

4.3 Mission Notes

Central Asia

The Central Asia region continues to face considerable challenges to security and stability. April and June 2011 marked the one-year anniversary of the violent protests and pogroms in Kyrgyzstan. While the situation in the country now is calm, state authority continues to be weak and fragmented, and ethnic tensions heightened. As long as these issues remain unresolved, there is a risk of continued instability and possible future violence.

The conditions that triggered the uprisings are not unique to Kyrgyzstan. Throughout the region, economic stagnation, marked by high unemployment and poverty, widespread corruption, and repression by autocratic regimes prevail, all of which could provoke large-scale social unrest. At the same time, transnational threats like terrorism, organized crime, human and drug trafficking pose further risks to regional security. The precarious situation in Afghanistan continues to pose security challenges to the region, particularly to the neighboring countries of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Continued rivalries and mistrust among Central Asian states have often hampered their cooperation on pressing regional issues and, in turn, broader development and stability in the region. Nonetheless, the efforts of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Special Representative of the European Union have helped the Central Asian governments to develop joint approaches to shared problems.

BACKGROUND

On 10 December 2007, UNRCCA was established at the initiative of the governments of the Central Asian states to address regional security threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime and environmental degradation.

Headquartered in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, UNRCCA's mandate includes liaising with the governments of the region and, with their concurrence, with other parties concerned on issues relevant to preventive diplomacy; maintaining relationships with regional organizations and encouraging their peacemaking efforts and initiatives; providing a political framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the UN country teams and resident coordinators across the region; and maintaining close contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The Center focuses on three priority areas: cross-border threats from illicit activities (terrorism, organized crime and drug trafficking); environmental degradation and management of common resources such as water and energy; and implications of the situation in Afghanistan for the region.

The OSCE maintains Centres in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), Astana (Kazakhstan), and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) as well as an Office in Tajikistan and a Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan. The OSCE's field presences have an extensive network of field offices and contacts with government officials and civil society throughout the five countries. Activities range from environmental affairs to security



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Cartographic Section

projects, including assistance on counter-terrorism issues and support to police reform. They also conduct activities promoting human rights, including holding events with civil society and governments, and commenting on draft legislation.

In July 2005, the European Union (EU) established an EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Central Asia, a post first held by Ján Kubiš. The current EUSR, Pierre Morel, who replaced Kubiš in 2006, has a mandate until 30 June 2012. Morel's mandated tasks include monitoring functions on political developments in the region as well as on the implementation of the EU human rights policy; conflict prevention and resolution; and to provide input to the formulation of energy security, counter-narcotics and water resource management aspects of the common foreign and security policy in regard to Central Asia.¹ Although the EU lacks a strong consensus on Central Asia, the decision to keep the EUSR amid the termination of such posts

elsewhere, reflects the strategic sensitivity and continued uncertainty of the region.

Kyrgyzstan

On 6 April 2010, mass protests erupted in northern Kyrgyzstan against government corruption and rising energy prices. Three days later, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev fled Bishkek for the southern city of Jalalabad, and an interim government headed by former foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva took power. More than 75 people were killed and over 1,500 injured during the demonstrations. Bakiyev fled the country on 16 April, resigning from the presidency.

In an effort to legitimate its rule, the interim government announced that it would hold a national referendum on 27 June to confirm the interim presidency of Otunbayeva and revisions to the constitution. In the lead up to the referendum, ethnic

tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks were reported in the south of the country. Then, on 10 June, a violent clash between the two ethnic groups in Osh spread through the surrounding provinces, including Jalalabad. By the end of the crisis several days later, nearly 470 people were killed and 411,000 displaced within Kyrgyzstan and to Uzbekistan.² Ethnic tensions and mistrust remain high.

According to early reports from the UN, the spreading violence at times took an orchestrated character, to fuel ethnic tensions.³ An official commission of inquiry led by Dr. Kimmo Kiljunen, which released its findings in May 2011, found that a power vacuum, combined with weak state institutions and rule of law after the April uprising enabled the violence. The commission argued that the government underestimated the deterioration of ethnic relations, and failed to exercise adequate discipline over the security forces – both to contain the violence and to prevent their complicity.

Despite the insecurity, the government held the referendum as planned, confirming Otunbayeva as president until December 2011 and revising the constitution. The reforms circumscribed the office of the president by introducing a mixed presidential-parliamentary system – the first in Central Asia.

Parliamentary elections were successfully held as scheduled on 10 October 2010, to be followed by Presidential elections in October 2011. On 17 December 2010, Social Democratic Party leader Almazbek Atambayev was named as prime minister of a coalition government.

International Engagement

Following the ouster of Bakiyev in April, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon dispatched veteran Central Asia diplomat Ján Kubiš, head of the UN Economic Commission for Europe, as Special Envoy to assess the situation and scope for the reestablishment of legitimate political authority. After Bakiyev's resignation and exile to Belarus, Kubiš concluded his mandate on 16 April 2010.⁴

Under the regional mandate for preventive diplomacy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Miroslav Jenča, head of UNRCCA, undertook efforts to provide good offices and facilitate dialogue among the political actors in Kyrgyzstan, given the rising tensions through the period April–May 2010. SRSG Jenča's

UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

Authorization and Start Date	7 May 2007 (UNSC Letter S/2007/279)
SRSG	Miroslav Jenča (Slovakia)
Deputy SRSG	Fedor Klimtchouk (Russian Federation)
First SRSG	Miroslav Jenča (Slovakia)
Budget	\$3.3 million (1 January 2011–31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Civilian: 8 National Civilian: 20

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EUSR for Central Asia

Latest Key Resolution	11 August 2011 (date of issue); 1 September 2011 (date of effect) (Council Decision 2010/443/CFSP)
Authorization and Start Date	28 July 2005 (date of issue) (Council Joint Action 2005/588/CFSP)
Special Representative	Pierre Morel (France) (Appointed by Council Decision of 5 October 2006)
First EUSR	Ján Kubiš (Slovakia)
Budget	\$1.8 million (1 September 2010–31 August 2011)

OSCE Centre in Ashgabat

Authorization Date	23 July 1998 (PC.DEC/244)
Start Date	January 1999
Head of Mission	Ambassador Sergei Belyaev (Russian Federation)
Budget	\$2.0 million (1 January 2011–31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 2 National Staff: 17

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involvement, requested by the Secretary-General, was in conjunction with the work of the UN Country Team, in terms of facilitating conditions necessary for the humanitarian response and mobilizing resources. The SRSG works closely with the

special envoys of regional organizations,⁵ especially the Special Envoy of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Zhanybek Karibzhanov and the EUSR for Central Asia Pierre Morel in a tripartite co-ordination mechanism initiated and led by the OSCE.

In addition to the SRSG's activities, the UN Department for Political Affairs (DPA) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) deployed a Peace and Development Advisor in June 2010 – a preexisting post that had been vacated just prior to the protests. DPA also deployed a Senior Reconciliation Advisor through its Mediation Support Unit. The aim of both was to promote improved confidence between ethnic groups and to strengthen their mediation capacities at the local, provincial, and national levels.

During the June crisis, the Otunbayeva government appealed to Russia and the Collective Security Treaty Organization to deploy troops to restore order, a request that both denied in favor of humanitarian and technical assistance. In July 2010, the government informed participating states of its support for a “police advisory group” which was initially designed to help the authorities to restore public order and reduce inter-ethnic tensions. Following months of delay in its deployment due to political opposition in Kyrgyzstan, a scaled down, country-wide version of the program was launched in January 2011 with 30 unarmed OSCE civilian police advisors in the form of a “Community Security Initiative” (CSI). The CSI was the international community's primary response to Kyrgyzstan's request for assistance in restoring security. The OSCE Centre in Bishkek also received a supplementary budget from OSCE participating states to address ethnicity-based tensions and strengthen local early warning, conflict prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms.

In mid-April 2011, SRSG Jenča visited Kyrgyzstan along with EUSR Morel and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representative for Kyrgyzstan Herbert Salber to meet with President Otunbayeva and leaders of other political parties. In a 14 April statement, the envoys encouraged continued dialogue and reconciliation and urged the government to increase its efforts to improve the work of state institutions, reform the law enforcement sector, strengthen the judiciary and tackle organized crime and corruption.⁶

The UN, OSCE and EU continue their

engagement with Kyrgyzstan. Moving ahead, the new government will need to continue, with the support of the international community, to consolidate legitimate authority and to pursue national reconciliation to address underlying ethnic tensions. At the same time, the factors that precipitated the events of April-June 2010 – economic stagnation, corruption, organized crime, drug trafficking, and weak rule of law – still have to be confronted. Progress on these issues is likely to bear on the forthcoming December presidential elections, and on broader public confidence in the new democratic regime.

Other Regional Developments

In December 2010, the OSCE held its first summit in over a decade in Astana, Kazakhstan to strengthen the organization's capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts. Among other issues, participants discussed arms control, the improvement of early warning and confidence-building measures, bolstering efforts to resolve protracted conflicts, working together to tackle transnational threats, and enhancing co-operation to address economic and environmental challenges. While some observers noted the willingness of Central Asian head of states to discuss issues of mutual concern in an international forum was an important achievement, others argued that the summit exposed the existing fault lines between the various countries, especially between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan over regional dominance and Tajikistan and Uzbekistan over trade and water right issues.⁷ The summit concluded without agreement on an OSCE action plan on how to improve the organization's response to future conflicts. However, participants agreed upon the “Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community,” which includes the strongest language yet on human rights within the OSCE agreed on by heads of state.

Also in December 2010, the UN held its first expert meeting of the Project on Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia – a joint initiative of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task-Force (CTITF), the EU and UNRCCA. Launched in September 2010, the initiative is intended to strengthen efforts to assist Central Asian countries in combating terrorism and to establish a regional counter-terrorism plan in line with the UN Global Strategy.⁸ The third

expert meeting took place on 21 July 2011 and concluded with recommendations for a regional action plan. Earlier in July in Kazakhstan, the OSCE held a joint meeting with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime for legal experts on improving international cooperation to combat organized crime in the region.

UNRCCA continues to promote dialogue and cooperation between the Central Asian countries for the management of natural resources, including water. To this end, the Center organized a conference on best practices on trans-boundary water dispute resolution in December 2010. UNRCCA also continues to work with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea to promote solutions in the area of water management. The Center's work on water-issues received added importance through a July 2011 report by the United Nations Environment Programme stressing greater cooperation on water sharing as vital for peace in Central Asia.

Stability in Central Asia is further impacted by the precarious situation in Afghanistan as the region's porous borders enable illegal trans-boundary activities, including drug and weapons trafficking, as well as terrorism. To ensure a comprehensive analysis of the situation in Afghanistan, UNRCCA maintains close contact with UNAMA. In May 2011, SRSG Jenča visited Kabul to meet with UNAMA leadership and international partners to discuss issues relating to the stability and security in the wider Central Asia region and to further cooperation between UNRCCA and UNAMA. Additionally, the OSCE's field operations in Central Asia, as well as other organs within the Organization, continue to engage with Afghanistan, in recognition of the impact of the situation in the country on security in the region.

CONCLUSION

Last year's crisis in Kyrgyzstan exposed the explosive mix of ethnic tension and public anger with social-economic problems and poor governance that affect all Central Asian states. While regional stability ultimately depends on the willingness of Central Asian governments to confront these challenges, international organizations have a demonstrable role in building confidence and enhancing cooperation on issues of common concern. Indeed,

OSCE Centre in Astana

Authorization Date	23 July 1998 (PC.DEC/243)
Start Date	January 1999
Head of Mission	Ambassador Alexandre Keltchewsky (France)
Budget	\$3.1 million (1 January 2011-31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 7 National Staff: 24

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OSCE Centre in Bishkek

Authorization Date	23 July 1998 (PC.DEC/245)
Start Date	January 1999
Head of Mission	Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere (UK)
Budget	\$9.6 million (1 January 2011-31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 44 National Staff: 97

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OSCE Office in Tajikistan

Authorization Date	19 June 2008 (PC.DEC/852)
Start Date	Renamed the OSCE Office in Tajikistan 1 July 2008
Head of Mission	Ambassador Ivar Vikki (Norway)
Budget	\$8.5 million (1 January 2011-31 December 2011)
Strength as of 30 April 2011	International Staff: 25 National Staff: 147

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further deterioration of the situation in Kyrgyzstan was avoided largely due to the successful cooperation between such organizations, particularly the OSCE, EU and the UN system.

In July 2011, the UN Security Council sent a strong signal of support by backing the "efforts of the Regional Centre to facilitate dialogue and assist the Governments of Central Asia on regional

issues of their common concern,” securing the UN’s continuous engagement in the region. The OSCE – which has all five regional countries as participating states and Afghanistan as a Partner for co-operation – is uniquely placed to foster greater cooperation. Yet, as the December 2010 summit meeting showed, the organization lacks consensus on how to augment its conflict prevention and response capacities, including on issues of concern

for Central Asian countries. At the EU meanwhile, there are signs of a growing recognition of the strategic importance of Central Asia. A report by the European Parliament on the region due in October 2011, aims to refine the EU’s Strategy for Central Asia that some observers call “overstretched and under focused.”⁹ A major challenge will be to find a common approach in the areas of security and energy policy, including on water related issues.

NOTES

- 1 Council Decision 2011/425/CFSP (18 July 2011).
- 2 Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Events in Southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, (3 May 2010) available at http://www.k-ic.org/images/stories/kic_report_english_final.pdf.
- 3 B. Lynn Pascoe, briefing to the Security Council on the Situation in Kyrgyzstan and UN Response, 14 June 2010.
- 4 United Nations, Press Conference on Fact-Finding Mission of Executive Secretary of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Ján Kubiš, to Kyrgyzstan, 16 April 2010, available at http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2010/100416_Kubiš.doc.htm.
- 5 Including the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the OSCE, and the European Union.
- 6 UN, OSCE and EU envoys for Kyrgyzstan issue statement to mark anniversary of April 2010 events.
- 7 Joanna Lillis, Kazakhstan: OSCE Summit Exposes Central Asian Rifts, Eurasia Net, 9 December 2010, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62539>.
- 8 The strategy is based on four key pillars of action: tackling the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; preventing and combating terrorism; building State capacity and bolstering the role of the UN; and ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law against the backdrop of the fight against terrorism.
- 9 Jos Boonstra, Central Asia: EU Parliament Mulls Central Asia Strategy, Eurasia Net, 26 May 2011, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63561>.