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THE CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS ANALYST

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

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

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

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

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

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

Svante E. Cornell

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RUSSIA REDEPLOYS ARMY TO DAGESTAN

Emil Souleimanov

Starting in early October, troops of the Russian Ministry of Defense are again participating in the counterinsurgency campaign in the North Caucasus. The recent decision of the Moscow-based National Anti-Terrorist Council to bring the army back to the area has marked another shift in Russia's longstanding efforts to break down the Islamist insurgency rooted in the Caucasus Emirate, a virtual theocracy claiming the territories of the North Caucasus. While the reintroduction of the army to the theater reflects a need to combat the insurgency in rural areas, the new tactics involved imply an increased risk of civilian casualties as well as coordination problems with local law enforcement.

BACKGROUND: The Russian army was gradually pulled out of the North Caucasus between 2004 and 2006 after crushing an insurgency largely concentrated within Chechnya's borders. Subsequently, the burden of fighting a counterinsurgent war was placed on the Ministry of Interior (MVD), while also encouraging the participation of local police units. The *kadyrovtsy* units in Chechnya, formally part of the republic's interior ministry, have proven quite effective in carrying out counterinsurgent activities supported by the East and West battalions, composed of Chechens and subordinated to the GRU until their disbandment in 2008.

The reintroduction of army units is concentrated to Dagestan, a republic of three million east of Chechnya that has recently become the hotbed of Islamist insurgency (see the [09/29/2010 issue of the CACI Analyst](#)). According to some estimates, army units numbering up to 40,000 troops have been located in a number of mountainous areas (Botlikh, Buynaksk) and on the crucial Khasavyurt-Makhachkala route, as well as in the outskirts of the Dagestani capital. What made Moscow reassess its strategy in the North Caucasus, opting for the redeployment of army units in the counterinsurgency campaign?

In fact, Moscow is actively strengthening its military presence in the region, with a particular focus on Dagestan. In the spring months of 2012, it deployed up to 25,000 MVD police units to Dagestan, the majority of which had previously been stationed in Chechnya. The recent decision to deploy army units to Dagestan seems to have been made in August or September and confirms that the success of the MVD troops has been limited. Indeed, the police units recruited from all over the Russian Federation and deployed to Dagestan for only a few months



have proven incapable of grasping the peculiarities of local counterinsurgency warfare. In addition, the death toll on MVD troops deployed in the Dagestan campaign has increased steadily in recent months.

IMPLICATIONS: Notwithstanding the application of better tactics including concentrated attacks on insurgent cells in

geographically close areas while simultaneously cutting off ways of retreat, particularly main roads from the urban centers to rural areas in the mountains, the insurgency has survived and even proved capable of carrying out deadly attacks. While the pressure exerted on insurgents in urban areas seems to have been rather effective, the isolation of the urban and rural bases of local jamaats has largely failed. As a rule, the insurgents have escaped from urban areas unarmed and unidentifiable, rendering the police tactic of blocking the main roads inefficient. Drawing on the support of local populations, the insurgents have in large numbers moved to rural areas and taken advantage of their extended network of mountain bases that have provided them with shelter and munitions for relatively long periods.

MVD units have demonstrated little efficiency in mountainous areas, not least since they lack heavy weaponry. While useless in urban warfare, tanks, armored fighting vehicles, and especially artillery and aircraft including military helicopters are key to success in mountainous terrain. Across the North Caucasus, the MVD has relied on one single artillery battalion. Communication between the MVD and army units during episodes when army weaponry has been used has displayed serious shortcomings as well, as exemplified by the heavy casualties inflicted on counterinsurgent forces during the fighting on the Chechnya-Dagestan border in February. This seems to be one of the reasons for reintroducing battalion tactical groups to the region. In addition, MVD units lack the sufficient experience and skills to carry out effective counterinsurgency warfare in mountainous terrain and the redeployment of army units is intended to compensate for this. According to some sources, Moscow also plans to resurrect the so-called VSOG (Temporary Specialized Operative Groups) that used to be widely employed throughout the North Caucasus, particularly in Chechnya. The core of these groups consisted of three high ranking and highly professional

MVD officers, who were directly subordinated to the MVD command in Moscow and thus exempt from the authority of local operative headquarters in the North Caucasus, as well as local police forces. Instead, local police were obliged to provide the VSOG with any necessary support including weapons and reinforcement during special operations. As a rule, VSOG units were deployed to regions for periods of at least one month with the aim of liquidating key members of the insurgency or carrying out special operations based on intelligence that could not be entrusted to the local police whose loyalty was often doubted in Moscow. The VSOG groups have been found responsible for a significant number of "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions that has ensured them a vicious reputation among the local populations and police forces. The upcoming deployment of VSOG groups to Dagestan is testimony to Moscow's doubt regarding the loyalty of local Dagestani police. Yet, the presence of such units in the republic will likely deepen the already existing animosity between local police and federal security forces. In any case, the deployment of VSOG groups to Dagestan illustrates that in addition to engaging the army, Moscow is willing to use all tools at its disposal to combat the Islamist insurgency. The deployment of army units to Dagestan has already caused serious discontent among the local population. A widely discussed incident in the relatively independent Dagestani media was a concentrated attack carried out on October 9 by heavy bomber aircraft and helicopters on targets on the Tarki-Tau Mountain close to Agachaul outside Makhachkala. The attack was launched at 5 a.m., causing panic among local residents who had not been informed about the barrage. It seems that the authorities made no attempt to ensure there were no civilians on the wooded mountain that is otherwise a favorite location for picnics and camping among locals as well as Makhachkala residents.

Similar massive attacks employing heavy bombers were recently carried out in the Khasavyurt district and some other areas of the republic, stirring serious discontent among locals.

CONCLUSIONS: It is likely that military operations involving army units and heavy weaponry will be considerably more indiscriminate and destructive than actions by MVD troops. This risk increases in the case of Dagestan where insurgents draw on the tangible support of local populations particularly in rural areas. While cutting off popular support is an indispensable part of counterinsurgency operations, a rising death toll among Dagestani non-combatants will cause more Dagestanis to opt for revenge and increase local support for the insurgency.

Even though Russian authorities assert that they will primarily use GRU elite troops in the fighting, these will obviously constitute a tiny share of the dozens of thousands of army troops deployed to Dagestan and some other critical areas of the North Caucasus where insurgency has been on the rise. Instead, army units comprising contract units, the so-called *kontraktniki*, and a portion of young recruits will be deployed which might cause serious pitfalls. First, while relatively more professional than young recruits, the contract units are known for their inclination toward

xenophobia and racism especially toward Caucasian peoples. Hence the likelihood of conflict between the contract units, predominantly composed of ethnic Russians, and local police in Dagestan and elsewhere in the North Caucasus will rise, complicating the cooperation between the different forces involved in the counterinsurgency campaign. Many local police officers resent the ongoing transfer of tactical command and financial means to federal police and army forces.

The growing conflict among local police and federal security forces reduces the ultimate chances of conducting an effective counterinsurgency campaign, which requires a close coordination between police units employed in urban warfare and army units deployed in rural areas.

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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN GEORGIA'S DIFFICULT TRANSITION

Johanna Popjanovski

While Georgia in October succeeded in carrying out its first truly competitive election since independence, the power transition process has not come without controversy. A number of incidents, including the arrests of members of the former governing elite, suggest the challenges ahead in achieving political collaboration and dialogue. Yet the post-election process carries important opportunities as well. Georgian politics now possess the components of pluralism and competition that have been largely missing since the Rose Revolution. Thus, given enough time, and, importantly, continued support from Georgia's Western partners, the coming months will provide important momentum for further consolidation of Georgian democracy.

BACKGROUND: On October 1 Georgia held its 7th parliamentary election since independence, which concluded in defeat of President Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM) party against the Georgian Dream (GD) coalition, headed by business tycoon Bidzina Ivanishvili. While the votes were still being counted, President Saakashvili went on national television conceding defeat, and shortly thereafter appointed Ivanishvili as the country's new Prime Minister. On October 25, a new cabinet, largely dominated by members of the GD coalition, was formed.

While the execution of a peaceful and competitive election constituted an important step in Georgia's democratization process, the post-election period has proven challenging. Since taking office, Mr. Ivanishvili has embarked on a determined route to clean up in what he throughout his election campaign referred to as mismanaged political structures. Among the most significant actions in this regard were the arrests of former Defense and Interior Minister Bacho Akhalaia – largely blamed for the prison abuse scandal that unfolded in the week before the election – and the Chief of the Armed Forces, Giorgi Kalandadze. Akhalaia, who left Georgia shortly after the October election, returned on November 5 with the stated ambition of responding to any allegations posed against him. Shortly thereafter Akhalaia, along with Kalandadze and 4th brigade commander

Zurab Shamatava, were arrested and charged with abuse of powers and illegal deprivation of freedom of prisoners. On November 10, Kalandadze and Shamatava were released on bail, while Akhalaia remains in pre-trial detention, awaiting trial. The arrests have been strongly criticized by the UNM, which refers to them as the launch of a process of political retribution by the new government. Mr. Ivanishvili has also cracked down hard on Government expenditures – particularly targeting the part of the state budget allocated to the presidential administration, the National Security Council and the Tbilisi municipality. On November 6 the President's office responded by announcing that the outdoor lighting of the presidential palace would be turned off to save electricity cost, albeit at the same time underlining that the presidential palace constitutes an institution belonging to the Georgian state – countering accusations of the President treating it as his private property. Adding to the row over excessive utility costs, Mr. Ivanishvili has suggested that the President and his staff move back into the old Chancellery office which served as the President's office until the completion of the new presidential palace in 2009. Meanwhile, the National Security Council, headed by one of Saakashvili's closest allies, Giga Bokeria, has faced a budget cut of up to 90% – funds that according to the new Prime Minister were spent

predominantly on international lobbying for the benefit of the UNM.



In his stated quest to normalize relations with Russia, Mr. Ivanishvili has moreover appointed the former Georgian ambassador to Russia, Zurab Abashidze, as his special envoy to coordinate relations with Moscow. Ever since Georgia's diplomatic ties with Russia were cut in late 2008, communication between Tbilisi and Moscow has been handled mainly through the Swiss Embassy in Tbilisi. Moscow's response to Mr. Abashidze's appointment has, however, remained lukewarm. On November 3, the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that while paying attention to Georgia's stated ambition to improve ties with Russia, further, concrete steps are now needed from Tbilisi's side. For Mr. Ivanishvili, this may constitute a daunting task ahead. Political concessions vis-à-vis Russia, especially should they concern Tbilisi's policy toward its secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, would likely give rise to strong criticism domestically, and carry serious implications not only for Georgia but for the region as a whole – including the unresolved conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria.

The post-election rows in Georgia have already given rise to international concern. In a statement after a meeting of the NATO

parliamentary assembly in Prague on November 12 (in which President Saakashvili

participated), NATO Chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen expressed "extreme concern" about the developments in Georgia after the October election, clearly referring to the recent arrests of Akhalaia and Kalandadze. He went on to underline the importance of avoiding political interference in the judicial processes, hinting at potential political motivation being behind the arrests. Following a visit by Mr. Ivanishvili to Brussels on

November 12, the Head of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso also raised a warning against cases of "selective justice" in Georgia, noting that those could harm Georgia's international image and pose a threat to the rule of law.

Mr. Ivanishvili's decision to choose Brussels as his first foreign destination as Prime Minister was surprising to many, as the PM stated in early October that his first official trip would be to Washington. Notably, his visit to Europe coincided with President Saakashvili's participation in the NATO parliamentary assembly meeting in Prague, followed by a visit by the President to Brussels on November 13-14. The simultaneous visits by the two leaders to Europe suggest that both sides are attempting to solidify their respective relations with the EU and NATO. Worryingly, however, it displays a lack of coordination and unity that is likely to raise eyebrows among Georgia's Western partners.

IMPLICATIONS: While the current power transition is important to Georgia's democratic progress, recent developments suggest that the coming year will be a challenging one for Georgia. Both sides will

now need to step up to the task of cooperating in the new parliament and government structures. This, in turn, will require that focus is shifted away from personal animosity and that retaliatory actions are avoided. It is also crucial that the two sides adopt a united front vis-à-vis Georgia's Western partners, as attempts to discredit one other on the international scene will do nothing but harm Georgia's image – with the potential consequence of slowing down the process of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Indeed, for both the UNM and the GD important challenges are looming. Since coming to power, Mr. Ivanishvili has eagerly repeated his campaign goals of creating jobs, raising pensions and lowering electricity prices to improve living conditions nationwide. It is now important that the GD leader steps up to his stated promises and focuses on the needs of the Georgian population rather than acts of political retribution. Since the election, thousands of workers, most recently Tbilisi's yellow bus drivers, have already gone on strike demanding higher salaries and better working conditions, which underlines the that the Georgian population is expecting true action from the new government in realizing its policy objectives. The GD will also face a challenging task in keeping the ideologically very diverse 6-party coalition together in the new parliament. While the coalition succeeded in securing 85 of the 150 parliamentary seats in the October election, it fell short of a constitutional majority, which means that staying united, as well as cooperating with the UNM is crucial to achieve important changes, especially as regards constitutional ones.

The UNM, for its part, equally has an important task ahead to prove itself as a political party and to stay united in the parliamentary structures. Out of its 65 parliamentary representatives, 6 MPs have already defected from the party and formed an independent faction, which has stated that

it is ready to cooperate with both sides. In order to avoid further fragmentation of the party, the former elite will need to take on the challenge offered by the election and emerge as a competitive opposition force with a clear political agenda ahead of the next election. In this process, it will be crucial for the UNM to move away from its tendency to base its party identity on personalities, and allow for broader power-sharing within the party structure.

In spite of the recent controversies, the post-election period offers important opportunities as well. While still struggling with the challenge of lack of cooperation and compromise, Georgian politics now include two strong political blocs that, given the right support and time to mature, will contribute to a more plural and competitive political environment in Georgia. It is therefore essential that Georgia's Western partners adopt an attitude of patience and provide continuous support for political dialogue and a system that is equipped to manage political controversies in a constructive way.

CONCLUSIONS: While it is still early to judge what the power transition in Georgia will bring, the coming period is likely to be marked by continued lack of coordination and falling-outs between the two sides, at least in the short-term. This is not unexpected, given that Georgia has had little experience of power-sharing and political compromise in the post-revolutionary era. In this light, it is neither the October election per se, nor the immediate post-election process, that will determine Georgia's democratic progress – rather the ability to use the current power-transition as a momentum for creating an environment conducive to building a stronger state in the years to come.

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UZBEKISTAN'S ECONOMIC REFORMS AND THEIR CHALLENGES

Richard Weitz

The security of Central Asia partly depends on the ability of these countries to transition from the state-controlled and inefficient command economic systems they inherited from the Soviet Union to more dynamic free-market economies, which can more easily attract foreign investment and generate employment and economic growth. These enhancements could reduce potential sources of domestic alienation and provide their governments with more resources to support regional security initiatives in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The Silk Road strategies of the U.S. and other countries also would achieve greater success if the Central Asian countries were more dynamic and better integrated into global economic processes. Uzbekistan and its recently announced economic reforms is a case in point.

BACKGROUND: Uzbekistani officials state that they are seeking to create a modern economy on the basis of the rule of law. The government has recently introduced a number of legislative and judicial reforms toward this end. For example, recent laws provide guarantees of freedom of entrepreneurship, reduction of inspections of business entities, and specify the rights and responsibilities for a new form of entrepreneurship: family business.

Uzbekistan's government has also been striving to diversify the economy, attract more foreign direct investment and technology, and make its exports more competitive. Its import substitution strategy needs foreign companies to establish production facilities in the country. The government has spent some US\$ 100 million to construct the high-tech Navoi Free Industrial and Economic Zone and the Angren Special Industrial Zone, which aim to encourage local high-technology startups and attract more foreign direct investment.

The diversification campaign has had some success, with cotton now accounting for a much smaller share of Uzbekistan's exports than the 70-80 percent share it held two decades ago. At present, cotton, metals, energy and petroleum products amount to slightly more than half of the country's total exports, while machinery and equipment

account for almost half of all national imports. Some Uzbekistani firms have been able to leverage their natural endowments with late-comer advantages to find a comfortable niche on international markets.

According to Uzbekistan's calculations, oil, gas, and petrochemicals represent more than half the country's future economic activity. But Uzbekistan's central location also makes it a useful base for exporting throughout Eurasia. For example, General Motors sells the more than 100,000 engines it manufactures annually in Uzbekistan throughout the CIS region. Uzbekistan's government offers GM strong support in the form of tax benefits, preferential loans, and help in developing the local market.

The recently adopted Asian Development Bank (ADB) partnership strategy (CPS) with Uzbekistan for 2012-2016 affirms Uzbekistan's goal to become an upper middle-income country by 2020. The CPS aims to promote balanced growth, economic diversification, private sector development, and more jobs. Priority development sectors include transportation, energy, municipal services, water, and access to finance. The CPS also seeks to improve governance, regional cooperation and integration, private sector development, knowledge management, and gender equality. At present, the ADB

supports 35 joint projects at an aggregate cost of more than US\$ 3.8 billion.

Even before the recent reforms, Uzbekistan has been experiencing strong growth rates of 6-8 percent annually for the past few years, while the government has kept its annual budget deficit and overall public debt relatively low. The International Labor Organization calculates national unemployment at a very low 1-2 percent.

IMPLICATIONS: One reason for Uzbekistan's strong performance is the country's growing economic ties with China. The PRC is Uzbekistan's second largest foreign trade partner after Russia, with mutual trade amounting to US\$ 2.5 billion in 2011. Chinese nationals have made substantial direct investments in Uzbekistan to help develop the country's natural resources, including in the gold as well energy sectors. Uzbekistan has some 400 joint enterprises with PRC investment. According to its new contract with China in May 2012, Uzbekistan will export about 2-4 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas to China this year via the Central Asia-China transit pipeline that runs through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan, the largest producer of cotton in Central Asia, recently surpassed the U.S. as the main source of the PRC's cotton imports. In addition to cotton fiber and energy products from the Caspian Basin, other Uzbek exports to China include metals, minerals, and food products.

Uzbekistan's government has a program of modernization, technical and technological upgrading of key industries for the 2009-2014 period that anticipates some US\$ 20 billion of foreign direct investment. China is the logical source of such investment. The PRC offered the SCO's Central Asian members billions of dollars in easy short-term credits to help them manage the regional implications of the global financial crisis. According to the Uzbek government, their country has used these interest-free and long-term soft loans from the Export-Import Bank of China to support some 20 infrastructure projects worth more than US\$ 600 million. Although China's

increasing assistance is welcome in many respects, the aid often supports Beijing's priorities while offering insufficient guarantees against corruption and misappropriation, thereby serving as a means to evade implementing necessary domestic reforms.

Economic ties between Russia and Uzbekistan also remain strong. Russia is Uzbekistan's largest trading partner. According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, its share of the country's trade turnover was 24.3 percent during this reporting period. Uzbekistan's total turnover in January-September 2011 amounted to US\$ 18.8 billion (compared to US\$ 7.7 billion with other CIS countries). The trade between Russia and Uzbekistan grew by 5.6 percent year-on-year in January-September 2011, to US\$ 4.6 billion. During this period, Uzbekistan exported US\$ 2.9 billion worth of goods and imported US\$ 1.6 billion. GM Uzbekistan was the tenth largest seller of cars in Russia during the January-October 2011 period.

The Russian company Mobile TeleSystems (MTS) claims that Uzbek authorities unfairly deprived MTS of its subsidiary Uzdurobita, a US\$ 700-million concern that MTS bought in 2004. But Lukoil, the largest foreign direct investor in Uzbekistan, is eager to help develop the country's natural gas industry. According to Uzbekistan's government, only one fourth of the country's total hydrocarbon resources have been extracted. Lukoil's four concessions in Uzbekistan (Southwest Gissar, Aral, Kungrad and Kandym-Khauzak-Shady) account for 54 percent of Lukoil's total marketable gas output outside Russia. The company recently announced a major discovery at its Shurdarye field. Another constraint on Tashkent regarding Moscow is the presence of a large number of Uzbek migrant laborers in Russia, who are vulnerable to persecution and expulsion.

In June, the Russian and Uzbekistani governments signed a memorandum of understanding on Uzbekistan's accession to the CIS free trade zone that was established by most former Soviet republics on October

18, 2011. According to the latter document, Tashkent would close negotiations on its accession to the free trade zone by the end of 2012 and join the zone from 2013 on. Uzbekistan's central geographical location makes the country of key importance for current Russian efforts to promote economic integration in the post-Soviet region. Without Uzbekistan's participation, Russia cannot develop direct economic ties with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which have already expressed their intention to join the Russian-Belarusian-Kazakh Customs Union.

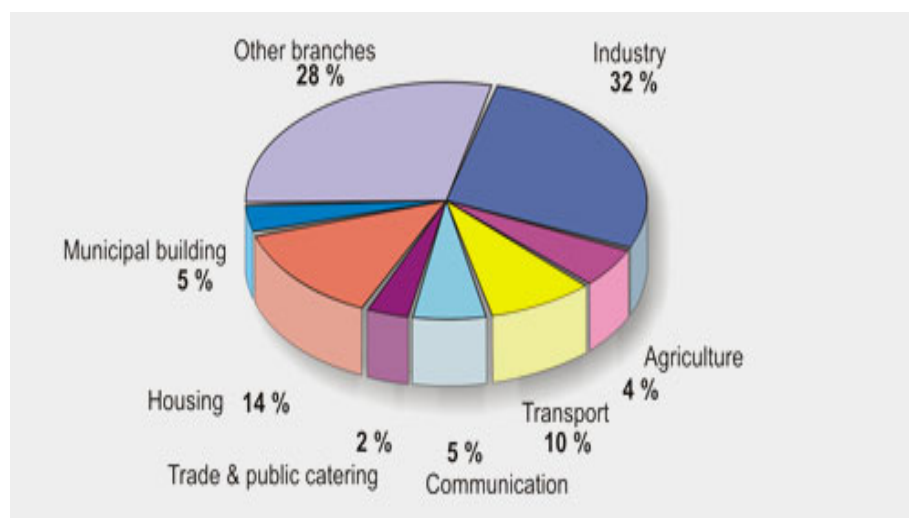


Figure 1: Foreign Investments

The World Bank ranks Uzbekistan 166 out of 183 in terms of "ease of doing business." Although some Doing Business scores are increasing, Uzbekistan is making slower progress than many other countries. Many structural difficulties result from Uzbekistan's relative geographic isolation as a doubly landlocked country and the structural distortions from its gradualist government-led development strategy. Pending further diversification, moreover, Uzbekistan is vulnerable to a decline in the world prices for its cotton, copper, gold, and energy exports as

well as constraints on the remittances from its migrant workers, which constitute a large share of Uzbekistan's national GDP.

CONCLUSIONS: Uzbekistan's economy could perform better if the government modernized the national infrastructure more rapidly, improved all levels of education, allowed for a freer flow of information, developed a sound insurance market, relaxed its rules on currency conversion, did not require a 100 percent prepayment for all purchases, made it easier to secure long-term visas for foreign employees, further developed its banking sector, increased transparency of government procurement and regulatory processes, permitted foreign firms to repatriate more profits, and reduced formal and informal barriers to trade with neighboring countries. Other challenges to Uzbekistan's socioeconomic development include

maintaining security in the country despite the turmoil in neighboring Afghanistan, averting regional conflicts over access to water and energy resources such as by using both resources more efficiently, ending child labor, and raising national productivity and the delivery of essential public services in rural areas.

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COULD ETIM DERAILED PAKISTAN-CHINA RELATIONS?

Rizwan Zeb

The East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was responsible for a series of bomb blasts and knife attacks in Hotan, Xinjiang last year in which reportedly more than 20 people were killed and many more were injured. Chinese officials pointed out that these militants were trained in the Pakistani tribal areas and hence for the first time publicly blamed Pakistan for the troubles in its Xinjiang province, in a state media broadcast during an official visit of Pakistan's then Inter-Services Intelligence chief. Islamabad and Beijing are already cooperating closely on anti-terrorism issues but if not addressed properly, this issue can become a major irritant between the two countries.

BACKGROUND: The friendship between Pakistan and China is described by the leadership of both countries as higher than mountains, deeper than the oceans, and of late, sweeter than honey. Pakistan and China celebrated 2011 as a year of friendship to mark 60 years of diplomatic relations. Relations between the two countries were established in 1950 when Pakistan decided to recognize the People's Republic and after a few minor feuds and misperceptions, relations strengthened considerably by the early 1960s.

The relationship has been mutually beneficial from the beginning: China ended Pakistan's search for a balancer in its relations with India and provides Pakistan with economic, military and technical aid and assistance. Pakistan on its part supports China on issues such as Tibet, Xinjiang, human rights, etc. Pakistan played a pivotal role in bringing the U.S. and China together and arranged a secret visit of Henry Kissinger to prepare for President Nixon's visit to China. Pakistan also supported and assisted China in establishing contacts with the Muslim world. Pakistan and China are collaborating in a number of sectors; especially defense, trade and developmental and energy sector. Since the 1960s, China has been the most important supplier of military goods to Pakistan. The JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft is the hallmark of this defense cooperation. In addition, the two countries have collaborated in establishing munitions factories and China has provided technical assistance in

improving and modernizing Pakistan's existing facilities. They have also cooperated in the nuclear energy sector and have organized joint military exercises and officers from both countries attend courses at military institutions.

Trade between Pakistan and China is increasing at a rapid pace and a free trade agreement has been signed. China has also stated that it will increase its investments in Pakistan and is currently investing in various projects related to development of infrastructure such as power plants, roads, gold and copper mines, electricity and power and nuclear plants. From 2007 to 2010, the Chinese investment was expected to increase from US\$ 4 billion to US\$ 15 billion. The most important joint project is the deep sea port of Gwadar.

However, four issues will be decisive in shaping the changing outlook of Pakistan-China relations: terrorism, the security of Chinese personnel working in Pakistan, people to people contacts, and India. Of these four, the issue of terrorism is the most problematic.

IMPLICATIONS: Xinjiang borders Pakistan and Afghanistan, and is of immense strategic importance for China for a number of reasons. Populated by Turkic-speaking and Muslim ethnic Uyghurs which constitute almost 40 percent of the area's total population, Xinjiang is also home to a number of militant groups or factions struggling for independence from China.



According to Beijing, a number of players are involved in the region and the religious extremists there are supported by several transnational terrorist networks, prime amongst them Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT).

The most effective of the groups active in the area is the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). ETIM was founded in 1997 and its stated aim is to liberate Xinjiang from China and restore its past glory by installing an Islamic caliphate there. There is strong evidence that ETIM is linked with other groups in the region, especially Al Qaeda. Its members are active in other countries such as Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. According to various media reports, ETIM's leader Abdul Shakoor Turkistani was one of the contenders to succeed Osama bin Laden after he was killed in the May 2011 U.S. operation.

Two factions exist within the ETIM: one wants to concentrate solely on its struggle for independence from China, while the other wants to participate in and support the globalized jihadist network. ETIM is reported to have secured sanctuaries in the lawless areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan's tribal areas. Xinjiang governor Nur Bekri stated in an interview: "We have certainly discovered that East Turkistan Islamic Movement activists and terrorists in our neighboring states have a thousand and one links." In an

official statement, the Chinese Ministry of Public Security issued a list of six terrorists including their profiles. The statement claimed that these terrorists were operating from a South Asian country and that one of them, the known ETIM commander Nurmemet Memetmin, was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in prison in a South Asian country but managed to escape in 2006.

This practice of avoiding direct mention of Pakistan changed after the attacks on July 18, 2011, in Hotan, Xinjiang, involving a series of bomb blasts and knife

attacks. Chinese officials pointed out that these militants were trained in the Pakistani tribal areas. The state run Xinhua news agency reported that the terrorist behind the attacks received training in camps located in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The timing of this report is important because the then director general of the Inter-Services Intelligence, General Ahmed Shujja Pasha was in China on an official visit at the time. Another piece of evidence of ETIM's Pakistani connections is the martyrdom video of Memtieli Tiliwaldi who was killed by Chinese security forces, training in what was claimed to be the tribal areas of Pakistan. During his recent visit to Islamabad, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi asked the Pakistani government to take action against ethnic Uygur Islamic militants present in its lawless tribal areas.

CONCLUSIONS: A positive sign for Pakistan-China relations is that China and Pakistan are actively cooperating on terrorism and have an institutionalized antiterrorism dialogue and intelligence sharing mechanism. On August 6, 2004, China and Pakistan conducted their first joint antiterrorism military exercise named Friendship 2004 in Xinjiang. In a military operation near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in December 2003, the Pakistani Army

killed the ETIM's leader Hasan Mahsum and arrested quite a few members of the organization which were extradited to China. Yet, despite these joint efforts and the fact that ETIM has been weakened in recent months – a number of its cadre have been killed in drone attacks and arrested or killed by Pakistani forces – it continues to be active and operational in the Xinjiang area. The relationship to China is of paramount importance for Islamabad and it hence needs to pay more attention to Beijing's sensitivity

to the ETIM problem. While the ETIM has so far not been able to impact the bilateral relations negatively, the organization certainly has the potential to do so.

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FIELD REPORTS**BERDIMUHAMEDOV PLANS TO TURN
TURKMENISTAN INTO AN INDUSTRIAL NATION***Tavus Rejepova*

On October 23, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov announced a so-called presidential plan including a five year economic plan for 2012-2016 and vowed to invest 200 billion manats (US\$ 70 billion) into the state and private sectors of the economy to turn Turkmenistan into an industrial state. The plan also aims to bring new reforms in the country's educational, agricultural and energy sectors. Berdimuhamedov unveiled the presidential plan at an annual meeting of the Council of Elders, an advisory body that meets annually and has no legal authority except for lavishing the president's new policy initiatives and decisions with praise.

First, the new economic plan aims to build and reconstruct over 450 industrial facilities and support systems across the country within the next five years. The president emphasized the modernization of existing industrial plants to produce finished and value added products by processing the country's hydrocarbon resources. For example, building a gas-chemical complex within 4-5 years will allow Turkmenistan to establish a sizeable production of polyethylene and polypropylene, according to Berdimuhamedov. The president also directed his Cabinet members to start a pilot project in each province by attaching these upcoming industrial facilities to bigger districts and moving or concentrating the populations of scattered mini-districts and villages closer to these industrial centers. On one hand, the president's economic plan is highly ambitious for a short period of time. On the other, it is unclear how the plan will be implemented in the near term, given the lack of existing infrastructure especially in the provinces.

Developing the country's petrochemical industry to produce finished products and reduce the economy's dependency on raw fuel resources is a prioritized aspect of the economic plan. The building of new industrial facilities will allow for the production and export of products such as caustic soda, chlorine and its derivatives, potassium fertilizers, high grade glass and insulation composite materials of basalt fibers. "The geopolitical situation and fall of oil prices in the world have a negative impact on the export of natural gas via pipelines" said Berdimuhamedov. He stated that Turkmenistan should therefore move away from its resource dependency toward a more diversified economy.

The second aspect of Berdimuhamedov's presidential plan is to reform the educational sector. In particular, the president instructed the Cabinet of Ministers to consider switching the secondary education system from ten to twelve years and to create contract-based educational establishments to provide paid education. Currently, nearly all universities and institutions in Turkmenistan, except for the Turkmen-Turkish University, are run on government subsidies and do not provide paid education. The plan states that creating possibilities for paid education will provide chances for the older generation to obtain education and professional development. The president told the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, and the Central Bank of Turkmenistan to make necessary preparations to deliver paid education starting from the 2013-14 academic year. Critics maintain that such reforms will not be enough to provide a sufficient number of university admissions to alleviate the

country's brain drain; neither will they address the widespread corruption in the admissions process. Currently, between 80,000-90,000 students graduate from secondary schools nationwide and only roughly 5,000 are admitted to higher education due to the limited number of universities in the country.

A third component of the reform addresses agriculture. The president spoke about introducing new technologies in the country's irrigation system and expanding the water-carrying capacity of some of the existing rivers and reservoirs in Turkmenistan. The completion of irrigation projects such as the continued construction of the man-made lake "Altyn Asyr" and the expansion of the Karakum River, which is derived from the Amu Darya River at the border with

Uzbekistan, are expected to provide agricultural growth in the country. However, it is uncertain how Berdimuhamedov's Uzbek counterpart Karimov will react to these initiatives given his adamant opposition to the construction of hydropower stations in upstream countries like Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Domestically, the presidential plan has been promulgated as ushering into what the president himself heralded as the "Epoch of Happiness and Might" in Turkmenistan. However, local and foreign skeptics claim that it will take decades, if not more, to implement such a grandiose and costly economic plan.

FORMER TOP OFFICIALS ARRESTED IN GEORGIA

Eka Janashia

On November 9, Tbilisi's City Court ruled to release the Chief of the Joint Staff of Georgia's armed forces Giorgi Kalandadze and the commander of the 4th army brigade Zurab Shamatava on a GEL 20,000 bail each. However, President Mikheil Saakashvili's long-time ally and once influential government member Bachana Akhalaia was placed in pre-trial detention.

Former Defense and Interior Minister Akhalaia resigned from the post of Interior Minister prior to the October 1 parliamentary polls and left Georgia shortly after the Saakashvili's United National Movement lost the elections. The new ruling party reportedly blamed him for transgressions during his service as chief of the prison system and later as defense minister. Despite a continuous stream of allegations, the former minister suddenly returned back to Georgia on November 5 and said he was ready to confront the "absurd" and "idiotic" assertions the new authorities leveled against him.

On the same day, an investigation under paragraph 3 of article 333 of the criminal code,

which involves "exceeding official powers" resulting in the "insult of a victim's dignity" and envisages imprisonment for five to eight years, was launched. On November 7, law enforcement arrested Akhalaia along with Brigadier-General Kalandadze – a hero of the 2008 August war who was appointed by Saakashvili as Chief of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces shortly after the parliamentary elections – and Zurab Shamatava, commander of 4th brigade of the Georgian armed forces.

The prosecutor's office released written witness statements of five soldiers that buttress the arrest of Akhalaia and the senior army commanders. The former servicemen of the 4th infantry brigade, whose identities have been kept secret, described in their statements how Akhalaia, Kalandadze and Shamatava beat and verbally insulted them at the Ministry of Defense and in the military base in Vaziani in 2011, while Akhalaia occupied the post of Defense Minister.

Later, the prosecutor's office released another testimony by an unidentified victim who told that he was verbally abused and beaten by

Akhalaia and Kalandadze in a restaurant and then taken to a house located in a Tbilisi suburb, on Akhalaia's orders, where he was held for a while. The case carries separate charges against Akhalaia including "illegal deprivation of freedom" regulated by the second and third paragraphs of article 143 of the criminal code which foresees imprisonment between seven and ten years. The detainees' lawyers reported that all three in arrest denied the charges against them.

The UNM termed the legal action a "launch of a campaign of political persecution" against previous administration representatives. The incrimination of Kalandadze, the UNM claims, was dictated by incumbent Defense Minister Irakli Alasania's desire to appoint his associate Vakhtang Kapanadze to the post of Chief of the Joint Staff. As the appointment of the army chief is within the President's authority, Alasania started consultations with the President on the issue on October 31. However, Kapanadze was only allowed to take the post of Deputy Chief, implying that the consultations failed.

Given the sequence of events, the Secretary of the National Security Council, Giga Bokeria, suggested that Kalandadze's arrest was a means to vacate the post for Alasania's confidant Kapanadze. "These steps have already struck a blow to Georgia ... especially in the context of the upcoming NATO [foreign ministerial] summit [in December]," Bokeria said.

In stark contrast to these statements, Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili said that "If illegal acts have been committed – and I think they have been, law enforcement agencies will continue restoring justice in the country."

On November 10, Saakashvili welcomed Kalandadze at the president's palace and charged him to resume his duties. "My advice is to leave it all behind. Get back to the general headquarters and continue your faithful service of the homeland, as you served in past years," the President told Kalandadze.

Meanwhile, the NATO Military Committee postponed its visit to Georgia, initially planned to take place in November. "It is natural that when an event of such scale is being postponed it is related to the situation existing in the country," Georgia's Ambassador to NATO, Grigol Mgaloblishvili said. Nevertheless, Alexi Petriashvili, Georgia's new State Minister on European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, assured that a new date for the NATO delegation's visit to Georgia would be known shortly.

Importantly, Georgia's President and Prime Minister are both to visit Brussels on November 12-14 and hold meetings with NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. The two politicians will thus have a chance to present their own versions of the events taking place in the country.

WORLD BRAND COMPANIES BOYCOTT UZBEK COTTON

Erkin Akhmadov

In early November, the American non-governmental human rights organization "Responsible Sourcing Network", which aims at uniting people for the eradication of slavery in the modern world as well as promoting sustainable development and fair business, announced that more than a hundred world brand companies boycotted

the use of Uzbek cotton and textile for their produce. According to the company's representative, this is an unprecedented number of companies that have joined the campaign against the use of child labor for picking cotton in Uzbekistan, which provides momentum for the campaign as a whole. Some sources suggest, however, that the

Uzbek authorities will not suffer serious losses from the boycott as their produce can be easily directed eastwards.

The campaign against the use of Uzbek cotton started in 2007 when a number of local organizations on labor protection requested the Uzbek authorities to stop the practice of usurping the working population to pick cotton. After several attempts, they changed their requests and addressed the major authorities of Tashkent to allow the International Labor Organization (ILO) to monitor the cotton picking procedures, which Tashkent refused. Thus, the campaign has continued for five years and seems to win new supporters every year. Among them are world fashion and brand companies such as Levi Strauss, Fruit of the Loom, H&M, Gap, Zara, Wal-Mart, Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent and others. This year the boycott was also supported by the American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA), which represents more than 75percent of the American producers in this sphere.

The NGO plans to continue the campaign until the ILO confirms that Uzbekistan has stopped using forced adult and child labor on its cotton fields. The NGO's official site states that the practice of using child labor for cotton picking is spread worldwide. However, nowhere is the organization of such forced labor comparable to that in Uzbekistan, where millions of adults and children go to the fields every fall for almost no money and under careful supervision of law enforcement bodies. According to the calculations of human rights activists, cotton provides the Uzbek government with revenue of over US\$ one billion annually. The major incentive of the companies that joined the boycott is to protest against the use of forced labor, including child labor, on the cotton fields of Uzbekistan. As the analysts of the "Stock Leader" magazine note, using the population to pick cotton in Uzbekistan is a tradition that has its roots in Soviet times, when all labor resources would be mobilized for what was then termed the "fight for harvest," supplying the Soviet textile

industry with cheap raw material. While that time has passed, in Uzbekistan millions of people are called back from enterprises and school children from their studies in the fall for "working" vacations that last for a month or two.

The planning mechanism has also been inherited from the Soviet times, making representatives of local authorities (*hokims*) supply certain amounts of raw cotton from the territories under their authority, and the more they can supply the better. Thus, the cotton is purchased from farmers at very low price, but the state exports the product at a much higher price, ensuring a large difference between export and initial prices.

It should be noted that in spite of an official ban imposed by Uzbekistan's government on the use of child labor for cotton picking, this year children were still involved in this activity. Thus, for instance, the Human Rights Alliance of Uzbekistan held a rally in Yakkabag rayon of Kashqadaryo district and revealed that college and school students were involved in picking cotton.

Meanwhile, the "Stock Leader" magazine notes that the campaign has an insignificant impact on Uzbekistan's government. Almost immediately after the announcement of the boycott, Uzbek authorities decided to redirect cotton exports to China. In fact, China is today one of the leading countries to supply textile to the world market. Furthermore, it would be very hard if not impossible to track which factories use Uzbek cotton. Therefore, the boycotting companies have few options other than asking textile producers to check the origin of cotton suppliers.

The campaign is important as it sends a clear sign of discontent of the major players in the cotton-consuming sector to the government of Uzbekistan. On the other hand, demand produces supply, and if Uzbek cotton suppliers will manage to find alternative consumers of their product, it is very unlikely that the human right activists will be able to lobby their concerns any further and have

any major impact on the policies of the state in this matter.

TAJIK HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS CONDEMN RUSSIAN HANDBOOK FOR LABOR MIGRANTS

Suhrob Majidov

In late October the Russian publishing house *Vzglyad v Budushee* (Look into the future) based in St. Petersburg issued a handbook for foreign labor migrants in Russia. On the first page of the handbook, labor migrants are pictured as tools – a broom, a paint roller, a brush and a spatula, while Russian citizens look like normal people – a policeman, a doctor, a guide, etc. Such depiction of the labor migrants was considered humiliating by human rights activists in the major countries of origin for labor migrants, and Tajikistan was among the first to express concerns. The issue received wide publicity in local and regional media, and the publishing house currently undergoes checking by the Prosecutor General.

The handbook contains fifty pages and has three chapters: legal advice to labor migrants, recommendations for preventing HIV/AIDs, and other useful recommendations. It was issued in four languages: Russian, Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz. The head of the publishing house *Aleksey Hmyrov* said that ten thousand copies of the handbook were published for the first time a year ago, and received no negative feedback at that time. The handbook is spread in St. Petersburg's centers that work with migrants and centers for HIV prophylaxis. They are also available at public transport in certain directions.

Russian and Central Asian human right activists, Diasporas and even the Tajikistan's embassy in Russia have condemned the handbook for the way it represents labor migrants. The head of the center "Migration and Right" *Gavhar Juraeva* thinks that by presenting migrants as tools, the authors of the handbook have depersonalized and humiliated them. *Farrukh Sattorov*, head of the public organization "Young Students of Tajikistan"

in St. Petersburg stated that presenting humans as construction tools is "ethically unacceptable, and the authors of the handbook seek a reverse effect – to humiliate migrants."

Tajikistan's embassy in Russia criticized the handbook stating that "certain people or groups that intentionally create an environment of hatred among nations and nationalities will never reach their goals; as such actions will never get support in a civilized world." The embassy expressed hope that discreditable conduct of the handbook publishers will be seriously examined by the Russian authorities, and that relevant measures will be taken to preclude such cases in the future. Meanwhile, Tajikistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested a halt to the dissemination of the handbook in Russia, as it "does not correspond to the level of friendship and understanding that exists between our states and our people." In addition, it was noted that the Tajik version of the handbook has many orthographic and stylistic mistakes, which does not credit the translator and the publishers of the handbook.

The scandal around the handbook is an especially sensitive issue for Tajikistan in light of an ongoing effort to project a positive image of Tajik labor migrants in Russia. The program seeks to curb elements of xenophobia towards Tajiks in Russia and improve their conditions of labor. As the director of the center "Migration and Development" *Muzaffar Zarirov* notes, the current image of Tajiks in Russia is not the best, as it was formed in early 1990s largely by representatives of Tajik rural areas. Therefore, Tajiks are mainly perceived as seasonal workers, and not like people that may contribute to developing the Russian Federation. This perception is often directed at, for example, members of the Tajik

intelligentsia, which are frequently met with suspicion on arrival in Russian airports. Despite the scandalous depictions, the content of the handbook is considered to be useful by most human rights activists and intended users of the handbook alike. In fact, it does contain information that helps labor migrants register in the accepting country, gives tips on finding a job and where to pass a medical examination, how to stay protected from HIV and so on. It is interesting to note that in the concluding section, migrants are advised to not wear their national clothing in Russia, as “it attracts a lot of attention, which is not always needed.” The content gives the impression that the authors of the handbook indeed had good intentions when compiling the material.

It should be recalled that Tajikistan is a major source country for labor migrants to Russia. Based on various estimates, about 500,000-700,000 Tajiks are currently working in Russia. The amount of remittances they have sent to their families in Tajikistan during the last five years is estimated at US\$ 10 billion. It is highly unlikely that the discontent of human rights activists will affect the flow of labor migrants to Russia from Tajikistan. The economic needs of migrant workers will remain regardless of how they are perceived or treated in the accepting country. The handbook scandal, however, provides an opportunity to raise such issues as intolerance, xenophobia and mistreatment of labor migrants in accepting countries and to demonstrate that their rights can be defended.

NEWS DIGEST

**GEORGIAN PM SAYS TBILISI
WILL NOT RESTORE RUSSIA TIES
SOON**

1 November

Georgia's new Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili says he will not restore diplomatic ties with Russia until Moscow reverses its decision to recognize the independence of two Georgian breakaway regions. Moscow has deployed thousands of troops in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia since recognizing them as independent after the Georgia-Russia war in 2008. Ivanishvili told a news conference in Tbilisi that, "as far diplomatic [relations] are concerned, it can't happen quickly." Ivanishvili said, however, that restoring trade and cultural links with Russia was a "more realistic" goal. His Georgian Dream coalition defeated President Mikheil Saakashvili's party in a parliamentary election a month ago. Ivanishvili has repeatedly blamed Saakashvili for provoking the conflict. (RFE/RL)

**GEORGIA MINISTER SUGGESTS
RECOGNITION OF ID
DOCUMENTS ISSUED BY TWO
BREAKAWAY REGIONS**

2 November

Georgia's reintegration minister says Tbilisi should recognize identification documents issued by the authorities of the country's two breakaway regions. In an interview with Russia's "Kommersant" newspaper, Paata Zakareishvili said the recognition of the documents issued by separatist authorities in Abkhazia and South Ossetia would allow greater freedom of travel between the two regions, Georgia, and Russia. The minister's statement comes a day after former Georgian Ambassador to Russia Zurab Abashidze was appointed as the prime minister's envoy for normalizing relations with Russia. After his appointment, Abashidze said that Tbilisi had

no immediate plans for restoring diplomatic relations with Moscow. Tbilisi broke diplomatic ties with Moscow after the Russian-Georgian military conflict in August 2008. The next month, Moscow recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. (RFE/RL)

**NEW AZERBAIJANI LAW ON
UNSANCTIONED PUBLIC
GATHERINGS**

2 November

Azerbaijan's parliament has adopted amendments to the law on public gatherings which significantly increase fines for illegal demonstrations. The fines have been increased to up to \$10,000 for organizing or participating in unsanctioned public gatherings. Before, the maximum fine was \$640. Carrying firearms, knives, or explosives at such gatherings could now be punished by up to three years' imprisonment. Earlier on November 2, Baku police dispersed dozens of activists protesting the amendments. Several activists were detained and later released. Earlier this week, human rights group Amnesty International called on Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to "end the crackdown on dissent and to ensure that all citizens are able to enjoy their fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association." (RFE/RL)

**RUSSIAN PM: PUSSY RIOT
MEMBERS SHOULD BE RELEASED**

2 November

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev says the two jailed members of the feminist punk performance collective Pussy Riot should be released. Medvedev said on November 2 he disagreed with the group's actions, but that members Maria Alyokhina and Nadezhda Tolokonnikova "have already been in jail long enough." The women were

transferred last week to penal colonies in Mordovia and Perm to begin serving two-year sentences. They were convicted of hooliganism for staging a protest against President Vladimir Putin inside Moscow's largest Orthodox cathedral. Alyokhina and Tolokonnikova had already served more than seven months in pretrial detention together with fellow member Yekaterina Samutsevich. Her sentence was later suspended. The case has drawn international condemnation, with many observers calling the prison terms an attempt by Putin to silence his critics. (RFE/RL)

FOUR KILLED IN SOUTH KYRGYZ MARKET COLLAPSE

4 November

Four people have been found dead in the ruins of a market in the southern Kyrgyz region of Osh following the collapse of a concrete floor on November 3. Five people have been hospitalized, Kyrgyz officials said, and rescue operations are continuing. The collapse occurred in the restrooms area of the Kara-Sui market, the largest market in southern Kyrgyzstan. All of the victims were reported to be Kyrgyz nationals, although the market is usually crowded with merchants from neighboring Uzbekistan and China as well. (RFE/RL)

DAGHESTAN BECOMES HOTBED OF NORTH CAUCASUS INSURGENCY

5 November

Suicide bombings in police stations. Muslim clerics gunned down in broad daylight. Shoot-outs between insurgents and security forces. These have become run-of-the-mill headlines in Russia's troubled North Caucasus region of Daghestan. Last week, unidentified gunmen shot dead an imam and two of his male relatives as they drove to morning prayer in the Daghestani town of Derbent. He is at least the fifth Muslim leader slain this year. Analysts say Daghestan has unquestionably deteriorated into the most unstable republic in the North Caucasus, a region wracked by

conflict and insurgency. But why Daghestan? What are the factors that set the republic apart? Like Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and to a lesser extent Chechnya, Daghestan is a hotbed for the militant Islamist insurgency led by Doku Umarov that seeks to create a so-called pan-Caucasus Islamic caliphate. Widespread unemployment, poor living standards, rights abuses, and resentment of local and federal authorities have spurred new generations to join the insurgency -- or "to go to the forest," as locals say. The difference in Daghestan's case, however, is the cachet that Islam wields in the republic. Analysts say more radical Islamic ideologies such as Salafism have gained a greater foothold in Daghestan than in other North Caucasus republics. ??This, according to Aleksei Malashenko, a Caucasus expert at the Carnegie Moscow Center, sets Daghestan apart from its neighbors. "The difference consists in the [presence of] very strong nonofficial Islam and very strong Islam within the opposition," he says. "There is also a difference in the level of Islamization. Daghestan is the most Islamized republic in the region." This distinction aggravates many of the riffs in Daghestan. It cuts directly along the fault lines that divide adherents of traditional from nontraditional Islam; the Islamic opposition from the local administration; and the adherents of Shari'a law from the population that opposes cultural and social drift from Russia's orbit. The killing of the Salafi imam on October 30, for example, illustrated the tensions between the Sufi and Salafi communities. Analysts say it appears to have been a revenge attack by powerful Sufi groups. Kalimulla Ibragimov, 49, was well known locally as an imam who worked at an unregistered mosque in Derbent that was dedicated to the Salafi branch of Islam, which is considered more radical than Sufism and is shunned by the authorities as extreme. Mairbek Vatchagayev, a North Caucasus analyst for the think tank Jamestown and head of the Paris-based Center for Caucasus Research, says Ibragimov's assassination had all the hallmarks of a

revenge attack. He notes that Ibragimov's assassination fell only days after Sufi groups marked one year since Sufi Sheikh Sirajuddin Israfilov was killed. "I think we can talk about an element of revenge here from proponents of Sufi who decided a year after the death of their imam to carry out a strike on those for whom they believe their sheikh may have been killed," Vatchagaev says. These kinds of attacks are likely to radicalize more moderate Salafists and stymie any reconciliation with adherents of the more mystical Sufi branch of Islam. Ibragimov, in turn, was dubbed a "martyr" by the Kavkaz Center website, which is widely viewed as a rebel mouthpiece. Analysts say imams make for attractive targets because they are high-profile public figures and also physically vulnerable to attack. In contrast with those in Chechnya, imams in Daghestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria do not receive official armed guards. Malashenko estimates that in the last six years, over 37 imams and muftis have been killed across the North Caucasus from Karachai-Cherkessia to Daghestan. On October 16, President Vladimir Putin called on Russia's security and law enforcement officials to work "as decisively as possible" to quash the insurgency ahead of key events like the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. Putin also confirmed what many analysts have long claimed -- that the Russian military is involved in the "counterterrorist" operations in Daghestan. Malashenko speculates that the use of the army will not alleviate the situation. He says the move instead underlines the failure of Kremlin policy in the republic. "The only way that exists in Putin's brain is to fight -- to send more and more military men," he says. "It leads to nothing. They have done this so many times and in practice it proves that there is a civil war in Daghestan." Putin estimated that Russian special operations have caught 479 "bandits" and killed 313 "terrorists," including 43 insurgency "leaders" in the North Caucasus. But Vatchagayev says these operations are not having a noticeable impact in Daghestan. "If we look at Ingushetia or Kabardino-Balkaria,

then we can see an element of stagnation -- the authorities are trying to counteract and are carrying out very serious blows on the insurgents. Even if the situation is not under control there, the authorities have managed to stop the increase in the actions of the insurgents," he says. "But in Daghestan for the last four years all we have seen is an increase," he continues. "We have not reached the peak. I think there is a long way to go till the peak." (RFE/RL)

UZBEKISTAN JAILS THREE WOMEN FOR SPYING FOR TAJIKISTAN

5 November

Uzbek officials have announced that three women from the southeastern region of Surhondaryo have been jailed for spying for neighboring Tajikistan. A televised statement on November 5 said the three women had received between 14 and 15 years in jail. Investigators say two of the women are Uzbek citizens and the third is a Tajik-born woman without any citizenship. Investigators say they received payments from the Tajik secret services for information about Uzbek military and law-enforcement buildings. No other information has been made public. Uzbek-Tajik relations have been strained for years due to disputes over water and energy resources as well as transit routes. Tashkent has cut electricity and natural-gas supplies and closing road and railway connections between the two countries in recent years. (RFE/RL)

KAZAKHSTAN TO OPEN CONSULATE IN KAZAN

5 November

The president of Russia's Republic of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnikhanov, has said that a Kazakh consulate would be opened soon in the Tatar capital, Kazan. Minnikhanov made the statement in Kazan during a meeting with a visiting Kazakh delegation led by the chairman of Kazakhstan's National Economic Chamber, Timur Kulibaev. The two sides discussed bilateral economic cooperation in machine building, energy, and trade.

Kazakhstan has deep-rooted economic, historical, linguistic, and cultural ties with nearby Tatarstan. (RFE/RL)

RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MEETS TOP SYRIAN DEFECTOR IN JORDAN

6 November

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has held a rare meeting with a high-level Syrian opposition figure. Lavrov met with former Syrian Prime Minister Riad Hijab in Amman on November 6. Hijab defected to Jordan in August. After the meeting, Lavrov accused the opposition of prolonging the bloodshed by demanding that President Bashar al-Assad step down before talks on ending the conflict in Syria, which began during Arab Spring-style uprisings in early 2011. Lavrov also said rebels fighting against Assad's regime have obtained 50 shoulder-launched Stinger missiles. He did not say how they obtained the U.S.-made weapons. Hijab said that Assad's removal was "the only way out." Syria's state-run news agency, meanwhile, reported that "terrorists" killed Muhammad al-Laham, the brother of Syrian parliament speaker Jihad al-Laham, in Damascus on November 6. Russia and China have resisted Western-led efforts to punish the regime in Damascus for its role in the bloodshed, which some activists say has taken at least 35,000 lives. The United Nations puts the death toll above 20,000. British Prime Minister David Cameron has said he would agree to granting Assad safe passage out of Syria to end the bloodshed in the country. He also reportedly said that he was "certainly not offering [Assad] an exit plan to Britain" and that he would "favor [Assad] facing the full force of international law and justice for what he's done." (RFE/RL)

RUSSIA TO FINANCE VIETNAM'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

7 November

Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has announced that Russia is to lend Vietnam some \$10 billion to build that country's first

nuclear power plant. Medvedev made the announcement on a visit to Hanoi where he is holding talks on boosting trade ties. Medvedev also said the two countries have decided to start negotiations on a free trade agreement. He said bilateral trade could reach \$7 billion by 2015, up from less some \$2 billion in 2011. Medvedev also called for increased cooperation in oil and gas exploration, including more joint investment among the countries' energy companies. Medvedev arrived in Hanoi from neighboring Laos where he attended a regional Asia-Europe meeting. (RFE/RL)

KYRGYZ PARTY SHOWS ITS COLORS, AND THEY LOOK RUSSIAN

8 November

For years, Kyrgyzstan's Ar-Namys (Dignity) party opted for a simple white-on-blue pattern for its banners and flags. But with the country preparing for key local elections later this month, the party has rolled out a new design that has critics crying foul. The fresh look, seen on billboards and posters throughout the capital, Bishkek, shows the party's top candidate, Omurbek Suvanaliev, photographed against a striped background that bears a marked resemblance to the white-blue-and-red of the Russian flag. Observers say the redesign is a blatant attempt to win votes from Kyrgyzstan's roughly 200,000 ethnic Russians. Activist Ilya Lukash says it's not the first time Ar-Namys and party leader Feliks Kulov have sought to create a visual association with Russia. "Ar-Namys has been doing things like this for a long time. [Ahead of parliamentary elections] in 2010, for example, the party used a photograph in which Feliks Kulov was shown together with Dmitry Medvedev," Lukash says. "These things show that Ar-Namys is a pro-Russian party. So it's hard to say that the use of the Russian colors is a simple coincidence." The image of the Ar-Namys leader with the then-Russian president proved so provocative that the Kyrgyz parliament later imposed a ban on such photographs for campaign materials. But

the ban stopped short of prohibiting other, more subtle, forms of association -- like color schemes that may or may not resemble another country's flag. Ar-Namys, which was formed in 1999, has never made a secret of its close ties to Moscow. United Russia, the ruling party of President Vladimir Putin, granted the party a valuable endorsement ahead of the 2010 parliamentary vote. And Kulov, a onetime prime minister and mayor of Bishkek, is among a small group of Kyrgyz politicians to openly maintain ties with Moscow as it seeks to restore the Kremlin's historical influence in Central Asia.

Abdymomun Mamaraimov, a former member of the Kyrgyz Central Election Commission, condemned the new Ar-Namys promotional materials, saying, "it's wrong to involve another country in our own internal affairs just because of political sympathies."

Suvaliev -- a former interior minister known as the "Kyrgyz Cattani," after the police chief hero of the Italian TV series "La Piovra" -- has dismissed any intentional resemblance between the party posters and the Russian flag. "The Russian flag is composed of three colors: red, blue, and white. We have just two colors. Probably when they hung the posters, the borders looked white," Suvaliev said. "And that's how the whole debate got started." Suvaliev accused party critics of engaging in "dirty PR," but also noted that Ar-Namys would soon change the color of its flag to white and red. The November 25 elections will determine the composition of city and village councils throughout Kyrgyzstan. But for most parties, the key contest is the 45-seat city council in Bishkek. The council is responsible for electing the city's mayor, and is also seen as a springboard for many politicians looking to build a career at the national level. (RFE/RL)

GEORGIAN COURT RELEASES MILITARY OFFICIALS ON BAIL, EX-INTERIOR MINISTER STILL HELD

9 November

A court in Tbilisi has released two military officials on bail but left a former interior minister in pretrial detention. Georgia's armed forces chief of staff Giorgi Kalandadze and Georgian Army brigade commander Zurab Shamatava were released on bail of 20 thousand laris (\$9,400). Georgia's former interior minister, Bacho Akhalaia, was ordered to be kept in pretrial detention for two months. The three were arrested and charged with abuse of office earlier this week. Prosecutors had demanded that all three remain be held in pretrial detention. Earlier on November 9, 29 members of parliament representing President Mikheil Saakashvili's United National Movement party requested the trio's release on bail. Saakashvili's party became a parliamentary minority after it was defeated by current Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition during elections last month. Meanwhile, in related news, a NATO official has told RFE/RL that a visit by the alliance's Military Committee to Tbilisi has had to be rescheduled because of the current political situation in Georgia. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said on November 9 that "recent events in Georgia make it difficult for both sides to fully benefit from the visit at this time." Georgia's Minister for Integration into European Institutions, Aleksii Petriashvili, told journalists on the same day that the NATO committee's visit has been postponed due to the arrest of Georgia's armed forces chief of staff. The chief of staff, Giorgi Kalandadze, Georgian Army brigade commander Zurab Shamatava, and former Interior Minister Bacho Akhalaia, were jailed this week and charged with abuse of office. According to Petriashvili, the rescheduling of the committee's visit will not affect Tbilisi-NATO relations. (RFE/RL)

EU OFFICIAL DENIED BAKU PRISON HOSPITAL VISIT DESPITE PRESIDENTIAL PROMISE 9 November

European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes of the Netherlands was barred from

visiting a penitentiary hospital in Baku, despite President Ilham Aliyev's permission to do so. Kroes told journalists in Baku that she met with Azerbaijan's president on November 6 and he agreed she could visit the hospital to observe the conditions for inmates there. Kroes said that when she arrived at the prison hospital, officials would not allow her into the building. She said that in her country, "if a president says something, it is always done, as in any democratic country." A spokesman for Azerbaijan's Penitentiary Service, Mehman Sadiqov, told RFE/RL that Kroes' visit to the penitentiary hospital did not take place because of "protocol issues." (RFE/RL)

UZBEK COURT REVERSES DECISION TO SEIZE RUSSIAN MOBILE OPERATOR'S ASSETS

9 November

The Tashkent City Court in Uzbekistan has reversed a September ruling to seize assets belonging to Russia's largest mobile telecommunications company. According to the November 9 decision, the company, MTS, was ordered to pay a \$600 million penalty to compensate for alleged tax evasion and embezzlement at the company's Uzbek subsidiary, Uzdurobta. The decision comes a week after Russian investigators seized a Moscow apartment worth \$10 million belonging to Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of Uzbekistan's president. The apartment was seized in connection with a criminal investigation into the confiscation of MTS property and assets in Uzbekistan. In September, the Tashkent Criminal Court sentenced four managers of the MTS subsidiary to three-year suspended sentences and ordered the confiscation of the subsidiary's assets.

PROMINENT KAZAKH JOURNALIST FINED FOR LIBEL, AGAIN

9 November

A court in Kazakhstan's western city of Oral has again fined an opposition journalist for libel. Lukpan Akhmedyarov and his

employer, the "Uralskaya nedelya" weekly, were ordered to pay 1.5 million tenges (\$7,700) to a local finance police officer for allegedly insulting him in an article. In July, Akhmedyarov was found guilty of insulting a local official and ordered to pay him 5 million tenges (\$33,000). The international media group Reporters Without Borders condemned the court's decision then. The group called it a move "to strangle the journalist financially." In April, Akhmedyarov survived a vicious attack in which he was stabbed and shot with an air pistol. Last month, Akhmedyarov received the prestigious Peter Mackler Award for Courageous and Ethical Journalism at a ceremony in the United States. (RFE/RL)

DOZENS PICKET KYRGYZ PARLIAMENT, DEMAND RELEASE OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

12 November

Dozens of activists, including many elderly men, have picketed outside Kyrgyzstan's parliament in Bishkek to continue pressure since authorities detained three opposition leaders after violence marred a protest. The protesters at the November 12 picket were demanding the immediate release of three opposition members of parliament -- Kamchybek Tashiev, Sadyr Japarov, and Talant Mamytov -- all of whom are leaders of the opposition Ata-Jurt (Homeland) party. They have been charged with provoking public unrest in connection with an October 3 demonstration in the capital to demand the nationalization of the largest gold-mining operation in Kyrgyzstan, the Kumtor mine, which is owned by a Canada-based company. That gathering was attended by about 1,000 demonstrators. In addition to freedom for the detained men, the picketers, who call themselves the National Patriotic Movement, told RFE/RL that they also demand the dismissal of the parliament, the holding of early parliamentary election, the nationalization of all industrial facilities and mines in the country, and the adoption of a new Kyrgyz constitution. The elderly protesters performed an Islamic prayer near

the parliament to support the detained men. On October 5, the trio's preliminary arrest was extended to two months. (RFE/RL)

NATO CHIEF EXPRESSES CONCERNS OVER GEORGIA ARRESTS

12 November

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen says he is "extremely concerned" about political developments in Georgia since last month's parliamentary elections. He discussed his concerns during a November 12 meeting of NATO's Parliamentary Assembly in Prague. "[There's] no reason to hide that I am extremely concerned about the development we have seen since [the elections], not least related to recent arrests of political opponents in Georgia," Rasmussen said. "It's for the legal system, the judicial system in Georgia to sort out these cases but of course it's important that such trials are not undermined by political interference and we will of course follow that development very, very closely." On November 9, a Georgian court released armed forces chief of staff Giorgi Kalandadze and Georgian Army brigade commander Zurab Shamatava on bail but left former Interior Minister Bacho Akhalaia in pretrial detention. Akhalaia was ordered to be kept in pretrial detention for two months. The three were arrested and charged with abuse of office last week. All three worked under President Mikheil Saakashvili. Rasmussen said that "it's important that such trials are not undermined by political interference." Saakashvili also attended the NATO meeting in Prague. In an interview with RFE/RL, he said he agreed with Rasmussen's comments. "The main challenge for us is to have the process of law, which is to say it's not about the culpability or innocence of certain individuals. It's about the rule of law and the due process of law," Saakashvili said. "From that point of view, of course, we have lots of concerns. And hopefully it can be remedied, and we can find a way to reverse it, but at this stage I think the language used by [Secretary-General Rasmussen] expressing

strong concern is pretty valid." Saakashvili's United National Movement lost the October 11 parliamentary elections to new Bidzina Ivanishvili's Georgian Dream coalition. Ivanishvili, who was confirmed as prime minister atop a new government on October 25, has vowed to take action against former officials suspected of wrongdoing. Rasmussen's remarks came as Ivanishvili was in Brussels on his first official trip abroad since the elections. He was expected to meet with Rasmussen during his three-day trip. On November 12, he met with European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and European Council President Herman van Rompuy. At a news conference, Barroso reiterated the importance of the European Union's relationship with Georgia. "I see the [Georgian] Prime Minister [Ivanishvili's] choice to visit Brussels in his first official trip abroad as a clear sign of Georgia's continued engagement with the European Union," Barroso said. "Georgia is a key member of our Eastern Partnership [program] and European Union is keen in bringing the country closer to the European Union." Ivanishvili said Georgia's integration with the European Union and NATO were his government's priorities. His trip to Brussels -- less than two weeks after taking office -- is widely seen as a signal to the West that ties with NATO and Europe, rather than Russia, remain Georgia's top priority. The 56-year-old billionaire businessman made most of his fortune in Russia. He has promised to improve relations with Moscow that were damaged in 2008 after a brief war between the two countries. (RFE/RL)

