized into volunteer citizen groups to protect the city and its suburbs, including Maevka, from lootings and attacks. As Bishkek City Council member Marat Sakiev stated, they have managed to gather approximately 5,000 volunteers. Small groups of 20 to 30 volunteers are patrolling the city and its outskirts along with police.

The Interim Government has denied the existence of inter-ethnic tension, saying that the mass disorder was caused by attempts at land seizure. According to the head of the Interim Government, Roza Otunbaeva, there were cases of lootings and disorders; however, they were not directed against the Turkish minority, or any ethnic group. "I was visiting suburbs of the Bishkek and did not see any signs of inter-ethnic tension," she concluded.

Furthermore, the President of the Turkish Diaspora in Kyrgyzstan, Murafidin Sakhimov, said the allegations that the disorders were inter-ethnic clashes are not true. "I would ask people not to interpret the events in Maevka as a conflict based on ethnicity. On that day Turks, Russians, Kyrgyz and other ethnic groups were standing together to protect their village", Sakhimov said.

The Mekshetian Turks were deported from Georgia to Central Asia in 1944. According to estimates, around 20,000 ethnic Turks live in Kyrgyzstan,

most of them residing in the northern part of the country.

Despite the common assumption that the land seizure and subsequent mass disorder were disorganized and spontaneous, some believe it was planned. Turatbek Madylbekov, head of the Bishkek City Police Department, said that the illegal land seizures were organized by the so-called "land mafia," which seeks to gain profits from reselling land: "We think there is an organized land mafia that specializes in land fraud behind these squatters".

It is noteworthy that both prior to and after the Maevka events, outbreaks of inter-ethnic tension were reported in some parts of the country. One incident in Jalalabad oblast in southern Kyrgyzstan raised serious concerns. On April 14, ethnic Uzbeks, Kyrgyzstan's largest ethnic minority, staged a rally of nearly 5,000 people demanding protection of their rights. The rally was precipitated by tensions between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks at a huge public gathering called to support the Interim Government. Uzbek community leaders were not allowed to speak at the gathering. "We are discriminated against. We want our rights to be protected", said one of the leaders of the Uzbek community, Kadyrjan Batyrov, in his interview with one of the local newspapers.

Another incident that followed the Maevka events took place in Alexandrovka village near Bishkek. On April 22, a group of unidentified squatters tried to seize the land of another ethnic minority, Dungans (Han-speaking Muslims). This time, police along with local residents took timely measures, thus making the crowd's attempts unsuccessful. With the growing number of cases of illegal land seizure around the capital city, the head of the Interim Government Otunbaeva has issued a decree allowing law enforcement bodies to use weapons in case of attacks on private property.

Meanwhile, in light of the above-mentioned inter-ethnic tensions, some Russian and local media outlets have started warning viewers about growing anti-Russian sentiment in the country. The Russian

Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Valentin Vlasov, expressed his concerns regarding the rapidly-growing number of ethnic Russians wishing to leave the country as a result.

However, according to some local political experts, Russia is artificially raising this issue to strengthen its position in the country by pushing the Kyrgyz

government to allow an increased Russian military presence. "Indeed, there is no anti-Russian sentiment and this whole 'artificial flurry' around the ostensibly anti-Russian mood in the country is just information warfare", political expert Mars Sariev stated.

WORLD BANK TO ASSESS ROGUN HYDROPOWER PROJECT IN TAJIKISTAN

Alexander Sodiqov

On March 10, the World Bank regional director for Central Asia, Motu Konishi, announced in Dushanbe that the bank has found the funding for carrying out a feasibility study and environmental assessment of the controversial Rogun hydropower station project on the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan. Konishi's statement came almost one year after the bank agreed to finance the study with a particular focus on the potential regional implications of the Rogun dam. It will take 18 months to complete the impact study and, if the project proves financially and environmentally sustainable, Konishi said the World Bank will "assist the Tajik government to create an international consortium to build it." In the meantime, the Tajik government will continue building the dam with the bank monitoring the works.

The World Bank's announcement generated considerable enthusiasm in Tajikistan where the Rogun project has long been regarded as the country's shortcut to energy self-sufficiency and economic development. Government representatives and independent analysts agree that the impact assessment will at the very least encourage evidence-based discussion of the project's environmental implications. According to the Tajik hydropower expert Georgiy Petrov, the study will demonstrate to what extent the downstream countries' concerns about Rogun's impact on the flow and quality of water are justified. "If the

assessment proves that the project has faults, we can modify it accordingly to address such issues", Petrov said. "In any case, this will break the deadlock in our discussion of the project with downstream countries".

Tajikistan's plans to complete the massive Rogun project have long confronted serious opposition from downstream countries, most notably Uzbekistan. Authorities in Tashkent insist that a reservoir behind the Rogun dam will inevitably require increased water withdrawals from the Vakhsh River, thus affecting the flow of water that Uzbekistan needs to irrigate its cotton fields. Uzbekistan is also concerned that the giant power station will degrade water quality in the regional river system. So far, Tashkent has successfully prevented Tajikistan from securing foreign funding for the US\$ 3 to 6 billion project. In addition, Tashkent has recently been blocking Tajik freight trains passing through the Uzbek territory with construction materials, fuel and equipment bound for the Rogun site, causing a major diplomatic row between Tashkent and Dushanbe.

Tajik political analyst Holmamad Samiev argues that the question of Rogun's environmental impact has been overly politicized in Uzbekistan. President Islam Karimov's administration recently amended the election law, reserving 15 seats in the 150-seat lower house of the Uzbek parliament, *Oliy Majlis*,

for the newly established Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan (EMU) which is heavily involved in advocating against the Rogun project and similar undertakings in Kyrgyzstan. In addition, colleges and universities in Uzbek regions bordering on Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have lately organized several rallies against the two countries' hydropower development schemes.

Tashkent has repeatedly stated that its position in respect to the Rogun project is dictated solely by environmental considerations, demanding that the Rogun project undergo an independent international assessment. Hence, many in Tajikistan now view the World Bank financed study as a decisive step in addressing Uzbekistan's concerns. This is why after the meeting with the bank's regional director, Tajik president Emomali Rakhmon promised that the assessment effort will involve a broad group of representatives from different countries, and its results will be made available to all countries in the region.

Alarmed at the growing row between Dushanbe and Tashkent, the international community will be

watching carefully for the study to be as reliable as possible and for its findings to be accepted by both upstream and downstream countries in Central Asia. Visiting Tajikistan on April 6 as part of his tour of the region, U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan "should respect the final outcome of this technical assessment by the World Bank".

However, some analysts argue that even if the study confirms the environmental sustainability of the Rogun project, it is highly unlikely that Uzbekistan will change its stance on the project due to the major political considerations involved. According to Samiev, Tashkent opposes Dushanbe's hydropower development projects because an enhanced ability to regulate water flows through the massive Rogun plant would give Tajikistan considerable leverage over Uzbekistan. Therefore, the environmental assessment of the Rogun scheme might at the end merely lead to a shift in focus from environmental to political issues in the discourse surrounding cross-border water use in Central Asia.

KARIMOV VISITS MOSCOW – A WARMING IN UZBEK-RUSSIAN RELATIONS?

Erkin Akhmadov

On April 19, 2010, President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan arrived to Moscow for a two-day visit. Several observers related the visit to the recent events in Kyrgyzstan, as if Uzbekistan was seeking support of Russia in an unstable situation in the region. However, the visit was planned back in December, but postponed due to the cooling of relations between the two states. The visit had several positive outcomes and shed light on the parties' positions on certain issues; even though some observers argue that no important problems were resolved.

Several documents were signed as a result of the visit. Specifically, the parties signed a program of

cooperation between the two governments in the cultural-humanitarian sphere for the years 2010-2012, and a memorandum of mutual understanding on the implementation of activities in the sphere of military-technical cooperation between the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan for the years 2010-2012.

One of the major issues discussed by the presidents was the current situation in Kyrgyzstan. The presidents agreed that Russia and Uzbekistan want the authorities in Kyrgyzstan to be strong, and the people of Kyrgyzstan to develop and prosper. At the same time, the president of Uzbekistan criticized certain Russian mass media reporting, which stated that the "Uzbek authorities are frightened, while the

Uzbek population is delighted by the deeds of the freedom-loving Kyrgyz people". The Uzbek leader invited everyone to the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border to observe the contrary. Furthermore, President Karimov expressed concerns that the processes in Kyrgyzstan may become uncontrolled, and that unrest may attain a "permanent nature".

The presidents also discussed bilateral trade, which in 2009 amounted to US\$ 4.5 billion, a decrease by one quarter from the previous year. The parties expressed their willingness to expand bilateral trade through new projects and new trade agreements. Russian president Dmitry Medvedev highlighted the possibilities for future closer cooperation in such areas as energy, aircraft construction, processing and chemical industries, telecommunications and transport.

Speaking of cooperation in the cultural sphere, President Medvedev underlined that he "values the position of the Uzbek authorities in relation to the Russian language, which is widely taught in schools and higher educational institutions of the country". In response, President Medvedev proposed broadcasting some Uzbek channels in Russia through satellite television.

In addition, the parties discussed hydro-energy issues in the Central Asian region. Uzbekistan and Russia supported the conduct of an international assessment for evaluating the possible consequences of constructing hydroelectric power stations on trans-boundary rivers in the region.

The presidents of Russia and Uzbekistan expressed their content with the outcomes of the visit, terming it "very substantial and utterly sincere". In spite of this, several significant issues in bilateral relations were not addressed at all during the

meeting. For instance, Tashkent still refuses to admit its debt to Russia, which amounts to US\$ 700 million. Because of this debt, Russia cannot provide Uzbekistan with credits. Another issue of concern for Russia is the refusal of Uzbek banks to exchange the profits made by Russian entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan in national currency into U.S. Dollars or Euros. As a consequence, it is estimated that about US\$ 60-150 million of such profits are frozen in Uzbekistan.

Last but not least, the parties did not discuss Uzbekistan's return to the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Community or joining the Collective Rapid Response Forces under the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Nevertheless, the presidents did emphasize the necessity of strengthening common efforts to fight terrorism, religious extremism and other challenges and threats to regional and international security. Several observers still connect the visit and sudden rapprochement between Uzbekistan and Russia to the recent events in Kyrgyzstan, speculating that these events pose a threat to its neighbors, and that it is therefore in Karimov's interest to consult with Russia. Thus, even though both presidents emphasized that the visit was planned long ahead, it is clear that Kyrgyzstan was one of the major issues on the agenda.

Setting this aspect aside, the effectiveness of the visit should perhaps be assessed on the basis of the countries' longer-term relations. It seems that Uzbekistan and Russia did address some of the current challenges and issues of concern for both states, while many others were left untackled.

NEWS DIGEST

BAKIYEV TO SEND REPRESENTATIVE TO NEGOTIATE WITH INTERIM GOVERNMENT IN JALALABAD

15 April

Ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev will send a representative to hold talks with interim government members in Jalal-Abad. It was earlier reported that he himself would attend the meeting, but now it appears Bakiyev will remain in his home village of Teyit. It is not known who exactly from the provisional government Bakiyev's representative will meet. Meanwhile, Bakiyev blamed the new authorities for thwarting a rally he attended in the southern city of Osh earlier on Thursday where shots were fired. "These authorities are bandits," he said. He also thanked Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko who has called the April 7 events in Bishkek a state coup. (Interfax)

KYRGYZ INTERIM GOVERNMENT TO PROBE OUSTED PRESIDENT'S "CRIMES"

15 April

Kyrgyzstan's interim government promised an investigation "into all the crimes of which the former president [Kurmanbek Bakiyev] is guilty" and said it would demand that Bakiyev, who fled to neighboring Kazakhstan on Thursday, be turned over to either Kyrgyzstan or an international court. "The interim government intends that there has been an agreement to that effect with the mediators who were involved in the deportation of the former president, to carry out an objective investigation, in conformity with our laws and international law, into all the crimes that the former president is guilty of, and, after that, to demand that he be extradited to Kyrgyzstan or turned over to an international court," the head of the interim government, Roza Otunbayeva, said in a statement. "None of the associates and relatives of Bakiyev who have been with him until now have been let out of the country, and those of them who have committed crimes will be arrested and face justice," she said. (Interfax)

INTERIM GOVERNMENT HOPES BAKIYEV'S BROTHER WILL SURRENDER VOLUNTARILY

15 April

Kyrgyzstan's interim government wants to hold talks with President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's brother Zhanybek Bakiyev, who remains in Kyrgyzstan, about his voluntary surrender. "President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has left alone, and his brother Zhanybek and the other members of his family have remained in Jalal-Abad," rights campaigner Tolekan Ismailova, who is now in Jalal-Abad, told Interfax. Representatives of the interim government have gathered for a meeting in Jalal-Abad to discuss the voluntary surrender of the president's brother, who headed the State Bodyguard Service, she said. The interim authorities have started a criminal case against Zhanybek Bakiyev on multiple charges of murder and blamed him for issuing the order to open fire on demonstrators at the square near the government headquarters on April 7. "No special operations will be carried out in Jalal-Abad. The new authorities are hoping Zhanybek Bakiyev will surrender voluntarily," Ismailova said. (Interfax)

KYRGYZSTAN EXTENDS U.S. LEASE OF AIRBASE

16 April

Kyrgyzstan's interim government said it will extend the U.S. lease of a key air base by another year. "Kyrgyzstan is extending by one year the validity of the agreement with the United States over the Manas transit center," Omurbek Tekebayev, the deputy leader of the opposition, was quoted as saying by BBC News. Washington is using the air base in Manas to fly troops and equipment in and out of Afghanistan. After the bloody unrest that ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev last week, the U.S. government had been worried that the opposition would throw the Americans out. The move to keep them in for another year was announced a day after Bakiyev boarded a plane to neighboring Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is chairman of

the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and together with the United States is eager is to stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan. Observers are worried that a civil war could break out between Bakiyev's supporters and the opposition. A country of 5 million in the mountains of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is one of the poorest countries of the former Soviet Union. Unlike its neighbors, Kyrgyzstan has no significant natural resources; more than half of the adult population is unemployed and its political system has been marred by instability and corruption. (UPI)

KAZAKHSTAN TIGHTENS REGULATIONS FOR CIS VISITORS

16 April

The Kazakh Interior Ministry has announced that all citizens from countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) must register with immigration authorities within five days of their arrival, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. The new measure went into effect on April 13. All exemptions previously in force have been abolished. Citizens of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were previously allowed to stay in Kazakhstan without registering for 90 and 30 days, respectively. Those privileges no longer exist. The ministry did not explain why the registration regulations are being tightened. (RFE/RL)

BAKU UNHAPPY WITH U.S. ROLE IN KARABAKH PEACE PROCESS

16 April

The United States has not been making a serious contribution to efforts aimed at resolving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, Azerbaijani presidential administration spokesman Ali Hasanov told journalists on Friday. "The U.S. has not been making any serious attempts as part of the Karabakh settlement process. We have not seen such attempts," Hasanov said. "Society has already started to protest against the participation of the U.S. in the OSCE Minsk Group because it has given nothing to Azerbaijan," the spokesman said. "Instead of making Armenia abandon its occupation policy, the U.S. is trying to help Armenia emerge out of its economic crisis. That is why no one should be reproached for making anti-American remarks," he said. (Interfax)

UZBEKISTAN TIGHTENS SECURITY IN ANDIJON

17 April

Authorities in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijon are imposing stringent security measures on residents in the aftermath of last week's uprising that ousted Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, RFE/RL's Uzbek Service reports. Security officers have been visiting Andijon citizens who have relatives in Kyrgyzstan's Osh and Jalal-Abad regions and asking them about their most recent visit to Kyrgyzstan. Andijon is about 20 kilometers from the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border and 40 kilometers from the Kyrgyz city of Osh. Both lie in the Fergana Valley, which is regarded as a hotbed of social and ethnic tension by the region's governments. Andijon-based human rights activist Saidjahon Zainabiddinov told RFE/RL on April 16 that the city's streets were full of police officers wearing bulletproof vests. He said he was summoned by police and questioned about where he was and what he did in the last several days. Shortly after the 2005 Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan that toppled President Askar Akaev, thousands of people in Andijon held a mass protest that was brutally suppressed by Uzbek security forces. Witnesses said hundreds of peaceful demonstrators were killed, while Uzbek officials say less than 200 were killed, many of them security officers. Hundreds of Uzbeks fled and trials were held to convict alleged agitators whom the government in Tashkent accused of helping foreign elements foment insurrection. (RFE/RL)

BAKIEV LEAVES KAZAKHSTAN

19 April

Mob violence against ethnic Russians broke out in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Monday as overthrown Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev left neighboring Kazakhstan. The Kazakh Foreign Ministry declined to reveal Bakiyev's destination. "According to my information, Bakiyev has left Kazakhstan," the Russian news service RIA Novosti quoted ministry spokesman Askar Abdrakhmanov as saying. "I do not know anything about his current whereabouts." Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said Sunday his country was ready to provide refuge to Bakiyev and his family. It wasn't clear whether the ousted president was accompanied by his family when he left Kazakhstan. Voice of Russia reported people with sticks and torches broke into the Russians' homes in Bishkek and told them to get out of Kyrgyzstan. Similar incidents were

reported in other districts of the country, as well, the network said. Voice of Russia said dozens of production facilities and large cultivated plots of land, owned by Russian businessmen, reportedly had been seized, and shops owned by Turks, Chinese and Jews plundered. Russian Foreign Ministry representative Andrei Nesterenko said Russia was "gravely concerned" about the reports. Nesterenko said the Russian Embassy had strongly urged Kyrgyzstan officials to act quickly to ensure the security of ethnic Russians in Kyrgyzstan. The network said the rioting ceased only after Bishkek's provisional mayor agreed to leave the seized lands in the hands of the new owners. Bakiyev fled Bishkek April 7 when violent protests toppled his government and left more than 80 people dead. He made his way to Kazakhstan Thursday and was reported to have resigned Friday. Bakiyev's younger brother Kanybek said Kurmanbek was unlikely to return to Kyrgyzstan in the next couple of days, RIA Novosti said. The country's interim government has expressed the desire to bring charges against Bakiyev. (UPI)

AFGHAN DEPUTY MAYOR KILLED IN ATTACK

20 April

Unknown gunmen have shot dead a deputy mayor of the southern Afghan city of Kandahar, according to Afghan officials. The Interior Ministry today said that Azizullah Zeyarmal was on his way to a mosque on April 19 when gunmen opened fire on him. Officials said that Zeyarmal died on his way to hospital. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack. The ministry said the attack was carried out "by enemies of Afghanistan," a term often used by Afghan officials to describe Taliban militants. (RFE/RL)

MEDVEDEV ORDERS MILITARY TO TAKE MEASURES TO PROTECT RUSSIANS IN KYRGYZSTAN

20 April

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has ordered Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov to take measures to protect Russian citizens and Russian facilities in Kyrgyzstan due to increasingly frequent violent attempts to seize property in the Central Asian country, the Kremlin said. (Interfax)

OUSTED BAKIYEV SAYS HE'S STILL PRESIDENT

21 April

Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the ousted leader of Kyrgyzstan, said Wednesday he is still president and called the interim government a "gang of impostors." "My people are living through a terrible tragedy. A gang of impostors have declared themselves as the authorities and they are committing outrage," Bakiyev said from Belarus, where he is living in exile, ITAR-Tass reported. "As the president and safeguard of the constitution, I am responsible for the catastrophe. I must stop this catastrophe. I do not recognize my resignation," said Bakiyev, who fled Bishkek April 7 after violent protests toppled his government and left about 85 people dead. He had gone to neighboring Kazakhstan and arrived in the Belarusian capital Minsk earlier this week, The Financial Times reported. In giving Bakiyev asylum, Belarus could anger Russia, the Times said. Russia had denied Bakiyev refuge and accused him of igniting a civil war in southern Kyrgyzstan. Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus's president, said: "This is my personal decision as a president and as a person, and I have the right to it by law." The interim government that took control in Kyrgyzstan after the uprising says it plans to try Bakiyev for alleged abuse of power, theft from state coffers, corruption and human-rights violations during his regime. Meanwhile, Catherine Ashton, the European Union's high representative for foreign affairs, is tying financial and political support for the interim Kyrgyz government to its commitment to democracy and human rights, the EUobserver reported. "If we are satisfied that the provisional government is committed to a quick return to legitimacy and genuinely wants to join the democratic family, the European Union will be ready to provide the necessary political, financial and technical support," Ashton told the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France, Tuesday. She said it's critical to restore order and bring to justice those involved in the fatal shootings during the bloody uprising. The EU has not recognized the interim government, led by foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva. (UPI)

BAKU PRESSED ON NABUCCO PIPELINE

21 April

The Nabucco natural gas pipeline to Europe will top the agenda for talks between German and Azeri officials in Baku, German ministers said. Europe

aims to diversify its natural gas sector by transporting non-Russian supplies through the Nabucco pipeline. The project would move gas from Central Asia and possibly the Middle East, through Turkey and on to Austria. Russia is pursuing its South Stream gas pipeline through the Balkans and the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany, which is under construction. Emilia Mueller, the minister for federal and European affairs at the state of Bavaria, Germany, said she plans to discuss the Nabucco project with her Azeri counterparts during a two-day visit to Baku. "A short while ago, I had talks in Austria at the other end of this pipeline," she told the Trend news agency in Azerbaijan. "Now, I would like to discuss the Nabucco project at its starting point in Azerbaijan." The Nabucco project faces obstacles in terms of firm commitments from potential supplier nations. A project to ship liquefied natural gas across the Black Sea, meanwhile, could overshadow the project. (UPI)

ARMENIAN-TURKISH PEACE PROCESS STOPPED

22 April

Armenia decided to halt ratification of a key treaty aimed at normalizing relations with Turkey. Armenia's ruling coalition said in a statement it halted ratification of the landmark accord signed last October after decades of conflict because of Turkey's refusal to ratify without preconditions. "Considering the Turkish side's refusal to fulfill the requirement to ratify the accord without preconditions in a reasonable time, making the continuation of the ratification process in the national parliament pointless, we consider it necessary to suspend this process," BBC News quoted from the statement. Armenia lashed out at Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan for linking the normalization accords to a resolution over Nagorno-Karabakh, an area of dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. (UPI)

MORE GEORGIAN OPPOSITION LEADERS VISIT RUSSIA

23 April

The leaders of two Georgian opposition parties are in Moscow for talks about the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Russian politicians and Georgian diaspora groups, RFE/RL's Georgian Service reports. People's Party leader Koba Davitashvili and Conservative Party leader Kakha Kukava left for Moscow on April 22.

Their respective parties are members of the opposition National Council, which unites six Georgian opposition parties and groups. Davitashvili told InterPressNews that they would meet journalists and Georgian immigrants living in Russia. They also have planned meetings with Russian politicians and opposition party members on April 26-27 at the State Duma. "We are travelling to Russia to discuss issues about the country's unification," Davitashvili said. "We will not discuss the country's domestic affairs. We want...to create a Georgian lobby in Russia." Davitashvili said they had no meetings scheduled with President Dmitry Medvedev or Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. The two National Council leaders will also attend the Georgian Diaspora Forum, which is organized by the World Congress of Georgian People in St. Petersburg. Davitashvili said it was important to engage the diaspora, which could play an important role in Georgian-Russian relations. Other opposition officials have visited Russia since the August 2008 military conflict between Russian and Georgian forces over South Ossetia. Zurab Noghaideli, the former prime minister and current opposition member, has visited Russia several times in recent months and said he plans to travel there again in May to continue talks on the resumption of regular flights between Georgia and Russia. In early March, former parliament speaker Nino Burjanadze also went to Moscow, saying that dialogue with Russian officials is crucial for Georgia. The Georgian government has branded the decision by Davitashvili and Kukava to travel to Russia "unpatriotic." (RFE/RL)

KARABAKH KEY TO TURKISH-ARMENIAN PEACE -- AZERBAIJAN

24 April

Azerbaijan warned Armenia on Friday it could not achieve anything in the region unless it makes peace over Nagorno-Karabakh, and warned its army was ready "to hit any target" to take the breakaway region back. The comments follow the collapse on Thursday of a U.S. and Russian-backed bid to mend ties between Armenia and Turkey after a century of hostility stemming from the World War One mass killing of Armenians by Ottoman forces. Armenia suspended ratification of a deal to establish diplomatic ties and reopen its border with Turkey after Ankara said Armenia should first reach terms with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, where ethnic Armenians threw off Azeri rule in the early 1990s with backing from Armenia. Armenia says it

is unacceptable to link the two issues. But in Baku, Azeri President Ilham Aliyev said nothing would be possible without a solution to Nagorno-Karabakh, something that has evaded mediators since a cease-fire was agreed in 1994. "You cannot achieve anything in the region without a solution to the Karabakh conflict," Aliyev said in a televised meeting of the government. Azerbaijan, its military budget swollen by petrodollars, frequently threatens to take the mountain region back by force. But the rhetoric became sharper after the thaw began between Turkey and Armenia late last year, and traditionally good ties with the United States have become strained by Washington's support for the rapprochement. "The fact that we continue peaceful negotiations is a major compromise on our part," Aliyev said. Defence Minister Safar Abiyev told him: "The Azerbaijan army has all the capabilities to hit any target on the territory of Armenia if necessary." To the vast majority of Armenians, the idea of giving up some of the land won during the Nagorno-Karabakh war in exchange for an open border and diplomatic ties with Turkey, is unacceptable. But Turkey, which closed the border in 1993 in solidarity with Azerbaijan, has been stung by the backlash in Azerbaijan, an oil and gas exporter and one of the West's key hopes for gas for the planned Nabucco pipeline. Though the deal is now on ice, some analysts warn it is too late to sooth tempers in Azerbaijan. (Reuters)

AFGHAN GIRLS BECOME SICK IN SUSPECTED GAS POISONINGS

25 April

Afghan authorities are investigating whether some 80 Afghan schoolgirls who have fallen ill during the past week were intentionally poisoned. In the latest case, 13 girls fell ill today at a school in the provincial capital of Kunduz. Humayun Khamoosh, head of Central Hospital in the Kunduz Province, said the girls were complaining of symptoms like headaches, vomiting, and shivering. After the initial treatment, he said all were in stable condition. On April 24, 47 girls and three of their teachers were brought to city hospitals after they complained of feeling dizzy and nauseous. About 20 other girl students were hospitalized with the same symptoms last week. Similar suspected gas-poisoning attacks have been reported in other parts of Afghanistan in the past three years. (RFE/RL)

EXPLOSIONS IN KANDAHAR KILL TWO CIVILIANS

26 April

Two civilians have been reported killed in two bomb explosions in Afghanistan's southern city of Kandahar. A police official said the explosions were caused by a car bomb and a motorbike packed with explosives. The bombs which struck within minutes of each other appeared to target a police convoy. No one has claimed responsibility for the blasts. Kandahar is the birthplace of the Taliban and the hard-line militants still have considerable support there. U.S. forces have announced plans for a military operation this summer aimed to clear Kandahar of Taliban militants. The United Nations said after the blasts that the deteriorating security situation forced it to temporarily move some foreign employees to Kabul and tell more than 200 Afghan personnel in the city to stay home. UN spokesman Dan McNorton however insisted that the organization is not permanently pulling out of the southern Afghan city and remains committed to offering its programs and humanitarian assistance there. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKHS RIGHTS ACTIVIST'S GUILTY VERDICT UPHELD

26 April

The Kazakh Supreme Court today upheld the guilty verdict against jailed prominent Kazakh rights activist Yevgeny Zhovtis, RFE/RL's Kazakh Service reports. Zhovtis, the director of the Almaty-based Kazakh Bureau for Human Rights, was sentenced on September 3 to four years in a labor camp for manslaughter after his car struck a pedestrian who later died. Zhovtis and his lawyers have protested the verdict, saying it is retaliation by Kazakh authorities for his professional activities. Domestic and international human rights organizations consider the case against Zhovtis to be politically motivated. (RFE/RL)

UN URGED NOT TO LEAVE SOUTHERN AFGHAN CITY

27 April

The head of Kandahar's provincial council has urged the international aid community not to pull out of the troubled southern city. A deteriorating security situation in Kandahar ahead of a major military offensive has prompted the United Nations to temporarily withdrawn foreign staff from its mission in the city. But Ahmad Wali Karzai, the half-brother of President Hamid Karzai, said today the United Nations was overreacting by withdrawing its staff. "They didn't consult with

anyone. The governor doesn't know; the provincial shura [assembly] doesn't know; and we are not happy with that," Karzai said. "We hope that they return back to their offices and open their offices and continue their humanitarian assistance. I personally believe the security situation is not that bad that they should leave Kandahar." The UN said on April 26 that it had relocated some foreign staff to Kabul and that Afghan staff there had been told to stay home, after several bombings shook the city. Over the past few weeks, there has been a surge in attacks in Kandahar, with insurgents carrying out several major suicide bombings and a deputy mayor gunned down this week. (RFE/RL)

TURKEY-ARMENIA ACCORD CONCERNS EUROPE

27 April

A decision by Armenia to suspend ratification of a treaty aimed at normalizing relations with Turkey is cause for concern, the European Union said. The ruling coalition in Armenia issued a statement Monday saying it halted ratification of an accord signed in October because of a refusal by Turkey to move ahead with the deal without preconditions. Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs in the European Union, said through her office that the EU was "pleased" that Armenia remains committed to normalization. "But at the same time expresses concern about the loss of momentum in this process." Ashton said the European Union calls on both countries to remain steadfast in the normalization process "without preconditions and in a reasonable time frame."

Armenia accuses Turkey of committing genocide against its population during the Ottoman Empire. Recent ties are strained further over issues regarding the region of Nagorno-Karabakh, an area of dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Armenia is upset that Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is linking the normalization process to Nagorno-Karabakh. "The EU will continue to provide its political and technical support to this process and stands ready to help implementing the steps agreed between the two countries," Ashton added. (UPI)

ROADSIDE BOMB KILLS 12 CIVILIANS IN AFGHANISTAN

28 April

A roadside bomb struck a passenger van in southeast Afghanistan on Wednesday, killing 12 civilians, a local official said. Dawlat Khan Yaqubi, head of the Tani district of Khost province near the Pakistan border, said women and children were among the dead. The vehicle caught fire and the bodies were burned, he said. Home made bombs planted in roads are by far the deadliest weapon used by insurgents against NATO troops and Afghan government targets and frequently kill civilians. The United Nations says 2400 civilians were killed last year, the deadliest of the war. Most were killed by insurgents, while the number killed by Western and government troops fell. Khost, across the border from the restive Pakistani region of North Waziristan, is a stronghold of fighters loyal to the Haqqani family, an insurgent network linked to both the Taliban and al Qaeda. (Reuters)



New Book:

The Guns of August 2008

Edited By Svante E. Cornell and S. Frederick Starr

M.E. Sharpe, New York, June 2009, 290pp

This book is designed to present the facts about the events of August 2008 along with comprehensive coverage of the background to those events. It brings together a wealth of expertise on the South Caucasus and Russian foreign policy, with contributions by Russian, Georgian, European, and American experts on the region.