

**Central Asia**

**Caucasus**

**ANALYST**

**BIWEEKLY BRIEFING**

**Wednesday, October 22, 2003**

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BIWEEKLY BRIEFING

Wednesday/October 22, 2003

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## EDITORIAL PRINCIPLES

*The Analyst* is an English language global Web journal devoted to analysis of the current issues facing the Central Asia-Caucasus region. It serves to link the business, governmental, journalistic and scholarly communities and is the global voice of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, The Johns Hopkins University-The Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. The Editor of the Analyst solicits most articles and field reports however authors may suggest topics for future issues or submit articles and field reports for consideration. Such articles and field reports cannot have been previously published in any form, must be written in English, and must correspond precisely to the format and style of articles and field reports published in *The Analyst* ([www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org)) and described below.

The Analyst aims to provide our industrious and engaged audience with a singular and reliable assessment of events and trends in the region written in an analytical tone rather than a polemical one. *Analyst* articles reflect the fact that we have a diverse international audience. While this should not affect what author's write about or their conclusions, this does affect the tone of articles. Analyst articles focus on a newsworthy topic, engage central issues of the latest breaking news from the region and are backed by solid evidence. Each 700-900 word analytical article must offer a concise and authoritative statement of the event or issue in question. An article must provide relevant, precise and authoritative background information. It also must offer a sober and analytical judgment of the issue as well as a clinical evaluation of the importance of the event. Authors must cite facts of controversial nature to the Editor who may contact other experts to confirm claims. Since *Analyst* articles are based on solid evidence, rather than rumors or conjecture, they prove to be reliable sources of information on the region. By offering balanced and objective analysis while keeping clear of inflammatory rhetoric, The Analyst does more to inform our international readership on all sides of the issues.

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### **Analytical Articles:**

Analytical articles require a three to four sentence introduction to the article based on a news hook. Rather than a general, overarching analysis, the article must offer considered and careful judgment supported with concrete examples.

Analytical article structure:

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

**BACKGROUND:** 200-300 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:** 200-300 words of analysis of the ramifications of this event or issue, including where applicable, implications for the local people's future.

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

### **Specifications for Field Reports:**

Field Reports focus on a particular news event and what local people think about the event, or about the work of an NGO. Field Reports address the implications the event or activity analyzed has for peoples' lives and their communities. Field Reports do not have the rigid structure of Analytical Articles, and are shorter in length, averaging ca. 500-700 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: [svante.cornell@pcr.uu.se](mailto:svante.cornell@pcr.uu.se) and suggest some topics on which you would like to write.

**Svante E. Cornell**, Editor  
 Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst  
 Central Asia-Caucasus Institute  
 The Johns Hopkins University  
 Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies  
 1619 Massachusetts Ave. N.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20036  
 Tel. +1-202-663-7712; 1-202-663-7721  
 Fax. +1-202-663-7785; 1-253-550-4390

## COMMON ECONOMIC SPACE THREATENS INDEPENDENCE OF SOUTH CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

Ariel Cohen

*On September 19, 2003, Russia and three of its trading partners – Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan – signed an agreement on a Common Economic Space (CES). The body is sometimes also referred as the United Economic Space (UES). This economic zone is a new attempt at integration between Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan, countries that comprise 90% of Russia's trade with the Commonwealth of Independent States.*

**BACKGROUND:** The CES is an ambitious project, aimed at maximizing Moscow's political and economic power. The CES is multi-phase agreement, which proclaims that each member state will be able to control the speed of integration. However, the goal is ambitious: the free economic space should be completed in 5-7 years whereas the EU took over five decades to construct.

The first phase will coordinate customs duties and harmonize trade legislation and custom regulations. The second phase aims at lifting current trade barriers exemptions and creating a customs union. In the third phase, "internal customs boundaries will be liquidated, a common customs boundary will be formed, and a supra-national regulating institution will start functioning through member countries' voluntary assignment of functions", Interfax quoted the agreement.

As with the EU, the Russian-led quartet is aspiring to produce a single powerhouse economic zone that would generate growth and foreign investment. However, this agreement did not come to fruition easily. Elites in Belarus and Ukraine have reservations about re-integrating with Russia and sacrifice their national sovereignty. Similarly, their counterparts in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as in Uzbekistan, who tasted the forbidden fruit of independence, would rather make often lucrative economic decisions themselves ad hoc, and not delegate them to an anonymous "supra-national body" on New Arbat.

While the leaders of the signatory nations had been meeting frequently to review the drafts, fissures had emerged even prior to the signing ceremony. A point of contention between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Presidents Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine and Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus was the juxtaposition of future membership in the EU and WTO vis-à-vis their membership in the CES. "The Ukrainian parliament will not vote on this agreement in its current form," a senior Ukrainian diplomat who requested anonymity said, commenting on the agreement.

Before the Yalta conference, Ukrainian Justice Minister Alexander Lavrinovich, announced that some articles of the draft agreement were in violation of the Ukrainian constitution, which prohibits the assigning of any national powers to a supra-national entity. Similar restrictions exist in constitutions of other post-Soviet states. Moreover, parliaments in several countries, such as Georgia, are unlikely to ratify participation in such a supra-national body only 12 years after gaining independence.

Yet, according to Vyacheslav Nikonov, President of the Politika Foundation in Moscow and grandson of Stalin's Prime Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, writing in *Pravda*, the general support for Ukraine joining the free economic space was considerable. Both the United Social Democratic Party and the Working Ukraine Party were in full support of joining the free economic space. These two parties shared the opinion that joining this free economic zone would not deter Ukraine's chances for eventually entering the EU. On the other hand, Ukrainian national-democrats led by former Prime Minister Viktor Yushchenko have threatened to stymie ratification.

Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev flatly stated that the "club" will be closed and should not accept any new members, while Putin would like to have an open admission policy – with himself as a gatekeeper. Nazarbayev understands that with the exception of Belarus, most of the "winners" in the CIS are joining the new zone, and he wants to keep the poor cousins out. Putin, on the other hand, understands the leverage Russia will receive as the "majority stakeholder" in the new economic bloc, and will be willing to wield clout vis-à-vis Central Asian and the three states of the Caucasus.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The accord, if implemented, will marginalize CIS countries such as Georgia, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan, who are WTO members. Analysts are at a loss how WTO regulations can be reconciled with those of the CES. And it will be run by "supra-national regulatory bodies," likely to be based in Moscow, which no doubt will be Russian-dominated.

Central Asian and Caucasian leaders view Putin's new "zone" with understandable suspicion. Potential candidates for Putin's club were all present in Yalta. Ten out of the twelve CIS presidents were present; ailing President Heydar Aliyev was represented by his son, Prime Minister Ilham Aliyev, who went on to be elected President on October 15. President Saparmurad Niyazov Turkmenbashi of Turkmenistan was noticeable in his absence.

Ilham Aliev, Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze and Armenian president Kocharyan praised the economic union. They could not act otherwise: as in the case of Central America and the United States, over a million each of Azerbaijanis, Armenians, and Georgians are employed in Russia as guest workers and support families back home to the tune of double digits of the national GDP, allegedly up to a third in certain cases.

The further closure of borders would be a massive blow to South Caucasian economies which are dependent on Russia in terms of

trade and railroad links. And a customs union, allowing the free movement of goods, will encourage foreign investment in CES – a market of 214 million consumers, and not located in small and unstable markets such as the South Caucasian states.

U.S. officials expressed concern about the new body. Reportedly, last minute maneuvers by U.S. Ambassador to Kyiv, John Herbst caused Vladimir Putin's ire on the eve of the Camp David summit with George W. Bush. U.S. officials have grounds for concern, as they seek to prevent the emergence of a new Russian-dominated entity in Eurasia. Their policy responses were limited, however, since Washington needed Russian support on the U.N. Security Iraq peacekeeping resolution and in the war on terrorism. Thus, the U.S. is likely to acquiesce with the emergence of the new Eurasian economic bloc.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The four-way summit took place in Yalta, a highly symbolic venue, where in 1945 President Franklin D.

Roosevelt and the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill abandoned Central Europeans to the mercies of "Uncle Joe" Stalin. If successful, the new entity may replace the historic Romanov and communist empires. The dreams of the czars and the commissars, of one empire stretching eleven time zones from Brest to Vladivostok, be it under a two-headed eagle or under the hammer-and-sickle red flag, may be dead. A new empire, however, may be in the making. Anatoly Chubais, the controversial architect of the Russian privatization, has called it a "liberal empire" and even put a timeframe on its creation: 50 years. His boss, Vladimir Putin, on the eve of Spring 2004 presidential elections, may be a man in hurry, attempting to impose a more ambitious schedule.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Ariel Cohen is Research Fellow at The Heritage Foundation and the author of *Russian Imperialism: Development and Crisis*, Praeger, 1998. Special thanks to Irene Gorelik for assistance in the research of this article.

## INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF "CIVIL SOCIETY AGAINST CORRUPTION"

*Ms. Tolekan Ismailova was previously the founder of the NGO "Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society". However, considering that the presidential elections 2000 were held with fraud and violations; Feliks Kulov remains in jail, while the Aksy offenders are still on high ranking positions in Government; and the recent closure of the "Moya Stolitsa" and "Kyrgyz Ordo" newspapers, she decided to create the NGO "Civil Society against Corruption" to train local activists on prevention of corruption matters in the future.*

As parliamentary (2004) and presidential elections (2005) are approaching, Ms. Ismailova envisions an NGO program that will enable hundreds of civil society activists to play a greater role in holding the government accountable through the electoral process. She started to work on this project after an internship program in Washington.

*Ms. Ismailova, what is your assessment of the current legislation on corruption in Kyrgyz Republic?*

The legislation of Kyrgyzstan is imperfect, because it was based on the proposals of some deputies. Among them was also Mr. Sultanov, who had accused NGO "Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society" and me on biased reporting when he was elected to Parliament in 2000. We think the legislation had been devised and accepted without participation of civil society. This is why it should be reconsidered and improved with new proposals of social activists.

*Recently rights activists in Kyrgyzstan, including your NGO, protested against the OSCE Law Enforcement assistance to the Government. What are the reasons for this?*

First of all, it is vital to mention that we had heard about the agreement between the OSCE and the Kyrgyz Government from a third party – partners in the Netherlands – and expressed our protest. The OSCE had passed over in silence this event from local NGOs until signing the agreement. The OSCE intended to spend 4 million euros on it and

had already delivered ammunition (handcuffs, cars, gases) to local police structures. In essence, the strengthening of the governmental power occurred. Such assistance already displayed results in the recent elections in Azerbaijan, and the mass clashes there. Many citizens were injured. The OSCE claims this cooperation aims to improve police methods of crowd control and preventing public disorder. When we asked OSCE head in Kyrgyzstan Mr. Aydin Edil "have you ever seen public disorders in Kyrgyzstan emerging without reason?" He has not answered.

*How would you assess the events of last year – the referendum, and the creation of a media council?*

The process of general strengthening of the executive power at the local levels is continuing. The referendum held in February was not democratic. It was a referendum without democracy. For example, articles 46 and 47 of the new constitution reinforce the power of the Office of the Public Prosecutor: they can arrest citizen of Kyrgyzstan and imprison them without court or trial. These are Stalinist measures. The Media Council was created as a regulative mechanism of the Government and presidential administration. Actually, a process of return to feudal relations can be seen. Firstly, authorities tried to influence our and other NGOs via law-enforcement structures. The result was unsuccessful. Now, they attempt to do that via the media council – actually the introduction of censorship in the mass media. With the statements of media council independence, Askar Akaev throws dust in the eyes of the international community. Actually, this Council is under the control of the government. This is why we condemn cooperation of international organizations with the government in the framework of the media council.

*How effective was the program of elections to institutions of local government that was conducted in cooperation with international organizations?*

The Central Election Committee regulates these elections, because it informs the electorate two days prior to elections day. The elections in Bishkek, Karakol, Balyckhi and other cities was held in this way. People practically did not take part in the elections, and did not have time to familiarize themselves with the programs of candidates. From another standpoint, we could not keep up with physically preparing and conducting monitoring of these elections. Virtually, the Central Election Committee enforced its power. We think international organizations should work with local NGOs rather than with the government.

*What will be the outcome of the presidential elections of 2005?*

We do not know. Mr. Akayev won previous elections thanks to elderly people (veterans of WWII, pensioners and aksakals) and youth. Elderly people are satisfied with the reforms Mr. Akayev conducts and do not need dramatic changes. As for youth, in fact, the president appoints all heads of Universities; they lobby the presidential administration. In response, we are creating "islands of democracy" in each University (elections of the president of University), soon we will create the institute of ombudsman in one of the universities.

We think the role of the Central Election Committee should be reformed. We worry more about the preparation process of the elections rather than the outcome of elections itself. Everything depends on the choice of Kyrgyzstan's citizens. Our task is to report this procedure from all sides so that the electorate, especially the youth, can take objective decisions.

**Aziz Soltobaev**

## AZERI POLITICS: A NEW REALITY AFTER ELECTIONS?

**Fariz Ismailzade**

*On October 15, Azerbaijani voters went to the polls to choose a president for the next five years. The election was considered an important improvement over earlier elections, although fraud still marred the election process, and the election campaign was highly skewed. The most prominent opposition leaders refused to recognize the elections, leading to violence in the streets of Baku, and a crackdown on opposition forces. While the president-elect is generally accepted domestically and internationally, both the ruling elite and the opposition have important internal restructuring ahead of them, and need to figure out constructive ways to move ahead and defuse the increased polarization of Azerbaijani politics.*

**BACKGROUND:** Incumbent President Heydar Aliyev stepped down 13 days prior to the race, thus ending his nearly 34 year long reign and paving the way for his son Ilham to succeed him. According to the final results from the Central Election Commission, Prime Minister Ilham Aliyev received 76.84 percent of the cast votes and his closest rival Isa Gambar of the Musavat party received 13.97 percent of the votes. Six other candidates did not collect more than four percent of the votes.

International Election Observation Missions deployed by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe consisted of some 600 observers. They generally noted that the voting process was orderly and that a number of safeguards were implemented to prevent election fraud. These safeguards included the use of transparent ballot boxes, envelopes for ballots, publication of precinct results on the internet and the posting of the final protocols. Yet, the elections were still characterized as fraudulent, as a number of irregularities including ballot stuffing, observer restriction, and problems with the counting and tabulation of votes took place. Peter Eicher, Head of the ODIHR Observation Mission, noted that observers were "particularly troubled by the level of intimidation and unequal conditions for candidates during the campaign. Future progress towards democratic elections will depend first and foremost on the political will of the authorities."

The Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe, in a dissenting statement, argued that the OSCE and COE statements were mild and downplayed the scope and significance of electoral fraud committed during the election. The IDEE highlighted the problems of biased media during the campaign period, ballot stuffing and observer intimidation on election day, and fraud in the counting, tabulation and protocol completion after the voting. While authorities refuted news reports of mass falsifications, the CEC cancelled the results of the voting in 694 polling stations.

The opposition refused to recognize the legitimacy of the elections. The most radical members of the Musavat, Hope and Democratic parties (the latter led and financed by exiled former Speaker of Parliament Rasul Guliyev) clashed with

the police and army during unauthorized rallies after the elections, in which close to 10,000 people participated, leading to scores of injured on both sides and at least two fatalities. Police used tear gas to disperse the crowd, which raged on to break shop and car windows. A Journalist's Rights group stated that nearly 80 journalists were beaten, harassed and detained during these clashes. Authorities arrested close to 400 opposition members both in Baku and throughout the country. Isa Gambar was put under house arrest and his deputies were detained.

International organizations and the U.S. government called upon the Azeri government to restrain its punitive actions against the opposition parties. "We are worried about tensions arising from the low level of mutual trust within society," said Giovanni Kessler, Head of the Observer Delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. "We urge all parties to exercise restraint. This election shows an increased vitality of political life and serious efforts in Azerbaijan towards democracy and international standards."

**IMPLICATIONS:** This election opens a new era in Azerbaijan's politics. Guillermo Martinez-Casan, Head of Delegation of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, said: "We hope this election could mark the beginning of a new era in Azerbaijan in which progress could be achieved through trust, confidence-building and co-operation of all democratic forces in the country."

Most domestic analysts predict that this election puts an end to the political careers of some opposition leaders and their parties. Etibar Mamedov of the National Independence party, a leader of the dissident anti-Soviet movement and first runner-up to the 1998 Presidential elections, finished fourth this time in a weak showing. Most of his supporters as well as regular members of Musavat, ADP and other parties have started either leaving their parties or creating factions within them. Regional branches of the opposition parties are being either voluntarily or forcefully dissolved. Thus, the opposition is expected to be significantly re-shuffled and new leaders are likely to emerge. The popular independent TV channel ANS has already called on the opposition leaders to step down and hold internal elections within their parties.

Another re-shuffle will take place within the ruling party, YAP. Although temporarily united prior to the elections, the

competing factions of YAP are likely to re-start their rivalry over influence on Ilham Aliyev, who is thought to be less skilled than his father in balancing the interests of competing factions. Should Ilham choose one side over another, the fragmentation of the ruling elite will not be preventable.

Finally, the extreme polarization of the Azerbaijani political scene has reached dangerous level and any further alienation of the opposition will lead to further instability and violence in the country. The opposition forces believe that they have no avenues for political participation, as all elections are rigged. Thus, it will be in Ilham Aliyev's interest to open some avenues, such as the upcoming municipal elections in 2004 for the healthier segments of the Azerbaijani opposition to participate meaningfully. Most regular citizens have completely lost faith in the established opposition parties. Trust in opposition leaders was already low before the elections due to their inability to unite and field a single candidate. Their failure to prevent – and in some cases their active instigation of – violence on the streets of Baku has further damaged their standing.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The October 15 presidential elections ended Heydar Aliyev's long-term dominance and opened up new opportunities for political development in the country. Despite fraudulent elections, Ilham Aliyev is generally

accepted as a legitimate president both domestically and abroad. His popularity and name recognition is high and is likely to remain so, provided that the government continues to develop its oil resources and to improve the welfare of citizens. Ilham also needs to prove his leadership by initiating reforms sooner rather than later, and urgently and publicly addressing the concerns arisen in the post-election unrest.

Time is needed for the opposition to settle down after the elections. Their number one task in the short term is to avoid mass arrest and complete disappearance. International assistance in this matter is urgently required. It is most likely that the current opposition leaders will have to resign or their parties will face the danger of a split. Most current leaders date from the Soviet era and seem to be unskilled for political competition under the current realities of Azerbaijan. On the other hand, it is a high time for the ruling party to start thinking of power-sharing with some opposition groups in order to avoid further violence or the salience of Islamic Radicalism.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Fariz Ismailzade is a freelance analyst on Caucasus politics and economics. He holds a master's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and is a regular contributor for various international media outlets.

## CAN ISLAM BE STRONG AND POPULAR OPPOSITION IN UZBEKISTAN?

*For several centuries, the territory of Uzbekistan has been playing an important role in the development and rise of Islam in Central Asia. Cities like Bukhara and Samarkand were Islamic centers in Central Asia. Today being an Islamic country, Uzbekistan tries to create a secular state, but it becomes really difficult especially under the regime of Mr. Karimov.*

In the past, the territory of Uzbekistan was famous for its Islamic schools, which were located in Bukhara and Samarkand, and for theologians like Imam Al-Bukhari, who was one of the several scholars in the Islamic world, who collected the majority of the Hadith (the stories from the life of Prophet Mohammed). Being an Islamic center in Central Asia, the population of Uzbekistan is on the whole composed of more pious followers of Islam than the people of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. But today, Uzbekistan's government tries to build a secular state, while fighting against radical movements such as the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Wahhabi and Hizb-ut-Tahrir. This struggle started in 1995 when radical movements actively involved in the politics tried to form an organized opposition to the regime led by Islam Karimov. In February 1999, an attempt to assassinate the president failed. Since that time Tashkent started massive attacks on believers with little differentiation among schools of thought and movements. After 11 September, when the U.S.-led coalition began the war on terrorism in Afghanistan, Tashkent actively started to support it,

while taking the opportunity to struggle more overtly against radical Islamic movements in Uzbekistan.

Today in Uzbekistan, Islamism has become the chief political opposition to the current regime of Islam Karimov and, has become increasingly politicized, advocating regime change and the implementation of an Islamic law, Sharia. Increasing numbers of ordinary people today tend toward thinking that Islamic government can change the situation in the country. Turgunaka, the former chair of a mahalla (local self-administration) said: "If we will have Islam here, then it will improve our life". This is only one of evidence of people who were former "government supporter" change their minds and lean toward the Islamic alternative. In Uzbekistan today, there is no open opposition. Therefore Islamism became the only alternative for people who disagree with the regime. People do not have any chance to satisfy their needs and therefore they find Islam as an output of their frustration. Even Imams in mosques became government supporters, and they always ask God to bless the government during speeches at Friday prayers and Islamic Holidays. Moreover, the mass corruption, decay of social values, prostitution and bad economic conditions make ordinary people think that only by Islam it is possible to improve the current situation.

The economic situation is really bad today in Uzbekistan. A minimum basket of goods cost 170,000 sums, which is the average necessary for a

family of four persons, but in fact the average salary is 15,000-20,000 sums. Working for government and getting such low salary forces people to find other ways to earn money, and if in such a position, people start accepting bribes. The situation is much worse in the rural areas, where social and economic conditions and demographic problems are severe –there are even cases of starvation among people. These problems also push people toward the Islamist alternative, in turn helping radical movements to recruit ordinary people and especially youth in their activities. As the International Crisis Group puts it, "Closed political systems, lack of freedom of speech, lack of economic progress, and unreformed and brutal security services all contribute to the growth of radical opposition groups."

Thus Islam today is the sole opposition to current regime. While ordinary people do not accept the idea of military struggle to change government as desired by Wahhabi movements and the IMU, they have slowly begun to accept that Islamic rule could improve their lives. This is the fundamental feature of Hizb-ut-Tahrir, which is oriented mostly on social, political and economic reforms. And it is possible that the Uzbekistani government is creating the ground for future massive Islamic opposition, which will be more powerful and popular among ordinary people in Uzbekistan.

**Rustam Mukhamedov**

## GWADAR AND CHABAHAR: COMPETITION OR COMPLIMENTARITY?

Rizwan Zeb

*According to present projections, the Pakistan-China joint venture to build deep-sea port at Gwadar costing \$248 million will be completed by March 2005. Islamabad is very keen to present it as the gateway for trade to and from the Central Asian states. However, it seems that in the years ahead, the Gwadar port, once it materializes and becomes one of the outlets for Central Asia, will have to face stiff competition from Iranian port at Chabahar. These port projects could deepen the Pakistani-Iranian rivalry, thereby hindering the stabilization of the region. On the other hand, they could serve as avenues for cooperation and search for complementarity.*

**BACKGROUND:** Pakistan and China last year signed a deal to build the \$248 million deep-sea port, to be completed in March 2005. China is funding three-quarters of the project, supplying \$ 198 million in a mixture of loans and grants, and Islamabad the remaining \$ 50 million. Pakistan intends to take on other Gulf ports, especially Oman's Salalah and UAE's Jebel Ali and offer Central Asian states their most efficient warm-water access to both the west and the east. Gwadar will be the shortest route for the Central Asian states and their proposed east and westbound exports of oil, gas and goods if the plan goes well. The Pakistan-China mega project was inaugurated in April 2002. As this ambitious deep sea port is now under construction, and if the vision of people at the helm in Islamabad and the Chinese builders is realized, in every likelihood it will be transformed into a futuristic gateway for trade to landlocked Central Asia.

The location of Gwadar, on the Arabian Sea coast in South-western Baluchistan, is strategically significant as it is just on the opposite end of the Gulf of Oman and the straits of Hormuz. Pakistan's National Highway Authority (NHA) and the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) are tasked to build a 700 km coastal super highway, which as planned will link Gwadar with the rest of Pakistan. This highway will link Karachi on the east with Jiwani to the west, close to the border of Iran. It is estimated this highway will most likely be completed alongside the Gwadar port. Goods shipped into Gwadar will be taken by road to Afghanistan via either the eastern route over the Punjab or in the future through a highway to Quetta and Qandahar. Once in Afghanistan, a road network currently under construction will take the goods to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and deeper into Central Asia.

Pakistan is very optimistic about the prospects and impacts of Gwadar. However, it seems that the project might have to face competition from the Iranian port at Chabahar which is also currently under construction. This implies that Gwadar will not be able to monopolize on a position as the main route to the sea from Central Asia. Iran, with assistance from India, plans to channel and monopolize trade from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan destined for the East and the Gulf via Chabahar. Some analysts assess as high the likelihood that Chabahar could actually grow significantly once the port project materializes.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The Iranian leadership is ardently and promptly working on the construction of the Chabahar port, which they see as an instrument in their policy to escape international isolation. Work is also swiftly underway for the construction of the Iran-Afghanistan transit highway. The third phase of the construction of this Transit Highway began on July 14, 2003. The estimated cost of the project's third phase is 43 billion Iranian riyals and it is likely to be completed by March 2004. In this phase, 15 km of highway will be built, connecting Zahak district to the border post and onwards to the silk bridge being constructed over the Paryan river which serves as a natural border between Iran and Afghanistan. It has also been noted by observers that an estimated 60 per cent of construction work on the silk bridge has been completed. The main hurdle in the early completion of the highway is the bridge on the river Pyanj at Bandar Sher Khan on the Tajik-Afghan border. Interestingly, the US government is financing \$21 million for the construction of this bridge.

The three parties, Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, have also recently signed the Anzob tunnel project agreement. This is a significant development, as this tunnel would provide safe and uninterrupted road access to the Chabahar port from Tajikistan. Iran has also agreed to provide Tajikistan a grant of \$ 10 million for the speedy completion of the project. According to media reports, Iran has also decided to extend a \$21 million credit to Tajikistan for developing its transportation and road sector.

The development of two competing seaports as the gateway to central Asia is not bad, especially for the Central Asian states. However, if the parties try to compete and undercut each other, these projects could turn into another regional tussle. Instead of going solo, both Islamabad and Tehran may still explore ways to work together on the issue. The need of the hour is that Islamabad and Tehran have a joint approach on these projects instead of competing with each other. Tehran may not be able to win many friends in the region and thus may not be able to get rid of its isolation. Pakistan also feels a need to take measures to restore mutual trust with Iran. Especially now that the Taliban factor is gone, the endless competition is no longer necessary. Once this is done, there is no reason for not carrying forward the respective infrastructural initiative of Iran and Pakistan in



mutually advantageous complementarity to each other. The initiative for developing the new Persian Gulf port of Chabahar can quite conveniently be linked up with the fast-developing Gwadar port.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The Pakistan-China joint venture to build a deep-sea port at Gwadar will be completed by March 2005, while Iran is working frenetically to complete its rival port, intended to channel trade from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan intended for the East and the Gulf, via Chabahar to India. Working in competition, these two projects will keep fueling the Iran-Pakistan rivalry, while this is not in the interest of either state, both of which face enough problems on other fronts and would be well-served by deepening the process of normalization in relations that

has been initiated. A positive outcome of these two apparently rival projects would be to find mutual advantages and build them in complementarity to each other. The two projects can easily be linked with one another, and server different sectors or markets, reducing competitions but also reducing expensive duplication. This, if ever done, will dramatically transform the geostrategic landscape of the region.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Rizwan Zeb is an Islamabad-based security analyst and Mahbub-ul-Haq Fellow with the Regional Center for Strategic Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka. He is currently working on a book on Pakistan-Central Asian relations.

## NGOS IN KAZAKHSTAN GET STATE SUPPORT

*Contemptuously mocked by high-brow government functionaries as "petty trouble-makers" at the dawn of democratic changes, NGOs of Kazakhstan have rapidly grown into a powerful force. This transformation was evident at the Civic Forum which opened in Astana on October 14. The state-sponsored gathering brought together state officials and leaders of non-government organizations from all over Kazakhstan.*

The two-day Civic Forum clearly attested to the efforts of the State to reshape its approach to non-government organizations, which are gaining in political importance. According to official figures, 200,000 people are involved in the non-government sector. Government statistics put the number of NGOs operating in Kazakhstan at 4,500. What is no longer to be sneezed at by state bodies is not the rapidly increasing number of non-government organizations, but their unparalleled efficiency in winning public confidence and popularity. For people disenchanted by a swollen government bureaucracy infected with red-tape, a non-government office is a desirable alternative.

Grassroots environmental and health-care movements in the regions are still a source of irritation for authorities. On the other hand, more and more NGOs are attracting overseas funds to finance various educational and environmental projects. The state can no longer overlook the increasing outside sway. In the months prior to the Civic Forum, local departments responsible for state ideology held round-table meeting with NGO activists urging them to cooperate with state bodies in their activities for the benefit of society. Authorities went out of their way offering NGOs office rooms complete with computers.

In addition, the state announced a contest among the NGOs to promote the best projects for economic development, education, grassroots

initiatives in rural areas, fostering interethnic tolerance and patriotism among young people, and human rights activities. The selection committee included NGO leaders. Within a few days, 120 applications came in from various organizations, but only 20 participants appeared as winners. The state allotted from 400,000 to 1.5 million tenge to finance their social welfare projects.

The idea of partnership between the state and non-government organizations was accentuated at the Civic Forum. The somewhat belated attempt of state bodies to woo non-government organizations produced overwhelmingly positive responses at the forum. Given the insufficient funding which drives NGOs into a corner on the one hand, and the constant anxiety of state officials not to fall foul of western democratic institutions for neglecting civic movements, this tandem is hardly a surprise. With parliamentary and presidential elections in the offing, the ruling elite cannot afford to scoff at non-government organizations, more frequently referred to, in official parlance, as "the third sector". The slogan of civic accord and the common goal of social welfare comes in very handy in affecting this policy of rapprochement. From now on, it was said at the forum, NGOs will get state orders to develop projects needed to promote the public welfare. Accordingly, NGOs will be granted state subsidies.

The price of this partnership is likely to be the alienation of NGOs from political processes to a considerable degree. But according to some observers, the alliance of the executive power and the "third sector" is precisely what is needed to bring back social cohesion and a sense of civic responsibility to the country. A short while ago, the daughter of the president, Dariga Nazarbayeva, set up a public organization called

"Asar". The name comes from a Kazakh tradition of mutual assistance in building homes, digging dikes, deeply rooted and preserved to this day in village communities. Inspired by the sense of solidarity, "Asar" activists have mobilized people for the implementation of important social welfare projects.

Addressing the Civic Forum, president Nursultan Nazarbayev said that state institutions will need the support of the civic society in reforming the political system, which includes granting more power to local governing bodies, adopting a liberal election law, introduction of a more humane legal system. "The possibility of step-by-step abolishment of capital punishment is being discussed in the country, but the public is not unanimous on this point. We cannot ignore the opinion of our people. At the same time, I am sure, we will abolish death penalty in future" he said.

Most speakers at the forum stressed the need to develop NGO networks in the countryside. Rural residents make up 40% of the population of Kazakhstan. This is an area where social welfare programs can be effectively put to the test. The same day, as the Civic Forum started, the UNDP in Almaty organized field trips for journalists to show how some non-government organizations, involved in UN-sponsored Habitat International program, successfully put housing projects into practice. The public associations "Baspana" (Shelter) and "Umit" (Hope) provide migrants from rural areas with cheap housing, supply residents with water and power, and open special schools for disabled children. If the NGOs in Kazakhstan seriously choose to switch to social projects, there are plenty of opportunities for them to gain public sympathy.

**Marat Yermukanov**

## THE AFGHAN DISARMAMENT PROCESS AND ISAF

Shahin Eghraghi

*After 24 years of occupation, civil war and warlordism, Afghanistan is flooded with weapons and armed criminal groups. Warlords are ruling most of the count., while the Afghan Transitional Authority struggles to expand its influence outside Kabul. The UN-sponsored Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration process (DDR), aimed at demobilizing the various Afghan warring factions is crucial to the future stability and security of Afghanistan. There are, however, major obstacles to the process. Recent clashes between two powerful militias in the north of the country illustrate this. The International Security Assistance Force, could, with its new mandate, provide the necessary presence and security to monitor the DDR process and fill the power vacuum after the demobilization.*

**BACKGROUND:** On October 13, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution which mandates ISAF to operate beyond its present Kabul boundaries. Germany and NATO have also given a green light for up to 450 German peacekeepers, a force separate from ISAF, to deploy to Kunduz in the north of the country as a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The British already have a PRT presence in Mazar-e-Sharif with 72 men, and it is planned that they will be followed by others in up to eight different locations, including Herat and Kandahar. Their duty is to provide the local population with basic reconstruction as well as to provide for some security assistance, highly similar to the ISAF mandate but on a much smaller scale. In the third week of October, the DDR process is to begin with a pilot project in Kunduz, followed by two more in Bamiyan and Gardez. At each of these locations, verification teams will screen up to 1,000 persons. The focus will be on low and middle rank fighters, the key for warlords to mobilize. After surrendering their arms, former combatants are entitled to US\$200 in Afghan currency, 130 kg of food, career counseling and various other aid packages. If this US\$50 million program called the Afghan New Beginnings Program (ANBP) is successful, it will expand on a larger scale to Mazar-e-Sharif and Parwan, including the Panjsher Valley. The ANBP, a three-year project, aims to collect weapons from an estimated 100,000 fighters, 20 percent of which will be permitted to join the Afghan National Army.

The initiation of the DDR process has taken time, awaiting necessary reforms in the Ministry of Defense. These concerned primarily the ethnic balance within the ministry, given that since the fall of Kabul, the ministry has been heavily dominated by the Panjsheri Tajik faction of Marshal Fahim. On September 20, it was announced that the ministry had been reshuffled, and two weeks after that clashes began in Mazar-i-Sharif. It is within this context that the UN and NATO finds it appropriate to expand the ISAF mandate. The 300 Afghan police that Kabul sent to the north to overlook the truce after the recent clashes, and to reinstate order, will not be enough against at least 10,000 well-armed militia men.

**IMPLICATIONS:** The question now is how the expanded ISAF mandate will be used and whether there is still time to revert recent developments in Afghanistan. First of all, the PRTs, which are NATO-lead but separate from ISAF, have a very limited mandate. NGOs that are active in the area have been very critical against these limits. They note that the PRTs are not allowed to interfere with inter-militia fighting, and may not directly intervene in human rights violations. Nor do they have a mandate to stop the regional drug trade. Also, the areas where the PRTs are deployed, and where the ANBP is to begin, are relatively stable and friendly areas, where the security issue is not half as serious as it is in the south. So why deploy security forces to areas where security is less an issue? What makes one skeptic is also the fact that even though the Afghan Ministry of Defense in theory has reformed, in practice the majority of the top 20 officials remain Panjsheris. The Uzbeks, for example, have only two representatives, which makes the Uzbek-dominated Jonbesh-e-Melli militia strongly hesitant in submitting their weapons to what is being perceived as a rival faction, despite the fact that the JM leader, General Dostum, is in fact deputy minister of defense. Some reports also claim that cheap weapons are bought in Pakistan to be handed in to the verification teams, while more modern arms ones are kept.

The DDR is not primarily about collecting a certain number of weapons, rather about dissolving the militias' military structures in favor of rebuilding the Afghan National Army and provide alternatives to warlordism. However, the rebuilding pace is very slow. A new Afghan battalion recently came of the track, for the first time with all Afghan officers conducting a 12-week basic training course. However, the army has only 6,000 soldiers of a planned 70,000. The dropout rate is still an alarmingly high 15 percent, down from about 40 percent in the early days.

Parallel to the DDR, President Karzai has also approved a law forbidding political parties from having their private militia, but since some observers claim that there may be up to 800,000 armed fighters in the country, this new law may be hard to enforce. There are also reports of a definite split between Karzai and Minister of Defense Fahim Khan, which

deepened while Karzai was abroad recently. Fahim is himself a warlord and leader of the Panjsheri grouping Shura-e-Nazar. Fahim has his own political agenda, which most likely does not include handing over the control of his weapons to someone else. ISAF could play an important role here since ISAF is also involved in training the ANA and some of the ISAF-contributing countries are also equipping the ANA. If ISAF could send a strong signal that it is ready to step up training and funding for an ethnically balanced ANA, and is prepared to fill the security vacuum in the *whole* country during and after the DDR process, then some of the combatants could follow the call to hand in their arms. Since DDR is also about providing jobs to former combatants, ISAF could increase and expand the number of ongoing labor-intensive reconstruction projects. This could also have an impact on the drug trade since those former combatants, who are not already involved with the narcotics mafia, and won't join the army, can easily be recruited into the drug trade. Providing jobs and filling the security vacuum is essential for the DDR, and ISAF already has experience in that.

**CONCLUSIONS:** For the DDR process is to succeed, it is essential for ISAF to step in as an active participant in the demilitarization process, rather than merely as a distant observer. ISAF is also dependent on it, since it can not operate fully in an environment flooded with an estimated 10 million weapons. For the processes of demobilization and building of a national army is to be successful, continued attention is needed to the ethnic balance in the Ministry of Defense. If the Panjsheris are able to cling to power undisturbed, then there will be no demobilization, no efficient Afghan National Army and no security for the Afghan people. In this case, ISAF and the international community will have failed.

**AUTHOR'S BIO:** Shahin Eghraghi served in the Swedish detachment to ISAF in Kabul until Summer 2003. He is currently a Research Assistant with the Program for Contemporary Silk Road Studies at Uppsala University, where his main duties are research into drug trafficking and security issues in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

## THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN KYRGYZSTAN

*The issue of mental health in Kyrgyzstan has in recent times been insistently raised by NGO leaders, mass media and by the Kyrgyz Ombudsman Tuusunbai Bakir uulu. The mental health in society has been calling for more and more concern. An atmosphere of poverty and deprivation prevails in the psychiatric hospitals throughout the republic.*

In hospitals, patients live in dreadful conditions and are poorly fed, not to mention of being properly taken care of. The rooms in hospitals are overcrowded, holding up to 10-15 patients in a room. Lack of hospital staff forces a single nurse to supervise 10-15 people.

The rights of the mentally ill people in Kyrgyzstan have been systematically violated. According to the leader of the NGO "Mental health and society" Burul Makenbaeva, the principle of the voluntary appeal for psychiatric help is often ignored. For example, in Osh center of mental health, one of the few psychiatric institutions in the country, there have been cases when patients were hospitalized without their written consent. Methods of physical constraint are often used toward patients. There have also been cases of ungrounded hospitalization or in other words of medically unjustified long-term hospitalization of patients. Another practice, which grossly violates the right of the mentally ill people and has been evoking concern, is using patients as free labor force. The use of patients of psychiatric hospitals for manual labor on private farms of hospital staff or of local farmers has become a common phenomenon.

As a way of preventing abuses of patients' rights, the program manager of a British organization "Hamlet Trust" Paul Carter during his visit to Kyrgyzstan in summer suggested to set up a system of permanent monitoring of what is going on in the psychiatric hospitals by international organizations and NGOs. He also called local human rights activists to work out and realize projects directed towards protecting patients' rights in psychiatric hospitals. Kyrgyz NGO leader Burul Makenbaeva recently stated in an interview to journalists that it is necessary to create a special service for protecting patients' rights, which would be independent from the Ministry of Health. However, this suggestion has not drawn support yet. Another local activist, Karamat Abdullaeva, representative of the Women's Congress, says that in order to solve the problems of the mentally ill people, it is necessary to raise the issue on the national level.

A national program dedicated to the issue of mental health already exists in Kyrgyzstan. The National program "Mental health of the population of the Kyrgyz Republic for 2001-2010" was adopted several years ago, but did not improve the situation. As local observers note, although this program by itself provides a good basis, it has been ineffective as its main provisions have still not been realized. A system of rehabilitation of patients has not been worked out. In some places, psychiatric service has not even been staffed. Besides, financing for this program has not been envisaged yet.

Indeed, the present state of the mental health service in Kyrgyzstan has much to do with such factors as lack of funding. For example, last year the Republican centre of psychiatric health received only one fourth of its funding. According to the Chief Director of the centre Suyutbek Nazarkulov, today the state budget allocates 6 som (\$1 is ca. 42 som) for medical treatment of one patient while the amount of needed medicines constitutes 60 som. 13 som is spent for one patient as a daily food allowance. For the first nine months of this year, the Republican centre of psychiatric health was underfinanced by 846,000 som on "food allowances" and 203,000 on "medicines". For renovation of the hospitals, transportation and communication expenses, no funding was provided.

This is made worse by the fact that there is a tendency of growth of mental sicknesses in Kyrgyzstan. Only in Osh province, the number of mentally ill people has increased by several thousand people. The issue of mental health appears to be beyond the priority area for the Kyrgyz government, for whom providing even basic social and healthcare services has been an uphill task. But still this issue should trouble not only the activists of international organizations or local NGOs but the Kyrgyz leadership as well, especially when it wants to promote Kyrgyzstan as the "country of human rights".

**Aisha Aslanbekova**

## NEWS BITES

### UZBEKISTAN TO LIFT CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS

**8 October**

Uzbekistan's government said Wednesday it would lift restrictions on foreign currency transactions, a long-awaited move aimed at opening the most populous country in Central Asia to greater foreign investment. Businessmen reacted with skepticism. "From today, all remaining restrictions on currency transactions have been lifted," Deputy Prime Minister Rustam Azimov told reporters at a joint news conference with visiting head of the International Monetary Fund mission to the country, J. Erik De Vrijer. Azimov said the former Soviet republic will next Wednesday formally sign Article 8 of the IMF charter, requiring members to guarantee free convertibility of their currencies. Uzbekistan, which has extensive mineral reserves and is a major cotton producer, saw a brief economic boom in early 1990s. But the government's ban in 1996 on free currency transactions and restrictive economic policies have stifled budding private business and driven foreign investors away. The IMF withdrew its representative from Uzbekistan in 2001 due to frustration over the government's reluctance to liberalize the economy. It returned last year under strong pressure from the United States, which has become a strategic ally of Uzbekistan. The main dispute has been over the Uzbek government's reluctance to allow convertibility of the national currency, the som, a practice that has encouraged a black market in currency trading. The IMF's De Vrijer on Wednesday called the currency reform an important move, "but not the only step needed to make a transition to a working market economy." He urged the Uzbek government to improve the business climate, reduce state control, ease trade restrictions and ensure the rule of law. He also said authorities should meet obligations on pensions and wages. (AP)

### PUTIN SAYS RUSSIA WILL KEEP CONTROL OF CIS PIPELINES

**9 October**

Speaking at a joint press conference with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in Yekaterinburg on 9 October, President Putin said that Russia will not relinquish control over the pipeline infrastructure on the territory of the former Soviet republics. The gas-pipeline system was built by the Soviet Union, he said, and only Russia is in a position to keep it in working order, "even those parts of the system that are beyond Russia's borders." Putin said that it would only be possible to provide cheap Russian energy resources to the European Union if Moscow is able to keep the pipeline system in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan functioning with Russian technical supervision. (polit.ru)

### MOSCOW STRESSES POSSIBILITY OF USING MILITARY FORCE IN THE CIS

**9 October**

At the press conference in Yekaterinburg on 9 October after the completion of the Russo-German summit Defense Minister Ivanov said that Russia retains the right to use military force on the territory of the former Soviet republics. "The CIS is a very crucial sphere for our security," Ivanov said. "Ten million of our compatriots live there, and we are supplying energy to them at prices below international levels. We are not going to renounce the right to use military power there in situations where all other means have been exhausted." He added that Russia intends to boost its military presence in the CIS, especially in Central Asia, and will insist upon the ultimate withdrawal of military bases established there by the U.S.-led international antiterrorism coalition. He noted that Moscow only agreed to the presence of such bases for the period necessary to stabilize Afghanistan and to achieve the goals set forth by the coalition. (lenta.ru)

### SHELL ASKS KAZAKHSTAN TO IMPROVE OIL LEGISLATION

**9 October**

Martin Ferstl, president of the Kazakhstan branch of Royal Dutch Shell, said on 9 October at the annual Kazakh International Oil and Gas Exposition (KIOGE) in Almaty that his company has asked Kazakh officials to clarify legislation regulating offshore oil operations. Ferstl added that vague contracts and legislation are bad for investment, and investors need strong laws that cannot be interpreted arbitrarily by state agencies. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the requirement contained in the Kazakh government program for Caspian-shelf development through 2015 that the Kazakh state oil and gas agency KazMunaiGaz should own at least 50 percent of all Caspian hydrocarbon projects. (Interfax)

### CHECHEN PRESIDENT-ELECT RESTATES PRIORITIES

**10 October**

Speaking at a press conference in Moscow on 10 October, Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov said he wants the Kremlin to bestow special economic privileges upon Chechnya, specifically allowing the republic to retain until 2010 all taxes and revenues from the sale of oil. Kadyrov also reaffirmed his intention to set up a commission to determine who was responsible for the 1991 dissolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR, branding as one of the culprits then-Russian Supreme Soviet speaker Ruslan Khasbulatov, whom he referred to as "an enemy of the [Chechen] people." Kadyrov said he plans to strengthen the Chechen police force

as a preliminary step to securing the withdrawal from Chechnya of all Russian forces except for one motorized division and one brigade of Russian Interior Ministry troops, which will be permanently stationed there. In a reversal of his earlier statements, Chechen President-elect Kadyrov also said on 10 October that he is ready to establish contacts with Aslan Maskhadov, who was elected Chechen president in January 1997 in a ballot recognized by Russia and the international community as free and democratic. But Kadyrov advised Maskhadov to surrender and face trial, or to go into exile, rather than risk being hunted down and killed. Kadyrov said that even if the Duma declines to renew the amnesty it declared in June for Chechen fighters who surrender their arms, he will work out a "legal procedure" for those fighters who wish to return to a peaceful life. (Interfax)

### **INGUSH PRESIDENT SEES NO NEED TO REUNITE WITH CHECHNYA**

**13 October**

Murat Zyazikov told journalists in Moscow on 13 October that he sees no need to restore the Checheno-Ingush Republic, which split into its two constituent parts in the summer of 1992. Chechen President-elect Kadyrov referred during his 10 October press conference to the possibility of such a merger. Zyazikov, however, argued that a merger would not be economically viable, as both republics require major subsidies from the federal center. He compared Chechnya and Ingushetia to "two brothers...each of whom should have his own house." (Interfax)

### **AZERBAIJANI OPPOSITION LEADER CLAIMS ELECTION VICTORY**

**15 October**

Musavat Party Chairman Gambar told journalists at his headquarters late on 15 October that his observers who witnessed the vote count at an unspecified number of polling stations concluded that Gambar collected 60 percent of the vote. He said he will not yield to what he termed the authorities' attempt to steal the election. Exit polls of 2,414 voters at 200 polling stations throughout Azerbaijan conducted by the independent ADAM Center and Turan gave Gambar 46.2 percent of the vote, followed by Aliyev (24.1 percent), Hajiyeva (11.4 percent), Mamedov (11 percent), Ismailov (3.7 percent), Rustamkhanli (2.5 percent), Hasankuliev (0.6 percent), and Hajiyev (0.2 percent). (Turan)

### **KAZAKH PARTY CALLS FOR NEW ELECTION PROCEDURES**

**15 October**

The co-chairmen of the Kazakh reformist Ak Zhol (Bright Path) Party told a news conference in Almaty on 15 October that the recent nationwide local-council elections showed that Kazakhstan needs to adopt new election laws and join the CIS Convention on Standards for Free and Fair Elections. The elections were held on 20 September and 12 October. Ak Zhol co-Chairmen Alikhan Baimenov and Bulat Abilov noted that there have been numerous reports of election-law

violations during the two rounds of campaigning, many of them involving interference by executive-branch organs in the election process. Abilov added that his party intends to file complaints with the courts in cases where alleged election violations might have affected Ak Zol members. About 140 Ak Zhol members were elected to local councils nationwide. (Interfax-Kazakhstan)

### **HEAVY FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN**

**15 October**

Hundreds of Afghan government troops are reported to be fighting up to 50 suspected Taleban rebels in central Uruzgan province. The provincial governor, Jan Mohammad, told the BBC the fighting started when Taleban forces came down from mountain hideouts and killed four government troops. Speaking from the area, where he said fighting was continuing, Mr Mohammad said Afghan forces had asked the United States military for back-up, after the suspected Taleban called in reinforcements. He said one Afghan soldier was killed and five others were injured in the fighting. Uruzgan was part of the heartland of the Taleban government, which was overthrown two years ago. (BBC)

### **AZERBAIJAN PRESIDENT'S SON WINS ELECTION**

**16 October**

President Geidar Aliev's son won a landslide victory in Azerbaijan to succeed his 80-year-old father, according to election officials, as clashes erupted between police and protesters alleging widespread vote fraud in the former Soviet republic. With 91 percent of the ballots counted, Ilham Aliev had 79.5 percent of the vote, the Central Election Commission said. Opposition Musavat party leader Isa Gambar had 12 percent support. Aliev, 41, led a field of eight candidates, standing alone for the ruling party after his father, hospitalized in the United States, withdrew less than two weeks before the vote. As the votes were being counted, Gambar asserted he won a majority and claimed irregularities in favor of Aliev. A foreign observer said violations were rampant, and many in Baku complained they were prevented from registering and that others cast multiple votes. Even before election day, international organizations had reported biased media coverage, violence at opposition protests and intimidation of opposition sympathizers. An OSCE observer, Ivan Lozowy, said he had stopped recording reported irregularities because he had seen so many himself at the 35 polling places he visited. He said violations included multiple voting, falsified ballots, and ballot counting in absence of observers. At a news conference Wednesday, Gambar waved a stack of ballots marked for Aliev that he claimed had been filled out before the election, and asserted he beat the president's son in districts where international observers were able to watch. (AP)

### **RUSSIA SEEKS INCREASED INFLUENCE OVER COMPATRIOTS ABROAD**

**16 October**

A conference titled "The Diaspora Is a Russian Intellectual Resource" organized by the Russian government opened in Moscow on 15 October, with 300 delegates representing Russian emigre communities in 58 countries, ORT reported. According to the Foreign Ministry, there are about 35 million Russian speakers living outside of Russia, including about 27 million living in the former Soviet republics and 8 million living elsewhere. There are about 3 million Russian speakers - representing four waves of emigration in the 20th century - living in the United States. ORT noted that Russian speakers play an active role in political and economic lives of the countries where they live, and cited the recent gubernatorial election in California as an example. Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger was reportedly widely supported by local Russian speakers. Addressing the Moscow conference, Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov called for a federal agency to coordinate contacts with Russian communities abroad. Duma Committee for CIS Affairs Chairman Andrei Kokoshin (Fatherland-Unified Russia) said that the government has increased spending for support of Russian speakers abroad by 25 percent in 2003. (RFE/RL)

**HIZB UT-TAHRIR ADHERENTS PROSECUTED IN SOUTH KAZAKHSTAN****16 October**

Three members of the Muslim extremist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir are being prosecuted in Shymkent, the administrative center of South Kazakhstan Oblast, for allegedly running a clandestine printing house that produced Hiz ut-Tahrir literature. The printing house, which was reportedly set up in a Shymkent apartment by three men from Kyzylorda Oblast, was discovered and shut down by security officials in August. The men are being prosecuted for producing and distributing material inciting interethnic and interconfessional hatred. Major Kanat Imanaliev, deputy head of the antiterrorism department of the Shymkent National Security Committee branch, complained that Hizb ut-Tahrir is not officially banned in Kazakhstan, making it more difficult for the authorities to deal with it. He added that among the alleged Hizb ut-Tahrir members who have been questioned in connection with the printing-house case were a number of government employees. Previously, he said, movement members were usually unemployed. Imanaliev declined to specify how many Hizb ut-Tahrir members there are in South Kazakhstan Oblast. (KazInform)

**KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTRY REJECTS UZBEK REPORT ON BORDER INCIDENT****16 October**

The Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry has issued a statement rejecting the results of an Uzbek investigation into an incident on 16 July in which a Kyrgyz citizen was killed by Uzbek border guards. The ministry statement said the Kyrgyz side is continuing to work with the Uzbek Foreign Ministry on the issue, but is "deeply concerned" that charges against the Uzbek border guards involved in the shooting were dropped

and the Uzbek prosecutor-general has filed criminal cases against some Kyrgyz citizens who were allegedly involved in the incident. The Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry also said it found the Uzbek attitude counterproductive. The Kyrgyz insist blame for the incident lies entirely with the Uzbek guards, while the Uzbek side blames the Kyrgyz. The Kyrgyz side also argues that the use of firearms by border guards in peacetime cannot be justified. The Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry is calling for an impartial probe into the incident. (akipress.org)

**EU COMMITS 12 MILLION EUROS TO TAJIK LAND-MINE REMOVAL****16 October**

European Union Director for Central Asia and the Caucasus Per Brix Knudsen told journalists in Dushanbe on 16 October that the EU will commit 12 million euros (\$13.9 million) over the next three years for Tajik land-mine removal along the Uzbek border. Two-thirds of that amount has already been promised by individual EU states, he added, and the union is looking for ways to secure the rest. Tajikistan has already begun clearing land mines left over from the 1992-97 civil war, but has not started removing mines planted along the Uzbek-Tajik border by the Uzbek military in 2000 and 2001 to prevent incursions by Muslim militants. Tajik officials have said that more than 50 Tajik citizens have been killed and hundreds have been injured by land mines in recent years. (ITAR-TASS)

**PUTIN ATTENDS OIC SUMMIT WITH LARGE MUSLIM DELEGATION****17 October**

President Vladimir Putin on 16 October addressed a summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Malaysia, saying that the millions of Muslims in Russia are "a full-fledged, full-blooded, integral part of the Russian people." He called Muslims "an asset" and a part of Russia's "wealth." Putin said that interconfessional and interethnic conflicts are among the main threats in the modern world. He said that some forces use religious slogans to wage an aggressive campaign against legitimate authorities and to incite separatism and terrorism. Other forces, Putin added, are manipulating this situation for their own ends, which have nothing to do with Islam or human rights. He added that Russia condemns efforts to identify Islam with extremism or terrorism. Putin urged that the financial, scientific, and human resources of Russia and OIC member countries be combined in order "to make [the organization] a factor in world politics." President Putin traveled to the OIC summit with an impressive delegation that included Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov and many Muslim officials in the federal government, as well as representatives of Russia's predominantly Muslim regions. Among those traveling with Putin were Chechnya's President-elect Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov, Bashkortostan's President Murtaza Rakhimov, Kabardino-Balkaria's President Valerii Kokov, Tatarstan's State Council Chairman Farid Mukhametshin, presidential administration deputy head Jaikhan Pollyeva, and Property

Relations Minister Farit Gazizullin. Although Russia has expressed a desire to join the OIC, it can only lay claim to observer status because OIC rules restrict full membership to countries with populations that are at least 50 percent Muslim, or that have a Muslim head of state, or that are governed by sharia law, NTV reported. (RFE/RL)

### **RUSSIAN PRESIDENT GIVES AL-JAZEERA INTERVIEW**

**17 October**

In an interview with satellite channel Al-Jazeera on 17 October, President Putin said Russia and the United States have very different positions on Iraq but that his good personal relations with U.S. President George W. Bush have helped to maintain good relations between Moscow and Washington. Putin also said the latest Security Council resolution on Iraq-- introduced by the United States and passed on 16 October -- is "not enough." Responding to an Al-Jazeera question alleging that the UN role was diminished due to a "diktat" from Washington, Putin said: "Is the UN an organization that has managed to solve every problem before? If so, why has it not solved the Palestine problem?" Asked by the station about potential targets of a recently amended Russian military doctrine that seemingly allows for preventive military strikes, Putin said: "We are not very interested in who it might be. Anyone who threatens us should know that the response will be adequate." (RIA-Novosti)

### **196 PROTESTERS ARRESTED AFTER AZERBAIJAN ELECTION RIOT**

**17 October**

Police in the oil-rich republic of Azerbaijan have arrested 196 people after violent battles between police and protesters over a disputed election, the interior ministry said amid fears of more violence. It said Friday that some 64 police and bystanders caught up in the violence had been hurt, 34 of them seriously, while about 20 of the protesters sustained injuries and one of them, a 51-year-old man, died. Pitched battles broke out on Thursday afternoon between police and opposition supporters who claim that this week's presidential election, which handed victory to Ilham Aliyev had been rigged. One of the injured was a five-year-old boy who was trampled in the fighting and is now in a coma in hospital. The interior ministry said the dead 51-year-old opposition supporter was crushed by his fellow-protestors. His brother, however, told AFP he had been beaten to death by police. There was a massive police presence in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, Friday amid fears of new trouble. "We will not allow any disorder," said Interior Minister Ramil Usubov. "We will ensure law and order and all the organisers of these disturbances will have to answer before the law." He said that according to police information, Thursday's disorder was organized by Isa Gambar, defeated challenger in the presidential election, and two of his lieutenants. Azerbaijan's parliament, or Milli Majlis, met in emergency session Friday to discuss the violence. (AFP)

### **AZERBAIJANI RULING PARTY ACCUSES OPPOSITION OF PLANNING COUP**

**17 October**

Ali Akhmedov, who is executive secretary of the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan Party, told a press conference on the evening of 16 October that Musavat Party activists had tried to storm the Central Election Commission building in order to alter the results of the previous day's presidential ballot, an action which, he claimed, was tantamount to seizing power by force. Akhmedov claimed that Musavat Party Chairman Gambar urged his supporters to resort to violence. Akhmedov said the leaders not only of Musavat, but also of the other parties belonging to the Our Azerbaijan bloc that backed Gambar acted as "stooges of extremist forces" and thereby placed themselves outside the law, adding that Gambar and the leaders of the other parties should be brought to trial. Akhmedov also said the parliament should strip Umid Party Chairman Iqbal Agazade, who Akhmedov said led one of the groups of young protesters, of his deputy's mandate. (zerkalo.az)

### **UZBEK GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO PROTECT COTTON**

**17 October**

The Uzbek government has issued a decree criminalizing attempts to smuggle cotton to neighboring countries, Deutsche Welle reported on 16 October. The Interior Ministry has been ordered to take harsh measures against cotton smugglers. In Uzbekistan pickers are paid 30 soms (about \$0.03) per kilogram, while pickers on the Kazakh side of the border get the equivalent of 600 soms. Reportedly, Uzbek law enforcement agencies have registered 140 cases of cotton smuggling. A recent shooting incident on the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border reportedly involved a case of attempted cotton smuggling. The report notes that Uzbek officials justify the low wages for Uzbek pickers by pointing to low world prices for cotton. But the collective farms for which the pickers work are getting six to seven times as much for the cotton sold to state-procurement agencies. A government decree also sets a fine for failing to deliver cotton promptly to procurement points. Reportedly, some pickers hide cotton in their homes, hoping for better prices later. (RFE/RL)

### **RUSSIA EASES NATIONALITY RULES**

**18 October**

The Russian parliament has simplified the procedure of acquiring Russian citizenship and allowed foreigners to serve in the Russian army. The law on Russian citizenship, adopted last year, was criticised by many as draconian, as it made it extremely difficult for nationals of the former republics of the Soviet Union to acquire Russian citizenship. President Vladimir Putin, who was thought to have backed the law, has heeded the criticism and asked the Duma to review it. It should be much easier now to become a Russian citizen, especially for nationals of the countries of the former Soviet Union or those who reside and work in Russia as foreigners.

They do not even have to prove they are fluent in Russian, as the law previously required. The amended legislation cuts back on red tape and even offers incentives for prospective citizens. For the first time in Russia's modern history, foreigners can join the Russian army, and get Russian citizenship through the fast track. The dramatic change is due to the dire demographic situation in Russia. Its population is shrinking, while the economy is picking up and becoming labour-hungry. Millions of former Soviet citizens living in Russia and the ex-Soviet republics had been cut off from the legal labour market and were pushed into the grey economy. The Russian army has been also feeling the crunch, with widespread draft-dodging decimating its ranks. Now it is staking its hopes on foreign mercenaries but the question is, will there be many of them? Observers say there may be millions of ex-Soviet nationals who would like to become Russian citizens, but only a handful have so far expressed a desire to join the army. (BBC)

### **NEW CHECHEN PRESIDENT INAUGURATED**

**19 October**

Akhmed-hadji Kadyrov was inaugurated as Chechen president amid tight security measures in the town of Gudermes on 19 October. Kadyrov announced before the ceremony that he would not swear the inaugural oath on the Koran as "I am not the leader of an Islamic state." Kadyrov swore in Russian to implement the Chechen Constitution and uphold human rights and freedoms. Representatives from Moscow, St. Petersburg, and neighboring North Caucasus republics, including Kabardino-Balkaria's President Valerii Kokov, attended the ceremony, as did Russian presidential administration head Aleksandr Voloshin and Russian Minister for Chechen Affairs Stanislav Ilyasov. (ITAR-TASS)

### **NUMBER OF SELF-IMMOLATIONS GROWING IN TAJIKISTAN**

**19 October**

The number of women who attempt to burn themselves to death is increasing in Tajikistan, "Asia-Plus" reported on 19 October, citing statistics from the Prosecutor-General's Office. According to the prosecutor-general's figures, 33 self-immolations were attempted in 2002, while 90 cases were registered in the first six months of 2003. The problem is particularly serious in northern Tajikistan's Sughd Oblast, where 113 cases of self-immolation have been registered in 2003, against 115 cases in the previous two years. A Red Crescent Society expert was quoted as saying that almost three-quarters of the women who committed suicide by self-immolation were between the ages of 18 and 40, and most were motivated by family and economic problems. Self-immolation by Central Asian women was well publicized in the Soviet media in the late 1980s, but there were few reports of it after the Central Asian countries gained their independence. The Tajik media has increasingly drawn attention to the problem during 2003. (Asia Plus-Blitz)

### **POLICE UNABLE TO FIND TRACE OF VANISHED KYRGYZ MULLAH**

**20 October**

Deputy head of the Uzgen Raion police Mamatali Turgunbaev announced on 20 October that law enforcement officers have been unable to find any trace of Uzgen Mullah Sadykjan Rakhmanov, who disappeared on 7 September. The disappearance of Rakhmanov, who organized groups making the pilgrimage to Mecca, has been linked by the Kyrgyz authorities to the Uzbek security service, but law enforcement officials in Uzbekistan have denied any knowledge of him. Kyrgyz police have been trying to interview an Uzbek security officer from the town of Namangan, who reportedly bought the car in which witnesses said Rakhmanov was abducted, but Uzbek authorities have told the Kyrgyz investigators that the officer has been transferred to a distant oblast. The Kyrgyz media has been keeping the story before the Kyrgyz public. (Kyrgyzinfo)

### **ISLAMIC CONFERENCE ORGANIZATION ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON TAJIKISTAN**

**20 October**

The 10th session of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted a special resolution on Tajikistan on 17 October. The resolution, which appealed to OIC member states and financial institutions to help Tajikistan's government overcome the country's economic problems and promote economic reform, was requested by Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov, who attended the OIC session in Kuala Lumpur. The resolution also contained an appeal to the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) to increase its financial assistance to Tajikistan. According to a presidential press secretary, Zafar Saidov, Rakhmonov took advantage of the presence at the session of a number of Muslim heads of state to press for expanded ties with Malaysia, Syria, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, and the Tajik president spoke with IDB President Ahmad Muhammad Ali about attracting investment to Tajikistan. (Asia Plus-Blitz)

### **KYRGYZ LOWER HOUSE WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT COALITION AIR BASE**

**20 October**

The lower house of Kyrgyzstan's parliament ratified 10 international agreements on 20 October but not an agreement on the status of New Zealand personnel at the international antiterrorism coalition air base at Bishkek's Manas airport. The parliamentarians said they want more information on the makeup and financial expenditures at the base, which supports coalition missions in Afghanistan. They also want more information from Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov, who was not present at the session, on the expected length of the coalition's presence in Kyrgyzstan. (KyrgyzInfo)

### **US ADDS VOICE TO INTERNATIONAL CRITICISM OF AZERBAIJAN ELECTION**

**20 October**

The United States added its voice to concerns about events in



Azerbaijan after the much-criticised presidential election in the Central Asian republic. A number of international bodies, led by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, has condemned a wave of arrests of opposition party officials and supporters following last week's election, which was won by the son of the outgoing president. "We share those concerns at what appears to be a wave of politically motivated arrests over the weekend," deputy State Department spokesman Adam Ereli told reporters. "It is our view that Azerbaijan's government must follow through on its OSCE commitments to safeguard its citizens and respect their rights," said the spokesman. "We also call upon the opposition parties to act peacefully and within the law." The State Department also highlighted its worries over post-election violence in Azerbaijan. "We have called on both the government and the opposition parties to stop it. Those who are engaged in criminal acts should be pursued as should be police who used excessive force," said the spokesman. (AFP)

#### **ARMENIAN OPPOSITION STAGES NEW ANTIGOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATION**

**20 October**

Thousands of people attended a rally in Yerevan on 17 October at which leading members of the opposition Artarutun bloc renewed their demand for the referendum of confidence in President Robert Kocharian proposed by the Constitutional Court in April, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported. Kocharian immediately rejected that proposal. People's Party of Armenia Chairman and defeated presidential candidate Stepan Demirchian told the rally that a referendum would give Kocharian the legitimacy that he currently lacks because the presidential election outcome was falsified. Former Premier and Artarutun leader Aram Sargsian predicted that the next opposition rally will force Kocharian to step down. He did not elaborate. (RFE/RL)

#### **ARMENIAN PARLIAMENT QUERIES PRIVATIZATION STRATEGY**

**21 October**

In a report circulated to legislators and made available to RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau, the parliament Audit Chamber highlighted "significant shortcomings" in the government's three-year program to privatize remaining state-owned enterprises, RFE/RL's Yerevan bureau reported on 20 October. The government program, which should be

completed by the end of this year, envisaged the sale of almost 1,000 enterprises, but in 2000-2001 only 350 were sold. Moreover, in many cases the sales were not transparent, and according to Audit Chamber deputy head Gegham Gasparian, many entities were sold for less than one fifth of their face value as estimated by the State Property Committee. (RFE/RL)

#### **IRAN TO PROVIDE IAEA WITH KEY NUKE DOCUMENTS**

**22 October**

Iran said Wednesday the Islamic Republic would hand over documents on its past nuclear activities to the U.N. nuclear watchdog later in the day to allay international suspicions it is planning a bomb. The move would meet a key demand of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which had given Tehran an October 31 deadline to clear up suspicions about its nuclear ambitions. Iran has always denied that it is seeking to make nuclear weapons and Tuesday agreed to sign up to tougher IAEA inspections and suspend uranium enrichment as part of a deal hailed as a positive step by President Bush. The IAEA has said its primary current concern is to ensure it has complete information about the origin and history of Iran's sophisticated uranium enrichment system. Tehran agreed to the snap inspections and to freeze uranium enrichment Tuesday in an agreement hailed by three visiting European ministers as a promising start to removing doubts about Iran's atomic aims. Iran's President Mohammad Khatami said Wednesday the protocol would need parliamentary approval. "It will have to be presented to parliament. It is like all other agreements," he told reporters. Under the agreement brokered by the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany in Tehran Tuesday, Iran pledged to implement the tougher inspection regime ahead of ratification. It was not immediately clear when a parliament vote would take place. Its outcome is uncertain because although parliament is dominated by pro-Khatami reformists, all legislation must go to hard-line supervisory body the Guardian Council. "It shows how delicate the agreement is, the proof will be in the implementation," said one European diplomat close to Tuesday's deal. However, political analysts said Iran's reformist government would have never struck the deal without the approval of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei which meant there should be little resistance from the Guardian Council. (Reuters)

