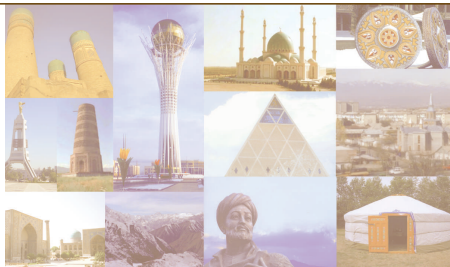


# CENTRAL ASIA OBSERVATORY



The Central Asia Observatory (CAO) was established in 2007 by three institutions that are interested in the area: Casa Asia, CIDOB Foundation and Royal Institute Elcano



CASA ASIA



CIDOB  
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UZBEKISTAN



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## Highlights

September-October 2010 period in Uzbekistan was “normal” and balanced. The European and Asian vectors of its foreign policy developed equally. Few changes to report in terms of the domestic situation, which remained as “normal” as in the previous period.

## Internal affairs

The *Voice of America* correspondent in Uzbekistan Abdumalik Boboev was arrested and went on trial on 7 October. He was charged with the crimes of slander (Article 139 of the Criminal Code), proffering insults (Article 140), illegal exit from / entrance in the Republic of Uzbekistan (Article 223), and production and dissemination of materials causing threats to social security and social stability (Article 244-1). Point B of Article 244-1 refers to crimes perpetrated “with the use of financial or other material help received from religious organizations as well as foreign countries, organizations and citizens”. The journalist faces a prison sentence of 5 – 8 years, as provided for in the Criminal Code.

The U.S. expressed its concern regarding the trial of this independent journalist who has been working for Voice of America for over 5 years. US State Department official Michael Tren made a statement on 5 October to the effect that the US had initiated contacts with the Uzbek government on this issue.

The court delivered its verdict on 15 October. Boboev was found guilty and ordered to pay a fine of 18,086,000 Sum, equal to \$ 11,500.

This disgraceful episode shows yet again that the Uzbek government does not tolerate freedom of speech. Meanwhile, allegations are rife in Uzbekistan

that the scandal involving the Voice of America correspondent was inspired by certain government circles in a bid to inject new tension into Uzbek-US relations.

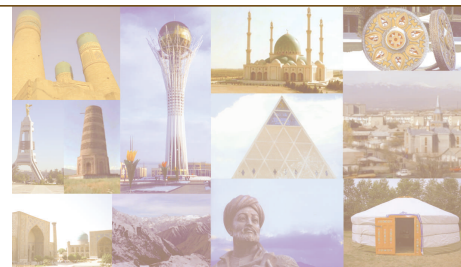
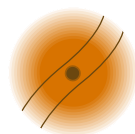
## Foreign and international Policy

On addressing the 65th UN General Assembly on 20 September, President Islam Karimov brought three basic questions to the UN’s attention. He started off by referring to the shrinking Aral Sea basin and the water level of the Syrdarya and Amudarya rivers, which is dropping further, and he reiterated his objection to the building of the Rogun Hydro Power Station in neighbouring Tajikistan which he described as an environmentally harmful project. He then moved on to Afghanistan, highlighting the worsening situation there and regional security in Central Asia overall. Last, he called for an international investigation of the June 2010 events in Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan where Uzbeks had been massacred to punish the organizers of that crime.

An EU delegation headed by the special representative on Central Asia Pierre Morel visited Uzbekistan on 21 October. He met with members of the senate and parliament, cabinet ministers and foreign ministry officials. During these meetings, overall cooperation between Uzbekistan and the EU was discussed. Both sides paid special attention to issues of international and regional security, especially problems concerning the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan and the situation in Kyrgyzstan after the June 2010 tragic events.

Morel appraised Uzbekistan’s stand regarding the situation in Kyrgyzstan in positive terms, along with the measures the country has taken to prevent the conflict from escalating across the region. Morel also

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pointed out the importance of drawing on the international expertise of the World Bank for the Rogun hydro power station project. For their part, the Uzbek representatives made a positive evaluation of various EU programmes in Uzbekistan, among which BOMCA and CADAP.

On 25-26 October, a delegation from Lithuania headed by deputy foreign minister Evaldas Ignatavichus visited Uzbekistan to participate in the third round of the Uzbek-Lithuanian political consultations. The issues raised during these consultations focused on bilateral relations in political, trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian spheres. The two parties exchanged opinions on current problems in terms of international and regional politics, particularly prospects of peace and stability in Afghanistan and the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

Interestingly, this visit had been preceded by the arrival of a delegation from Poland on 12-13 October for a fifth round of political consultations. And on 4 October, an Uzbek delegation headed by foreign minister Vladimir Norov visited Italy for the fourth round of political consultations.

Consecutive political consultations of this nature have become a marked tendency in Uzbek diplomacy, denoting some form of international activation allegedly sparking the growing interest of countries around the world in Uzbekistan and particularly the enhancement of relations between Uzbekistan and Europe.

## **Economy and business enterprise**

On 28 September the Asia Development Bank published the Renewed Asia Development Survey 2010 singling out Central Asia as a region where economies are demonstrating growing dynamism. The Bank confirmed the economic growth forecast for Uzbekistan at 8.5% in 2010 and 9% in 2011. The Board of Directors of the Islamic Development

Bank adopted a decision on 5 October to provide credit of \$ 167.2 million to the government of Uzbekistan for the reconstruction and modernization of the 100km M-39 highway in Surkhandarya province. The credit will be issued for a period of 20 years. It should be noted that construction of new roads, highways, railways and bridges has become a strategic asset for Uzbekistan since gaining independence and that this policy is currently pursued with great enthusiasm. An important cotton fair took place in Tashkent last month during which contracts were signed for the export of more than 600 tons of Uzbek fibre-cotton. It should be noted that the international cotton market situation this year greatly favoured Uzbekistan, whose main cotton buyers were China, Bangladesh, UAE, South Korea, India and Russia. The cotton fair was attended by 600 representatives of 300 companies from 26 countries. For the first time in the history of this fair, Uzbekistan's textile production -notably yarn and ready-made goods- was auctioned in addition to raw cotton.

In the course of the fair, \$500 million-worth of export contracts for textile products were signed. This widely advertised event demonstrated not only that Uzbekistan has made notable headway in terms of advancing foreign economic relations but also that it has been very successful in the international political arena. This is particularly striking in the light of the Andijan events of May 2005 which turned Uzbekistan into an object of international isolation. Its cotton trade was affected after a number of international organizations and companies called for boycotts of Uzbek cotton in that year. Today, the cotton trade campaign symbolizes a new political advancement of Uzbekistan.

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