

Central Asia News Update

November 2015

Recent Developments

Economics

The Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev [dismissed](#) the head of the his country's Central Bank over the continued devaluation of the country's currency. The Central Bank had [increased](#) interest rates from 12 percent to 16 percent a month earlier in an effort to counter the problem.

The IMF [forecast](#) that economic growth in Central Asia will slow further in 2016.

Shinzo Abe, the Japanese Prime Minister, [toured](#) Central Asia. During his stay in Kazakhstan, Abe offered Japan's assistance in building a nuclear power plant.

A senior IMF official [declared](#) that the 'the situation and outlook [in the Central Asian economies] are worse than for the world economy as a whole.'

Kazakhstan's global rank [increased](#) by 12 positions in the World Bank's 2016 'Doing Business' report.

Kazakhstan and Japan [signed](#) a memorandum of cooperation for investment in Kazakhstan's transport sector.

The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) [agreed](#) to finance the construction of a chemical complex in Uzbekistan with a \$577 million loan.

The Kazakh President [warned](#) that the full scale of the country's economic crisis is yet to come.

The Kyrgyz Defence Minister, Abibilla Kudaiberdiev, was [sacked](#) after Kyrgyz prosecutors announced that he was being investigated for alleged embezzlement.

Politics

The Kazakh and Russian Presidents [expressed](#) concern about Taliban activities in Tajikistan.

Reports [emerged](#) that the Australian government is considering resettling refugees in Kyrgyzstan. The government has not commented on the reports.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are expected to [finally](#) reach a deal on the delimitation of their shared border.

The US Secretary of State John Kerry [toured](#) the five Central Asian states.

Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media [condemned](#) Kazakhstan's decision to close an independent publication that was critical of the government.

A Kazakh citizen went on [trial](#) October 22 on charges of inciting separatism. He is accused of writing and distributing an online poll that asked whether East Kazakhstan should rejoin to Russia.

Norway's government [forced](#) the chairman of the Norwegian telecom giant Telenor to resign after allegations emerged over bribes paid to the Uzbek President's daughter.

The leaders of The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) [met](#) on October 16 in Kazakhstan. They signed 17 agreements, including an agreement on military cooperation until 2020.

The French government [agreed](#) to extradite the Kazakh opposition leader, Mukhtar Ablyazov, to Russia. Ablyazov is accused of embezzling billions of dollars.

Security

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [raised](#) concerns over Tajikistan's forced disbandment of the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT).

Kyrgyz police [shot](#) dead a suspected Islamist militant who had escaped from prison. One policeman and two civilians were killed during the gun battle in Bishkek.



Germany will [close](#) its air base in the town of Termez in Uzbekistan by the end of 2015.

A Tajik diaspora leader in Russia [said](#) that the Tajik government's crackdown on Islamic political and religious groups has made the recruitment process easier for Islamic State (IS).

Russia [announced](#) that it will station more helicopters in Tajikistan following growing insecurity in northern Afghanistan.

Tajik authorities [arrested](#) 23 officials from the banned Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan. The government claimed that some of the officials were linked to a September 4 attack on a police station in Dushanbe, in which 26 people were killed.

Uzbek Police [arrested](#) 16 alleged members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Tashkent.

A rocket [hit](#) a mosque in Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least five worshippers and wounding others.

The Taliban [captured](#) Darqad district on the Afghan-Tajik border following intense battles with Afghan security forces.

Sima Joyenda, the Governor of Ghor Province in western Afghanistan, [reported](#) receiving death threats from armed strongmen.

Barack Obama [said](#) on October 15 that the US will keep 5500 troops in Afghanistan after 2016. Kabul welcomed the decision.

Britain [pledged](#) to retain its current number of troops in Afghanistan between 2015 and 2016.

The United States [imposed](#) sanctions on Torek Agha, a senior Taliban leader in Afghanistan, on October 20.

Kyrgyz Parliamentary Elections

Kyrgyz parliamentary elections took place on October 4, with the president's Social Democratic Party (SDPK) [winning](#) the most seats with 27.5 percent of the vote. For the first time, six parties will be represented in the parliament, [including](#) two newcomers, Onuguu-Progress and Bir Bol. [All](#) of the main parties elected are pro-Russia, making Kyrgyzstan the only post-Soviet democracy willing to build closer ties to Russia. Almazbek Atambaev, the Kyrgyz President [asked](#) the leader of the SDPK to establish a ruling coalition.

Electoral observers praised the conduct of the elections, with The Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society, who observed the process at 500 polling stations across the country, declaring that there had been [no](#) reports of 'very serious irregularities.' OSCE election monitors applauded the competitive nature of the election, but [highlighted](#) the need for improved electoral administration, and greater transparency in party funding. Kyrgyz citizens voted using biometric ID cards for the first time in Central Asia, but Monitors [noted](#) 'procedural shortcomings' in the system's implementation.

The Taliban [announced](#) that they would retreat from Kunduz city in northern Afghanistan to prevent further civilian casualties.

Seven Pakistani soldiers were [killed](#) in gunfire along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border on October 27.

A US watchdog [said](#) that the success of Afghan Local Police (ALP) has been hampered by inadequate supply.

An air strike [conducted](#) by US forces killed at least 22 people at an Afghan hospital that was run by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Kunduz city. President Obama apologized for the incident and promised a full investigation.