

Central Asia news update

March 2015

MIDDLE
EAST
STUDIES
FORUM

HOSTED BY THE CENTRE FOR
CITIZENSHIP & GLOBALISATION

Recent Developments

Economic

The Tajik state-owned aluminium factory, [Talco](#), is purportedly nearing a deal to settle its \$363 million debt with the Russian aluminium producer, Rusal.

A senior Tajik official has [complained](#) that Russia has made little progress in implementing its promised support for Tajik hydropower schemes.

The Kazakh Energy Minister [says](#) that the final decision on finance for the Tengiz oil project will be made by the end of 2015.

Kazakhstan's slowing economy is having a [significant](#) impact on the country's industrial base.

US military and economic [aid](#) for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia will increase in the 2016 fiscal year.

Turkmen residents in city of Mary [rushed](#) to buy US dollars on February 2 after rumors circulated that the national currency would be devalued.

The Kazakh Energy Minister, Vladimir Shkolnik, [said](#) on February 23 that Kazakhstan will maintain its oil production levels in 2015, despite the low oil price.

Politics

Supporters of the Kazakh president have [called](#) for an early presidential election to ensure the country's economic and political stability. Kazakhstan's ruling party has [supported](#) the proposal.

China's Foreign Minister [announced](#) that China is willing to play a role in Afghanistan-Taliban peace negotiations.

The Kyrgyz Justice Minister, Almambet Shykmamatov, resigned following a [standoff](#) with presidential office.

Uzbekistan's Presidential election is [scheduled](#) for March 29.

Tajikistan's parliament has made it [easier](#) for Tajiks to join the Russian army in response new Russian legislation that allows foreign citizens to join the Russian military.

A Kazakh activist was [arrested](#) for expressing solidarity with the Adam Bol (Be a Human) magazine, which was closed in December on charges of 'propagating war'.

Uzbek authorities [prevented](#) Shukhrat Rustamov, an Uzbek human right activist, from travelling to South Korea to receive an international award.

The US has denied reports that it will hold [talks](#) with the Afghan Taliban, although it has said that it supports reconciliation.

The Afghan Taliban has [condemned](#) a February 2015 United Nations report that accused the Taliban of being 'responsible for the majority of civilian casualties in 2014'.

According to International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Afghanistan, thousands of Afghans [fled](#) Pakistan after the December 16 Taliban attack on a school.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) [monitored](#) the March 1 Tajik parliamentary election.



DEAKIN
UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

Security

A February 2015 UN report [noted](#) a 25 percent increase in civilian deaths in Afghanistan during 2014.

A leader of Tajikistan's opposition Islamic party was [detained](#) on February 11 on charges of illegally possessing of weapon.

Tajik authorities detained an opposition politician on February 4 in Qurghonteppa on accusations of [embezzlement](#).

Kyrgyzstan has taken [steps](#) to strengthen its borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan amid fears of Taliban infiltration from Afghanistan.

Rakhat Aliyev, the [former](#) son-in-law of Kazakhstan's president, was found dead in an Austrian prison. He was awaiting trial on charges of murdering two bankers in 2007.

30 Hazaras [traveling](#) on a bus were abducted by unidentified gunmen in Zabul province in Afghanistan on February 23.

A villager was killed in southern Kazakhstan on February 5, raising tensions between Kazakhs and Tajiks. Kazakh authorities [censored](#) media reports on the incident.

The son of a well-known Uzbek [cleric](#) based in Sweden said he has received threatening messages from Uzbek agents via his family in Uzbekistan.

Kyrgyz officials [detained](#) 37-year-old man in city of Osh on February 4 on suspicions of being a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir.

An Afghan member of the country's [peace](#) council was shot dead on February 12 after participating in a dialogue with the Taliban.

A court in Tajikistan [sentenced](#) 13 members of Jamaat Ansarullah, a banned Islamic group, who were accused of recruiting for ISIS.

Radicalisation in Central Asia

Radicalisation in Central Asia has long been used by the region's leaders to justify repressive policies. The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) group in the Middle East has provided the ideal pretext to enhance these practices, with state media across the region publishing stories about the risk on a daily basis. Some of these reports have been included in this brief. Along these lines, Uzbek authorities have claimed that ISIS is planning an attack in the coming spring, prompting a build-up of troops on Uzbekistan's [border](#). Likewise, the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev has [ordered](#) initiatives to counter extremism, such as public awareness campaign.

An International Crisis Group report released in January suggested that these concerns were not unfounded, estimating that between 2,000 and 4,000 Central Asians had travelled to Syria. Although the data was [queried](#) by John Heathershaw and David Montgomery, who are well-known experts on the region, it is clear that events in the Middle East are having an impact on security dynamics, at least in official discourse.

Kyrgyz authorities [announced](#) that 22 Kyrgyz nationals have been killed in fighting in Syria.

Kyrgyzstan officials said that they have [uncovered](#) 30 cases where the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) group had tried to recruit Kyrgyz nationals in the Kara-Suu district of Osh Province.

A man suspected of being a Hizb ut-Tahrir [leader](#) was detained in Kyrgyzstan on February 19.

A Kazakh court sentenced two radical Islamists to [lengthy](#) prison terms on charges of terrorist activity.

20 police officers were [killed](#) following four suicide attacks on a provincial police building in eastern Afghanistan on February 17.