

# Central Asia news update

August 2014

MIDDLE  
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FORUM

HOSTED BY THE CENTRE FOR  
CITIZENSHIP & GLOBALISATION

## Recent Developments

### Economic

There is considerable [speculation](#) surrounding arms deals purportedly signed by Kazakhstan at the KADEX defence expo in late-May.

The Kyrgyz government suffered a massive blow after a Moscow court [awarded](#) \$118.2 million in damages to the Canadian Stans Energy Corp in July.

Kyrgyzstan has [signalled](#) that it will join the Customs Union in 2015, although will not complete the accession process until 2020.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has [granted](#) Tajikistan a \$50 million loan to modernise the Qairokkum hydroelectric plant in Sughd Province.

Turkmenistan and South Korea [signed](#) a \$4 billion agreement for the construction of gas processing plants in Turkmenistan.

The Japanese government is [expected](#) to award Tajikistan \$20 million to establish a new freight terminal at Dushanbe International Airport.

Uzbekistan and South Korea have [held](#) talks about future economic cooperation worth over \$2.4 billion. The two countries will strengthen ties in the fields of information technology, solar energy, agriculture and education.

### Politics

The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, has [announced](#) that China has received positive signals from the Mongolian Prime Minister about joining the SCO.

Kyrgyz officials have expressed concerns that Uzbekistan will not [restate](#) the country's natural gas supply ahead of winter. Uzbekistan cut its gas pipeline to Kyrgyzstan



in April in protest to the Kyrgyz government's sale of a majority stake in KyrgyzGaz to Russia's Gazprom.

Kyrgyzstan has [bemoaned](#) its declining military relations with the US.

A Turkmen newspaper [reported](#) in mid-July that a route had finally been agreed upon for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railroad. Negotiations on the project had stalled earlier this year.

The Canadian-Tajik researcher, Alexander Sodiqov, has been [released](#) from a Tajik jail on bail, although his rights remain seriously restricted.

The ousted Kyrgyz [president](#), Kurmanbek Bakiev, has been sentenced to life in prison in absentia for the role he played in the killing of protesters during the 2010 Kyrgyz uprising.

The 2014 UN [Human](#) Development Report ranked Uzbekistan (114), Turkmenistan (103), Kyrgyzstan (123), Tajikistan (133) and Afghanistan (169) out of the 187 countries studied. Kazakhstan was the only Central Asian state to rank below 100, coming in at number 70.



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Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan [announced](#) the 'widening' of bilateral diplomatic ties after a meeting on July 15.

The Tajik government has put further limits on Tajik [internet](#) use. The most popular Russian social network, Odnoklassniki, has now been censored by Tajik authorities. The Tajik government has since [launched](#) its own social networking site.

## Security

The head of the Afghan army, General Sher Mohammad Karimi told the [BBC](#) that Pakistan controls the Taliban. He argued that violence in Afghanistan could be stopped in a matter of weeks if Pakistan ceased its support for the militant group.

Tensions were [reignited](#) on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border on July 10 after one Tajik national was killed and several were injured following an exchange of fire between troops on a disputed section of the border.

A gunfight [between](#) the Taliban and Afghan government troops took place at the Kabul International Airport in mid-July. All of the gunmen were killed in the incident.

25 Chinese workers have been [deported](#) from Kyrgyzstan and 14 fined following a riot at a refinery construction site in the northern city of Tokmak.

A [bomb](#) in a crowded marketplace in Afghanistan's eastern Patika province killed at least 42 people. The Taliban has denied involvement in the incident.

Troops from six CSTO member states participated in joint military [exercises](#) in Kyrgyzstan in late July. The CSTO's Secretary General stated that the exercises aimed to "verify the abilities of the organization's peacekeeping forces to counter terrorism."

There are thought to be [approximately](#) 110 Tajik nationals fighting amongst the Syrian opposition. According to Tajik authorities, four Tajiks have been killed in fighting in Syria

and a further six have been arrested upon attempted to return home to Tajikistan.

## Focus on: The Afghan election

The 2014 Afghan election has been closely watched by the international community, with observers hoping that Afghanistan's new president will be able to bring stability and security to Afghanistan ahead of the ISAF withdrawal later this year. The new president will be the second Afghan president since the US invasion of the country in 2001. The current President Hamid Karzai was not eligible to run because he has already served two five-year terms as president.

The 2014 election has been marred by controversy. While preliminary results from the run-off poll suggested that Ashraf Ghani had won by one million votes, his rival, Abdullah Abdullah, alleged widespread electoral [fraud](#). After rising tensions between the two candidates, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry, negotiated a full audit of the votes. However, as of late July, only about four percent of ballot boxes had been audited, suggesting that it could be late August before the result of the recount is known. Even since the recount began, there has been significant disagreement over the classification of invalid votes, with the audit halted twice in the final week of July alone. The result was initially expected to be announced in July.

Observers had hoped that the Afghan election would deliver a [decisive](#) victory to the new president in the first round of polling in April, preventing a run-off election that could prove divisive for the already fractious country. Even once the results are finalised, Afghanistan's new president will find it difficult to claim a legitimate mandate from the Afghan people, given how deeply the election has been discredited.

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