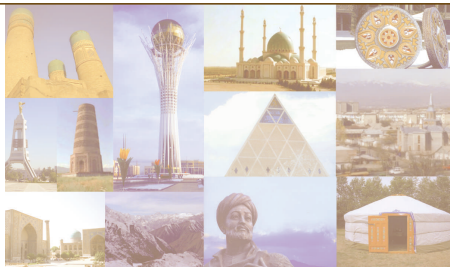


CENTRAL ASIA OBSERVATORY

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The Central Asia Observatory (CAO) was established in 2007 by three institutions that are interested in the area: Casa Asia, CIDOB Foundation and Royal Institute Elcano



CASA ASIA



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TAJIKISTAN



SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2011

Bimonthly article

Prof. Saodat Olimova*

Highlights

The main event in September-October was the magnificent celebration of the twentieth anniversary of independence. On the morning of 9 September, Dushanbe hosted a military parade of aircraft and 10,000 troops.

The 201st Russian military base and the armed forces of Afghanistan, Iran, India and France also attended the parade, which was followed by a festive demonstration at which a national flag of Tajikistan measuring 2,011 metres in length was borne aloft. Festive processions were held in all the towns and districts of Tajikistan.

In this context, an anniversary summit of CIS leaders was held and Tajikistan was visited by leaders of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Among the topics of discussion at the CIS summit were the results of two decades of CIS activities and future prospects. The most important documents to emerge from the summit were the statements of CIS participants-leaders with regard to the twentieth anniversary of the CIS and the analytical report "Results of CIS in the past 20 years and goals for future."

Internal affairs

The intensive preparations for the lavish twentieth anniversary celebrations gave way to a period of relative calm, with people switching their attention to everyday concerns, notably harvesting and preparing for winter. Nevertheless several events drew public attention.

On 3 October in Geneva, Tajikistan presented a universal periodic review on human rights to the UN human rights council. Noting Tajikistan's overall

progress in terms of adopting and ratifying human rights laws and conventions, the UN council made a number of comments on gender inequality and human rights violations, including violations of freedom of speech at a time when the trials of journalist Mahmadysuf Ismoilov and BBC journalist Urunboy Usmonov were pending. The two men were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment but later released under an amnesty. Several influential international organizations and countries condemned the verdicts arguing that they reflect the attempts of the Tajik authorities to censor coverage of sensitive political and religious topics.

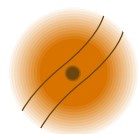
An initiative championed by the education ministry dubbed the "teacher's oath" was implemented, with all teachers now being required to swear allegiance to the state, students and employers.

In October, UNICEF launched a campaign to support education for girls. Gender inequality in education is a relatively new phenomenon for Tajikistan. In Soviet times almost the entire adult population of the republic was educated and school enrolment was almost 98% for all boys and girls. Now, the country faces the problem of growing gender disparity between boys and girls in education, hence the launching of the campaign by the education ministry and UNICEF to support girls' education. By the same token, a movement supporting education for women was launched.

Foreign and international policy

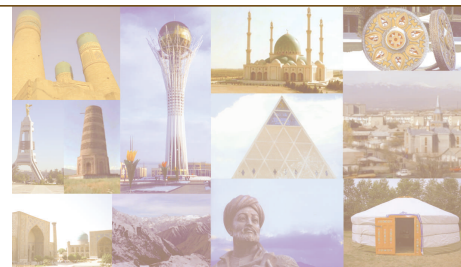
International affairs in the September-October were prominent. Various foreign leaders visited Dushanbe in early September in the context of the independence anniversary celebrations, the CIS summit and the meeting of the union of Persian-speaking countries.

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The most important foreign policy events were the CIS summit, the visits of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, President Ahmedinejad of Iran, Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the President of Pakistan Asif Zardari, plus vigorous international activity associated with the prospect of NATO withdrawing from Afghanistan and the impact of this move for Central Asia.

Tajikistan's participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan has been discussed at a number of levels. On 6 October Marc Grossman, the United States special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan discussed America's new "modern Silk Road" initiative with President Rahmon. This initiative is designed to contribute to economic recovery, peace and stability in Afghanistan by engaging its neighbours in the process. The new plan to revive the Silk Road implies connecting the energy and transport links of Central Asia and South Asia, including the CASA-1000 (Central Asia-South Asia-1000) pipelines, gas pipelines, roads and railways. President Rahmon supported the U.S. initiative, expressing his country's readiness to actively participate in its implementation. The objectives of this initiative are clearly set out in the report drafted by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which developed the project. According to the report: "Today's Silk Road is a transcontinental trading network, completely covering the Eurasian space. It will strengthen the presence of economic interests of the United States, support successful counter rebellion campaign in Afghanistan and prevent degradation, thereby implementing broad strategic U.S. goals. In addition, the implementation of the Modern Silk Road is intended to undermine the export monopoly of Russia and to provide access to new markets in China, India and Pakistan."

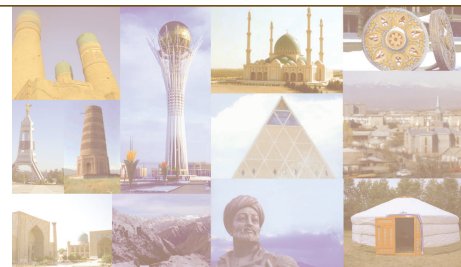
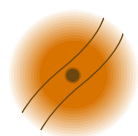
The same US strategy was discussed during the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who arrived in Dushanbe on 22 October on a two-day official visit as a part of a tour of Central Asian countries. At

a press briefing Clinton said that the U.S. wants to enlist the region's support to assist the people of Afghanistan. She promised to help Tajikistan with its economic development but cautioned about the continued construction of Rogun hydroelectric plant and human rights violations.

Tajikistan is actively participating in another Afghan reconstruction project with Russia, Pakistan and Afghanistan itself. On 2 September the "Dushanbe Four" held their third meeting in Tajikistan. During the meeting, presidents Karzai, Zardari, Medvedev and Rahmon agreed to develop a roadmap in the form of long-term cooperation in trade and economy, encompassing cooperation in aviation, road and rail links, energy projects, modernization and creation of production facilities, creating a favourable investment climate and expanding trade.

The four countries plan to cooperate with international financial institutions. Their priorities are to create the CASA-1000 energy transmission system and other energy projects, as well as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. In the field of security and military cooperation, the countries welcome the transfer of responsibility for security to Afghan armed forces in the context of the "Kabul process". The remaining priorities are the fight against terrorism, extremism and transnational crimes. Moreover, the four countries agreed on the need for wider access to opportunities afforded by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The Tajik government supports both projects as well as other projects that aim to develop and stabilize Afghanistan.

Competing projects concerning the development of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of NATO troops was the main topic of the numerous negotiations conducted by the Tajik authorities in September and October, at which bilateral relations were also discussed. On 2 September, during the



visit of Russian President Medvedev, the question of the return of Russian border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border was raised again. The most heated debate between the Tajik and Russian sides centred on negotiations to extend the status of the Russian military base in Tajikistan. It was agreed that before the end of the first quarter of 2012 Tajikistan and Russia will sign an intergovernmental agreement on the presence of a Russian military base on the territory of Tajikistan for the next 49 years. A new Tajik-Russian agreement on border cooperation was also signed whereby the continued presence of a group of Russian advisers will be extended until 2016 albeit reduced in number from 350 to 200. They will also lose the opportunity to conduct independent operational activities and will hereinafter coordinate their activities with their Tajik colleagues. Negotiations between the Tajik and Russian presidents also touched on customs tariffs on Russian oil exports to Tajikistan. Summing up the visit, the two Presidents stressed that Tajikistan had always been a strategic partner of Russia and would continue to be.

A few days before Independence Day on 4 September Iranian President Ahmadinejad visited Tajikistan and participated in the launch of the first unit of Sangtuda-2 hydroelectric plant. He and President Rahmon signed a memorandum on the construction of a hydropower plant on Aini river in Zarafshan. If the project is implemented, Iran will consolidate its position as the largest investor in the Tajik economy. In 2010, Iran invested \$65.5 million, even more than Russia. In the near future, Tehran intends to invest over \$1.5 billion in Tajikistan. The Iranians are considering the construction of two hydroelectric plants on the Nurabad river in Hingou. China had previously planned to construct these two facilities, but abandoned the projects for various reasons.

Iranian-Tajik cooperation is developing not only in the energy sphere but also in the transport

sector. Negotiations on the construction of a highway connecting Lower Panj in Tajikistan with Iran via the Afghan cities of Sherkhan, Qunduz, Mazar-i-Sherif, and Herat are still pending. Construction of this road will not only establish road links between Iran and Tajikistan but also enhance their role in export-import operations conducted in Afghanistan. Iran is also expanding its cultural ties with Tajikistan with plans to open a joint university and establish a new TV channel that will be broadcast in Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia with military ties with Iran and the Iranian embassy in Dushanbe has a permanent working military attaché.

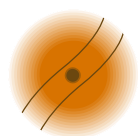
On 28-29 October the President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko paid an official visit to Tajikistan to discuss bilateral economic cooperation.

EU relations

In October 87 Tajik students and young scientists qualified for the EU's Erasmus Mundus education programme and went to study in European universities. In the last two years, over 100 scholars from Tajikistan have been to Germany to study as part of a German academic exchange service. At the end of December new applications for participation in the EU-funded Tempus programme may be submitted. From 2008 to the present, the EU has spent over 3 million euro on education initiatives in Tajikistan.

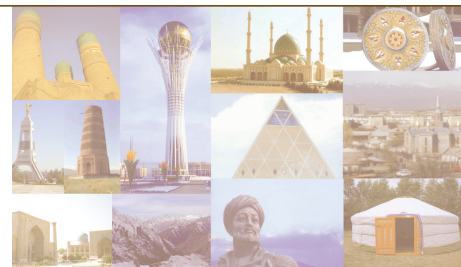
Economy and business enterprise

In October, 20 days earlier than usual, the state electricity company introduced restrictions on supply of electric power in certain regions of Tajikistan. Representatives for the electric company said that the measure was introduced because of reduced runoff in the Vakhsh River and the need to conserve water in reservoirs.



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Tajikistan experienced an annual power deficit during winter periods of up to 4.5 billion kWh. In the past two years, with the commissioning of hydropower plant Sangtuda 1 and dozens of small hydropower plants the deficit was halved.

Earlier deficits were mainly covered by imports from neighbouring countries, but for the past two years Tajikistan's energy system has been running in stand-alone mode owing to Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the United Energy System of Central Asia in November 2009.

Despite the winter energy deficit, Tajikistan is increasing energy exports to Afghanistan. With the commission of Sangtuda 2 and power lines Sangtuda-Puli Khumri, Afghanistan will only receive 45 million kWh in the autumn-winter period. In the spring of 2012 Tajikistan will supply 300 million kWh to Afghanistan. Energy cooperation between Tajikistan and Afghanistan fits into the strategy for reviving the Great Silk Road, supported by Washington and aimed at strengthening economic ties between South and Central Asia.

Tajikistan's external debt in the third quarter of this year reached \$2.1 billion (33.4% of GDP). Tajikistan's main creditors are international financial institutions such as Asian and Islamic Development Banks, World Bank and Exim bank of China. The share of Exim bank is \$800 million of total credits.

Remittances: According to Russia's Central Bank \$1.18 billion was transferred from Russia to Tajikistan in the first half of the year.

Cotton exports: Tajikistan has increased cotton exports by a substantial 60.7% since the beginning of the year. Sharp price increases for cotton on international markets are providing farmers with huge incentive to farm this crop. This year, the area for farming cotton in Tajikistan has been increased by

almost 50,000 hectares to 210,000 hectares. Cotton is Tajikistan's second biggest export item after aluminium and is exported to the EU and U.S. This year, however, the U.S. refused to purchase Tajik cotton because child labour is used in its production.

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