

Tajikistan

Stability and minimal security disruptions in Tajikistan since the end of its 1992–1997 civil war belie a more sobering reality, where long-standing political tensions and broader regional instability threaten to disrupt peace in this impoverished state. The UN Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Centre in Dushanbe continue to play a valuable peacebuilding role. In the wake of devastating earthquakes that left over 9,000 homeless in July and August 2006, humanitarian activities by the United Nations have also had a stabilizing effect.

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Tajikistan was gripped by civil war between groups that supported the Moscow-backed Tajik government and factions that had unified under the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) label. A Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peacekeeping force of 25,000 troops, provided mostly by the Russian Federation, arrived in September 1993. By September 1994, the Tajik government and the UTO had approved a UN-brokered cease-fire, making way for the establishment of the UN Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT) to work with the existing OSCE observer mission to Tajikistan in implementing both the cease-fire and the subsequent peace agreement of 1997.

Parliamentary elections in February 2000 coincided with the withdrawal of both UNMOT and CIS peacekeepers. At the Secretary-General's suggestion, in June 2000 the Security Council established UNTOP to provide political leadership for peacebuilding activities in Tajikistan. The OSCE Centre in Dushanbe is helping to strengthen democratic political

institutions and processes, while serving an early warning and conflict prevention role.

In its six years of existence, UNTOP has brought together diverse elements of the citizenry and leadership in discussion forums, and trained over 900 Tajik officials in human rights and conflict management procedures. In 2005, 1,000 Ministry of Interior staff were trained in policing standards and 3,000 local election commission members took part in seminars on election standards in advance of the 2006 presidential elections. To defuse regional antagonisms, UNTOP sponsored a national dialogue on political pluralism, which brought together over 500 government officials, political party activists, and representatives of civil society. Meanwhile, the OSCE gathered some 1,600 state representatives in seminars on the functioning of political parties, and convened meetings of disparate political groups to help build consensus on pressing social issues.

Despite the work of both UNTOP and the OSCE, developing an inclusive governance system has been a challenge. No elections since the signing of the peace agreement in 1997 have been deemed acceptable by international standards. Political opposition has been marginalized, press freedom diminished, and corruption allowed to thrive. Dissatisfaction and outrage among political opposition parties and Islamic groups are growing. In November 2006, President Imomali Rakhmonov won his third seven-year term. Establishing inclusive governing structures has proved difficult, as Rakhmonov received nearly 80 percent of votes cast in an election that international observers declared not to have met international standards.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's ongoing tumult, Kyrgyzstan's 2005 war, the continued disquiet in Uzbekistan, and the threat of transborder resource conflicts due to water scarcity all present serious obstacles to Tajikistan's future stability. The 2004 withdrawal of Russian troop protection along Tajikistan's borders raised questions about the capacity of the Tajik government to protect itself from instability beyond its borders. Given Tajikistan's poverty, geographic situation, and troubled history, the continued support of the OSCE and the UN will be needed for some time to come.

UN Tajikistan Office of Peace-building (UNTOP)

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| • Start date | 1 June 2000 |
| • Executive Representative of the Secretary-General | Ambassador Vladimir Sotirov (Bulgaria) |
| • Budget | \$1.8 million (1 January–31 December 2006) |
| • Strength as of 30 September 2006 | International civilian staff: 11
Local civilian staff: 21 |

OSCE Centre in Dushanbe

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| • Authorization date | December 1993 (Rome Ministerial) |
| • Start date | February 1994 |
| • Head of mission | Ambassador Alain Couanon (France) |
| • Strength as of 30 September 2006 | Civilian staff: 17 |