

Central Asia Weekly Intelligence Brief February 27th, 2023 – March 2nd, 2023

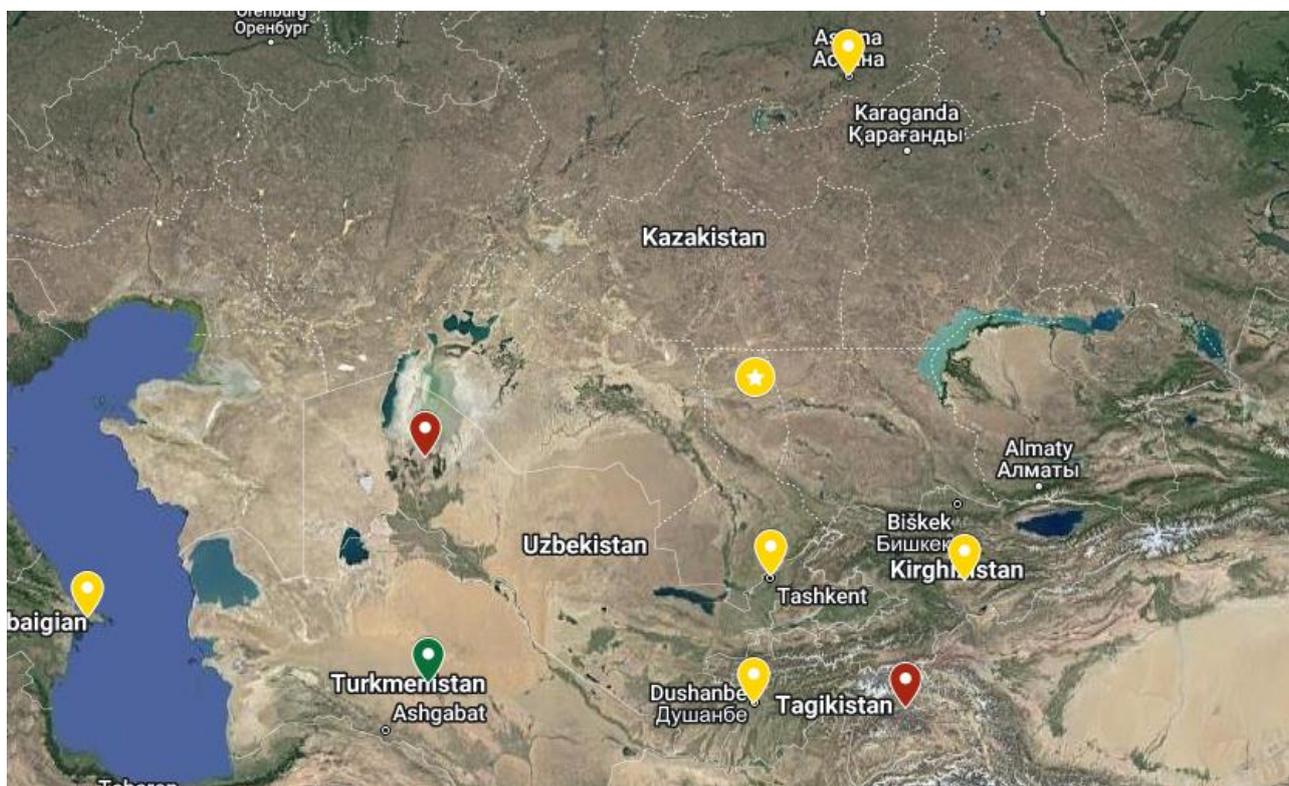


Figure 1 [Central Asia Monitoring & Risk Analysis Map](#)

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, visited Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and had talks with representatives of Central Asian republics. Blinken's visit was the first mission to the region as the Biden administration's top diplomat. It reaffirmed Washington's interests in Central Asia since the area is strategically valued in the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard, especially after the beginning of the Ukraine conflict.

Blinken's visit occurred a few days after the first anniversary of the beginning of the Ukraine conflict and highlighted that Central Asia has again become one of the 'battlefields' between superpowers such as the United States, Russia, and China.

Israel opens an embassy in Turkmenistan

Israel opens an embassy in Turkmenistan. The diplomatic mission in Turkmenistan will be the closest to the Iranian border. The embassy will be inaugurated during the next visit of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Eli Cohen, to Turkmenistan. The diplomatic mission confirms the Israeli-Turkmen strategic relations and Tel Aviv and Ashgabat's intent to further economic cooperation.

Israeli diplomatic mission in Turkmenistan underlines not only Tel Aviv's strategy in Central Asia but also Israel's strategy to encircle the Islamic Republic of Iran since the tension in the Middle East has arisen and the Israeli-Iranian confrontation has become more tangible.

Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia will build up a partnership in the energy sector

On March 1st, 2023, the Kazakh Minister of Energy, Bolat Achkulakov, led a business delegation and held meetings in Riyadh with the Saudi Minister of Energy, Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, and representatives of large Saudi companies. At the end of the meeting, the parties signed on implementing a renewable energy project between the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan, Samruk-Kazyna JSC and ACWA Power to build a wind power plant with a capacity of 1 GW in the Zhetysu region (Dzhungar Gates). In addition, the parties discussed issues of building up cooperation in the energy sector, including implementing projects in the oil and gas and petrochemical industries and further developing energy based on renewable sources.

Zhaparov promoted Kyrgyzstan as an ideal regional trade and transport centre.

On February 28th, 2023, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Akylbek Zhaparov, spoke at a round table on the development of transport routes in Bishkek, where he stated that Kyrgyzstan is an ideal centre for trade and transport due to its location. The Kyrgyz President noted that Kyrgyzstan plays a vital role in Beijing's Belt and Road because the country is strategically located at the crossroads of major transport routes linking China with Europe and the Middle East. According to him, the republic actively promotes its participation in this project, which can open up significant investment and trade opportunities.

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Zhaparov's words confirmed Bishkek's strategy to transform the Kyrgyz territory into a logistic centre, which might attract foreign direct investments (FDIs) capable of diversifying Kyrgyzstan's commercial and financial partners and supporting national infrastructural projects.

Emomali Rahmon met with Mikhail Mishustin

On March 2nd, 2023, the head of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, held talks with the head of the Russian government, Mikhail Mishustin and discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral cooperation and allied relations. The parties gave special attention to the fact that Russia is a key trading partner of Tajikistan and occupies a leading position in the structure of the state's foreign trade turnover.

In addition, Rahmon highly appreciated the high level of cooperation in the humanitarian sector. With this in mind, he expressed interest in further strengthening practical ties in education, science, culture and healthcare.

Rahmon and Mishustin's meeting corroborated the strategic level of Russian-Tajik relations and Moscow's important role in Dushanbe's foreign policy and economic strategy.

In Baku, Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, met with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

During the meeting, Ilham Aliyev noted that Uzbekistan is currently preparing a large project with the Azerbaijani state company SOCAR and expects many joint projects in various industries in the future. The parties confirmed the positive trend in bilateral relations and political and economic cooperation.

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