

August 2016

Economics:

The American oil giant Chevron [committed](#) US\$37 billion to the expansion of the Tengiz oil field in the Caspian Sea.

Tajikistan's Finance Ministry [forecast](#) that the country's currency will continue to gradually lose value over the next three years.

A Tajik National Bank decree that forces retailers and restaurants to install credit card facilities [came into effect](#) on July 1. The decree represents an attempt to circumvent the difficulties caused by the low levels of cash circulating in the country.

Tajikistan's National Bank [requested](#) a bailout from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to assist its country's lending sector.

Tajikistan [awarded](#) the Rogun mega-dam hydroelectric contract to the Italian firm Salini Impregilo.

The KAZ Minerals company [announced](#) that the expected cost of the Aktogay copper mine project has decreased by US\$100 million to US\$2.2 billion.

Kazakhstan's Kazkommertsbank [announced](#) that it would purchase 50 percent of the Belarusian BTA Bank. The deal received approval from Kazakhstan's antimonopoly committee.

A World Bank report [found](#) that the health of the Kazakh economy is gradually improving. The country is expected to face significant headwinds on its path to recovery.

The Kyrgyz Finance Ministry [announced](#) that the country's debt has reached nearly US\$4 billion.

Politics:

Turkmenistan [closed](#) its border with Kazakhstan for five days in July due to security concerns.

A Kazakh court [suspended](#) the prison sentence of the well-known Nakanune.kz journalist, Guzyal Baidalinova.

The German Chancellor Angela Merkel [met](#) with the Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev in Bishkek during a two-day visit to Kyrgyzstan. The two leaders discussed the case of the [well-known](#) ethnic Uzbek activist, Azimzhan Askarov, who was sentenced to life in jail on charges of provoking ethnic hatred six years ago.

The Tajik government [suspended](#) the Tajik edition of the Russian tabloid Komsomolskaya Pravda following its publication of an "insulting" article.

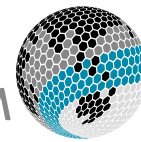
Kazakh authorities are [considering](#) stricter penalties for terrorism and extremism following the deadly shooting in Almaty in July.

A spokesperson for US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump [implied](#) that US policy could change under a Trump administration. The focus could shift from human rights and democracy, to the Russian and Chinese approach of 'mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.'

Turkey [increased](#) pressure on Kyrgyzstan following the attempted Turkish coup in July. The Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu told the Kyrgyz Foreign Minister that his country must 'change its attitude' towards the Gülen movement, which Turkey claims plotted the coup.



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Kazakh security services [allege](#) that a Kazakh businessman with ties to Uzbekistan organised this year's anti-land reform protests in an effort to seize power.

Kyrgyz authorities [announced](#) that two of the Istanbul airport attackers had Russian passports. Previous reports had identified the perpetrators as Russian, Uzbek and Kyrgyz nationals.

President Atambayev [supported](#) an increase in the number of billboards in Bishkek condemning conservative Islam. The billboards particularly focussed on the wearing of the hijab.

The Kazakh newspaper Tribuna/Ashyk Alan [will](#) pay almost US\$15,000 damages in a libel case. The newspaper is one of the country's last independent news sources.

The new Taliban leader Maulawi Haibatullah Akhundzada [urged](#) the US to end its "occupation" of Afghanistan in his first message since becoming leader of the group.

The Afghan President Ashraf Ghani [declared](#) that the US is a "strong and reliable partner." Ghani welcomed the US decision to slow its military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Dozens of young Afghans took to the streets in Kabul to urge the government to [take action](#) against acid attacks on women in Afghanistan.

Security:

Kazakh courts dealt with a number of cases ([1,2](#)) related to individuals joining ISIS in Syria.

Gunmen [killed](#) four at least policemen and one civilian in the Kazakh city of Almaty on July 18.

Kyrgyzstan's Supreme Court [postponed](#) the review of Azimjan Askarov's case.

A Tajik court [sentenced](#) the leader of an banned Salafist movement Muhammadi Rahmatullo to eight years in prison after finding him guilty of being a member of an extremist organisation.

The Afghan Journalists' Safety Committee [reported](#) that the first half of 2016 was the most dangerous period for journalists working in Afghanistan.

A suicide bomber [killed](#) at least two people and left a dozen wounded in Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan on July 2.

Australia [extended](#) its Afghanistan mission until mid-2017 in order to assist the Afghan government in fighting the resurgent Taliban.

Leaders at the NATO summit [expressed concern](#) over Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. During the summit, the Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah also [acknowledged](#) that ISIS had become "a problem" for his country.

US Defense Secretary Ash Carter [met](#) with Afghan leaders and US military commanders during an unannounced visit to Kabul. He praised the Afghan government's decision to give more authority to US commanders in the fight against the Taliban.

US and Pakistani authorities [confirmed](#) the death of Pakistani Taliban leader Omar Mansoor in a drone strike. Mansoor was accused of organising the 2014 Pakistani school attack in which 130 children were killed.

The Afghan president Ashraf Ghani's spokesman [said](#) that Kabul had no plans to resume peace talks with the Taliban in the aftermath of this year's failed four-nation negotiations.

Dozens of Afghan Hazaras took to the streets again in Kabul to [urge](#) government to reroute a power project through Bamiyan. ISIS carried out a twin bombing during the protest, killing 80 and wounding a further 231, making it the deadliest attack in the country since 2001.

Russian state media [reported](#) comments from the country's Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu, which suggested that Central Asian states were vulnerable to a "Syria-like crisis." Shoigu declared that "in these circumstances, Russia will be forced to adequately respond to potential threats."

