

Central Asia News Update

October 2015

MIDDLE EAST
STUDIES FORUM

at the Alfred Deakin Institute
for Citizenship & Globalisation

Recent Developments

Economics

The Scandinavian telecommunications company TeliaSonera [announced](#) its intention to withdraw from six troubled former-Soviet markets, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The Kazakh national currency [weakened](#) further, reaching a new low against the US dollar.

Kazakhstan and China [signed](#) 25 agreements worth \$23 billion.

Kazakhstan [began](#) producing diesel fuel in line with Euro-4 and Euro-5 standards.

The Kazakh President [suggested](#) establishing a Turkic integration fund during the fifth Summit of the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking countries.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Kyrgyzstan [increased](#) in the first half of 2015 by 2.3 times. FDI reached \$498.5 million, propelled mainly by an increase in investments from the West.

Kabul [hosted](#) a regional economic conference to discuss the country's future. More than 30 nations and 40 international organizations participated the conference .

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has [granted](#) Uzbekistan a \$300 million loan to modernise its electricity accounting system in regional areas.

Uzbekistan [increased](#) gas tariffs for domestic and enterprise customers by 7.3 percent on Oct 1, following a previous increase in May.

Uzbekistan [announced](#) that it will focus on developing the electricity sphere between 2016 and 2022.

Uzbekistan [increased](#) pensions, social allowances and salaries by an average of 10 percent on September 1.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) [forecast](#) that the Uzbek economy will grow by 7 percent this year, and 7.2 percent in 2016.

Politics

The Uzbek president [banned](#) the teaching of political science.

John Kerry [met](#) with Central Asian foreign ministers on 26 September to discuss "a new format for regional discussions."

Uzbekistan and Poland [established](#) a visa-free arrangement for holders of diplomatic passports.

The Tajik President [met](#) his Kazakh counterpart in Dushanbe on September 14 ahead of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit, signing a new "strategic partnership."

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) summit was [held](#) in Dushanbe on September 15. It focused on the threat that the Islamic State group could pose to Central Asia.



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Kazakhstan's recent [celebration](#) of 550 years of history was widely interpreted as a rebuke to the Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had previously stated that Kazakhstan "never had any statehood."

The Kazakh President [appointed](#) his daughter, Darigha Nazarbaeva, as Kazakhstan's deputy Prime Minister on September 11.

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) was [ordered](#) to disband by September 7.

Uzbekistan's government [banned](#) children under 18 years from attending Friday prayers and special mosque services, including the recent Eid al-Adha celebrations.

Presidents and soldiers from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan [attended](#) the massive Chinese military parade to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in Asia .

Security

Tajikistan closed all public markets in Dushanbe for security reasons in the days [surrounding](#) Tajik Independence Day on September 9.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [reported](#) that 1500 Chechen, Uzbek and Tajik fighters in Syria have announced allegiance to Al-Qaeda's Nusra Front.

Tajikistan [confirmed](#) that Abduhalim Nazarzoda, the renegade deputy Defence Minister who had served as a military commander in the United Tajik Opposition prior to the 1997 power-sharing deal, was killed in battle east of Dushanbe.

Unidentified gunmen [shot](#) dead 13 male passengers in Afghanistan's northern Balkh province after dragging them out of two vehicles.

An Uzbek National Security Service (SNB) analyst [declared](#) that ISIS mainly recruits doctors, electricians and engineers from Uzbekistan, rather than fighters.

Parliamentary election in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is [scheduled](#) to hold parliamentary elections on October 4. For the first time, 14 political parties will be contesting the 120 seats in the *Jogorku Kenesh* (parliament). The stakes are high in the election, which is hoped to restore Kyrgyzstan's reputation as a democratic outlier in Central Asia. This reputation has been rocked in the past decade by two revolutions, as well as outbreaks of ethnic violence. [Some](#) analysts have predicted that the incumbent President Almazbek Atambaev's Social Democratic Party will win the most seats.

Each party can win a [maximum](#) of 65 parliamentary seats, and 30 percent of seats are reserved for female candidates. A set number of parliamentary seats are also reserved for ethnic groups and those with physical disabilities.

Nine people were [killed](#) by a suicide bomber at a cricket match in southern Afghanistan.

The Swedish prosecutor [declared](#) that there is ample evidence that Uzbek authorities were behind the shooting of a dissident Uzbek Imam in Sweden in February 2012.

A UN report [published](#) in September found that ISIS is recruiting followers in 25 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces.

At least 10 Afghan Army troops were [killed](#) in an "insider attack" in the country's north on September 22.

The United Nations Envoy for Afghanistan [announced](#) that the Kabul-Taliban peace talks will resume soon.

A bomb [exploded](#) near the Tokhtaboy Mosque in the Tashkent on September 4, but there were no injuries.

11 members of the Afghan police forces were [reported](#) to have been killed in a NATO air strike on September 6. The US later [denied](#) the report.