

## **Tajikistan Seeks Role in Afghan Stabilisation**

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Tajikistan is hoping that energy and transport projects will contribute to building a more prosperous and hence stable Afghanistan.

As NATO troops prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2014, Russia and the Central Asian states are trying to figure out how they can contain or at least mitigate the effects of ongoing conflict in their southern neighbour. Building up the economy and employing young people is seen as one of the key aims.

Electricity is one area where Tajikistan might be able to help. Although it is still short of energy itself, new hydroelectric schemes are under construction, and cross-border power lines will allow surplus current to run schools and homes in Afghanistan's north. An ambitious international project called CASA-1000 could see electricity generated in Tajikistan and its neighbour Kyrgyzstan crossing Afghanistan to reach Pakistan

Aziz Rahmonov, an academic specialising in international affairs at the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University in the capital Dushanbe, points out that all three Central Asian states bordering on Afghanistan are already engaged.

"Uzbekistan is putting a great deal into Afghanistan, [especially] gas. Turkmenistan is providing electricity and gas in huge volumes that are incomparably greater than Tajikistan's modest contribution," Rahmonov said, adding that thanks to Tajik electricity, "we are gratified to see that the lights are on in [parts of Afghan province of] Badakhshan, even at night. Everyone there is amazed - they've got light."

Hamid Saidov, an Afghan-watcher in Tajikistan, sees power provision as a key tool for reconstruction and stability at least in the north of the country. "We cannot of course influence the whole territory of Afghanistan," he told IWPR, "but with an active presence we can nevertheless play a stabilising role in about 15 provinces, mostly those where Uzbeks, Tajiks and Pamiris form the majority."

**Parviz Rasulov is an IWPR-trained radio reporter in Tajikistan.**

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