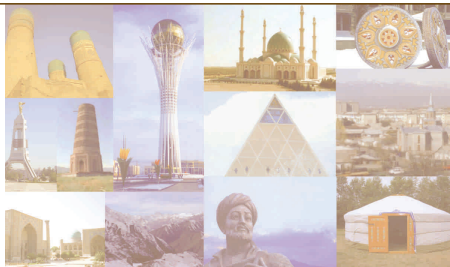


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CASA ASIA



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TAJIKISTAN



NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2011

Bimonthly article

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Highlights

The event that rocked Tajikistan towards the end of 2011 was the trial of the two pilots, Russian citizen Vladimir Sadovnichiy and Estonian citizen Alexei Rudenko, who landed at Kurgan Tube airport on 12 March without the required documents and without the permission of the Tajik authorities. One of their planes was carrying an aircraft engine. The two pilots, who work for Rolkand Investment Ltd., were found guilty of smuggling aircraft parts, violating international air traffic regulations and illegally crossing the Tajik-Afghan border. On 8 November, Kurgan Tube court sentenced the pilots to eight and a half years imprisonment and confiscated their aircraft. The pilots insisted they were innocent and had made an emergency landing at Kurgan Tube with the approval of the local aviation authorities. Although the pilots were detained in March, Russia did not respond to these events until November after the story hit the front pages of the Russian newspapers. Many political forces used the story of the arrested Russian pilot in Tajikistan as a weapon in the run-up to Russia's parliamentary elections on 4 December, with calls to defend Russia and Russians coming both from nationalists and official authorities. Russia's foreign affairs ministry described the Tajik court verdict as extremely harsh and politically motivated, and accused Tajikistan of violating international norms. The Russian ministry issued a statement claiming that the conviction of the Russian pilot was damaging the alliance and strategic partnership between Russia and Tajikistan. Responding to a question in relation with this issue during an interview, President Medvedev promised to take "asymmetrical measures", sparking a mass deportation of Tajik migrant workers. On 15 November the Russian newspaper Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported that the country had threatened to

expel up to 10,000 Tajik migrant workers from its territory. Russian authorities gave the reason for this as the "criminalization of Tajik migrants." Russia's surgeon general suggested banning the entry of Tajik citizens into Russia on the grounds that they may be carriers of infectious diseases. Russia's Duma discussed the introduction of a visa regime for Tajikistan and the foreign trade agency discussed a ban on imported agricultural products from Tajikistan. Russian youth organizations picketed the embassy of Tajikistan in Moscow. Cases of attacks by skinheads on Tajik migrants increased as well.

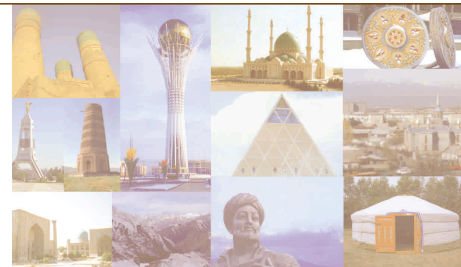
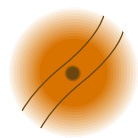
Immediately after the Russian actions the Tajik court reduced the sentence to two and a half years. The two pilots were later released under an amnesty. This story is still widely discussed in the press. Investigations by journalists revealed that the incident involved the property interests of shady Russian, Afghan and Tajik offshore business structures. It is still not known what the detained aircrafts were carrying, why the pilots did not have any documents and why air traffic workers at Kurgan-Tube Airport refused permission for landing not one but seven times whereas the pilots claim that they received permission. Journalists in Russia are also asking why the unnecessarily harsh sentence was meted out immediately after the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Tajikistan.

In all events, this scandal had an extremely negative impact on Tajik-Russian relations and prospects for integration in the Eurasian Union.

Internal affairs

In the last few months of 2011 a state programme to provision the population of Tajikistan with landlines was actively promoted, as a result of which one million

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free fixed-line phones will be installed thus providing low-income families, the disabled and people living in remote areas with a means of communication. So far 100,000 thousand phones have been installed. At the same time, Internet and cable television lines are also being installed.

On 9 December, the Centre for Strategic Studies presented a study on corruption, supported by OSCE Office. One of its main objectives was to assess the prevalence of corruption, levels of perception and attitudes towards corruption, and to fight corruption in Tajik society. The survey showed that 57% of respondents consider corruption in Tajikistan is high, whereas one-third of respondents rate it as average. According to the study, corruption in Tajikistan is institutionalized. Almost 80% of the population in one way or another is involved in corrupt relationships. The most corrupt structures are state auto inspection, the police and the health care system. For 59% of respondents, most corruption take place at state government level; 10.6% singled out regional government level, and 27.7% said local government level. More than half the respondents -55%- said that corruption had increased in the country in the last five years, and 54.4% of respondents believe that corruption will increase in next 5 years. According to the survey, non-corrupt structures include mosques, religious organizations, labour unions and social organizations.

According to the annual report published by Transparency International on 1 December, Tajikistan ranks 152 in the Corruption Perception Index 2011, scoring 2.3 points. Tajikistan has improved its position in comparison to last year's ranking by two positions.

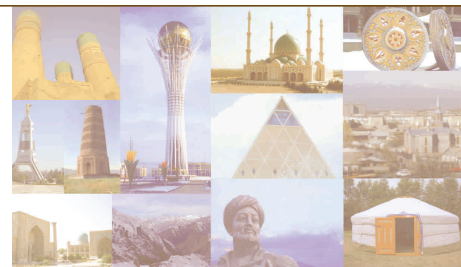
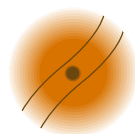
Religious life

On 4 November, Metropolitan bishop Vikentiy of Central Asia arrived in Khujand, the capital of Sugd region, where a celebratory service was held at the Church of Mary Magdalene. Commenting on

Orthodox Christianity in Tajikistan, Vikentiy noted that in the past 140 years of Orthodoxy in Tajikistan there have been no tensions between Muslims and Orthodox Christians. He noted that in Khujand parish there are 1,000 Orthodox Christians, many of whom are young people.

A month later, in December, a conflict flared up between the Council of Ulems (the supreme religious council) and the famous Muslim theologians, Hoji Akbar and Eshoni Nuriddin Turajonzoda. On 6 December, the Council of Ulems issued a statement accusing the Turajonzoda brothers of conducting a religious ceremony, Ashur, commemorated by Shia Muslims. The Council of Ulems called this fact "an attempt to split Tajikistan's Muslims who profess the Hanifi sense of Sunni Islam" and called on police to give legal assessment of the actions by the brothers Turajonzoda. These in turn rejected the accusations and said that according to tradition, they were reminiscing about the murder of the Prophet's grandson in Muhammadia mosque, which cannot be called an Ashur ceremony.

On 9 December, the head of the Council of Ulems together with representatives of the Tajik authorities visited Muhammadia mosque, where their entry was obstructed by the congregation. Police arrested and fined protestors for disturbing public order. The Committee of Religious Affairs of Tajikistan subsequently closed Muhammadia mosque for three months and dismissed from duty Eshoni Nuriddin, an imam of the mosque. The Turajonzoda brothers were taken to court and fined \$72 for disorderly conduct. It should be noted that Haji Akbar Turajonzoda previously served as head of Tajikistan's Muslims. During the 1992-1997 civil war he headed the United Tajik Opposition, and after signing the Peace agreement, he was appointed deputy prime minister. In recent years he stood down from politics. He does not approve of the government's actions. The Council of Ulems demanded that during Friday prayer, all imam-khatibs of Tajikistan announce the



statement made by the Council condemning the Turajonzoda brothers. A number of imams refused to do so and were banned from working. Meanwhile, the leader of Tajikistan's Islamic Renaissance Party Muhiddin Kabiri urged party members and supporters to refrain from engaging in polemics and debates on this matter with representatives of official clergy and authorities.

On 4 December Dushanbe hosted the 12th Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan. Rahmatullo Zoirov was re-elected as chairman of the party. Congress also decided to rename the party the National Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan. Congress delegates discussed and adopted a new edition of the party's charter, identified NSDPT priorities and programmes for 2011-2015. NSDPT unites 7,700 citizens of Tajikistan and takes a stand of constructive opposition.

A coalition of NGOs against torture developed and adopted a civil society strategy to fight torture. This strategy does not target the state authorities but rather requires active co-operation with them. A broad presentation of this strategy has been planned in early 2012. Human rights activists believe that torture and abuse are standard practice on the part of law enforcement agencies, an opinion that would appear to be endorsed by the widespread deaths of suspects after police interrogations, testifying to the serious nature of this problem and the urgent need to tackle it.

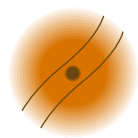
Foreign and international policy

In mid-December Tajik President Rahmon paid an official visit to Ukraine after which he attended an informal summit of the CIS, EurAsEC (EuroAsian Economic Community) and CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) in Moscow. This was the first visit of President Rahmon to Russia after the "pilot case" scandal and it did not improve Tajik-Russian relations.

There is a tendency to strengthen military cooperation between Tajikistan and Pakistan. In late December the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan General Khalid Shameem Wynne visited Tajikistan. On 23 December General Shameem Wynne held a meeting with President Rahmon to discuss military cooperation between Tajikistan and Pakistan, as well as regional security issues and the situation in Afghanistan. The day before, on 22 December, Tajik defence minister Hayrulloev and General Shameem Wynne agreed to cooperate in the military-technical sphere and the training of staff for the national army of Tajikistan, including military training of Tajik forces in Pakistani schools.

In November relations with Uzbekistan became strained. On 16 November, Uzbekistan once again blocked the transit of goods to Tajikistan. The reason for delaying cars from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan was a terrorist attack that had destroyed a bridge at Galaba-Amuzang railway station. The Uzbek authorities neither repaired the bridge nor did they respond to the proposals of the Tajik authorities to assist in the repairs. Currently, 350 wagon cars with supplies for southern Tajikistan are detained in Uzbekistan. Tajik MPs appealed to the Uzbek parliament to investigate the case. Tajik experts believe that the destruction of the bridge on Uzbek territory and the stopping of rail links with Tajikistan were part of a competitive fight for control over transit of NATO cargo to Afghanistan. Previously, 90% of the NATO cargo on the northern route was delivered into Afghanistan via Tajikistan. Now, almost all the coalition's goods and supplies go through Uzbek Termez-Hairatan. A very small amount of cargo for NATO arriving from Kyrgyzstan's Manas airport transits through Tajikistan.

Tensions suddenly sprang up between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Authorities from Afghanistan's Geodesy and Cartography office demanded to review the country's border with its northern neighbours, ie,



Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The reason for this turned out to be the changes in the channel border of the river Amudarya that have taken place in the past 30 years. There has been no official reaction on the part of the Tajik authorities to the Afghan statement thus far. The issue remains under study.

Relations with EU and European countries

Deputies of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the Bundestag, members of CDU, the Green Party and SDP visited Tajikistan in early November. The visit of the Bundestag deputies was filled with meetings and trips, during which they were acquainted with the living conditions of the citizens of Tajikistan and the human rights situation.

Economy and business enterprise

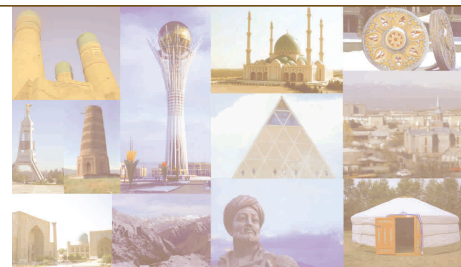
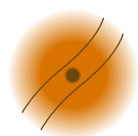
In early December, MPs discussed and adopted a budget for Tajikistan in 2012. State budget revenues for next year have been estimated at 10.16 billion Somoni (over \$ 2.1 billion), and expenditure at 10.34 billion Somoni (about \$ 2.2 billion), increases of 22% and 20% respectively with respect to last year's figures. The volume of Tajikistan's GDP next year has been estimated at 35.8 billion Somoni (about \$ 7.5 billion), 7% up on the previous year, and inflation at 10.5%.

Almost 50% of the 2012 budget -more than 5 billion Somoni- will be used to finance social issues, including education, health and the protection of the population. In addition, 58 investment projects in various sectors, including agriculture, health and education, transport infrastructure, communications and energy will be carried out in 2012. Thus, a key challenge is to attract investment. The finance minister presented parliament with an external public borrowing programme for 2012-2014, providing for the signing of 17 loan agreements totalling \$1.24 billion. Credit agreements will be signed with international financial institutions such as the World Bank, Asian and Islamic Development Banks, OPEC Fund, Arab financial

institutions, and a number of countries. The 2012 budget was discussed in the press, with the ambiguousness of many budget items provoking sharp criticism along with what are perceived as the excessive costs of the state apparatus, public festivities, unpopular tax increases and measures, etc. According to journalists, unnecessary and bloated government spending should not be allowed in times of extremely high dependence on remittances. Debates intensified after the publication of a new World Bank report on migration and development in which Tajikistan tops the list of the ten states that are most dependent on remittances. The report noted that in 2010 remittances of Tajik migrant workers amounted to \$2.3 billion, 31% of GDP.

At the end of the year, parliament adopted a law "On Concessions" which immediately sparked sharp criticism. According to experts this law would not help attract investments but would provide an opportunity for the enrichment of individual groups that were associated with the government. The law did not contain any articles about control over its execution.

In these cold and dark winter months, the population of Tajikistan is still disconnected from power supply. As always during this period of the year, enterprises and firms are experiencing great difficulties. In Sugd alone, over fifty industrial enterprises were disconnected from the grid in December owing to electricity issues, which are clearly extremely relevant in terms of people and businesses as well as the state. The overlap of the channel of Vakhsh River was scheduled in November, so that two units of Hydroelectric Plant Rogun could be installed by 2014. This summer, however, the World Bank issued a statement showing the undesirability of beginning construction of the first station before completion of an international expertise assessment. The Tajik government, under pressure from neighbouring countries -in particular Uzbekistan- agreed to conduct the assessment. Nonetheless, numerous media



reports from various countries in the region containing allegations that Tajikistan was rejecting the international expertise of Rogun forced the government to make a special statement in late November stating that the implementation of hydropower projects and the completion of Rogun plant take into account national and regional interests, and that Tajikistan is ready for close cooperation with its neighbours. The Tajik government also said that Tajikistan strongly supports international consultants for the successful completion of the assessment and that Tajikistan is awaiting the results while conducting repair work at Rogun hydroelectric plant. Hydro construction experts believe that it is technically possible to overlap Vakhsh River, but the decision on this matter is political and should be made by a special state commission. According to Tajikistan's finance ministry, in the first nine months of this year about 620 million Somoni (over \$138.3 million) was spent on the reconstruction of Rogun, and before the end of the year the ministry planned to allocate an additional 200 million Somoni. In the 2012 budget, over a billion Somoni was due to be earmarked for these purposes.

Serious problems exist with already constructed hydroelectric power plants. Sangtuda HPP-1, belonging to Russia, provides 15% of the country's electricity, reducing the seasonal energy deficit by 30%. However, the state power company Barki Tojik cannot pay Sangtuda-1 for the consumed electricity. Barki Tojik's debts now exceed \$50 million. During the visit of Russian President Medvedev in September, the two leaders signed a joint statement in which the Tajik side pledged to repay the debt before the end of 2011. However, Barki Tojik repaid only a small portion of the debt (\$0.5 million). There was a proposal to export electricity to Afghanistan, where prices are much higher. Starting next year, with the commissioning of a transmission line, Sangtuda-1 will sell electricity to Afghanistan, while the population of Tajikistan will once again remain without power.

In the last few months of 2011, the price of petroleum products and raw cotton rose continuously. Whereas the rise in the price of cotton plays in favour of Tajikistan, the increase in the prices of petroleum products is a source of high inflation. According to the finance ministry, inflation reached 11% at the end of the year. Industrial production in Tajikistan in the first ten months of this year amounted to over 5.9 billion Somoni (over \$1.3 billion) and grew by 5.1%. Foreign trade turnover of Tajikistan during the first ten months of 2011 totalled \$3.6 billion, 21.2% more than in the same period in 2010. According to the State Statistics Agency, the trade balance was negative and amounted to over \$1.5 billion. In 2011 Tajikistan had trade relations with 100 countries, including 10 CIS countries and 90 foreign countries. The CIS countries in foreign trade accounted for 44.5%, or more than \$1.6 billion, and foreign countries 55.5%, or more than \$2 billion. The trade deficit with CIS countries exceeded \$1.3 billion, and was \$225.6 million with foreign countries. During the reported period exports totalled over \$1 billion, and imports over \$2.6 billion. Tajikistan's major trading partners among the CIS countries are Russia with \$840.5 million, Kazakhstan with \$363.1 million, Ukraine with \$148.8 million and among foreign countries, China with \$570.7 million, Turkey with \$507.9 million and Iran with \$165.5 million.

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