

Central Asia

Central Asian states faced both domestic and regional challenges to security and stability in 2012. Authorities in the five Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—lack effective governance capacities. Corruption is widespread, the development of civil society is suppressed, and economic opportunities are rare. Violent responses to recent protests in some Central Asian countries and violent clashes in Tajikistan in 2012 underline the lack of capacity to manage internal conflict.

On a broader regional level fragility is exacerbated by a political environment of rivalry and mistrust among the five countries. Regional stability is further challenged through competition over water and energy issues as well as transnational threats such as terrorism and organized crime, compounded by the precarious security situation in Afghanistan. All of these regional challenges threaten to worsen as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan scales down its presence in advance of its withdrawal in 2014.

In recent years the five Central Asian states have shown limited readiness to develop joint approaches to tackle the challenges facing the region, despite persistent apprehensions and ongoing rivalries. To this end, the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) have striven to assist the various countries in developing joint solutions to their shared challenges.

Background

UNRCCA was established in December 2007 at the decision of the governments of the five Central Asian states to address regional security threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and environmental degradation. Headquartered in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, UNRCCA also maintains offices in each country's capital in the region.

The mission supports the five Central Asian governments in building their conflict prevention capacities through dialogue, confidence-building measures, and establishing partnerships to respond to existing threats and emerging challenges in the region. UNRCCA also maintains contact with regional organizations, provides a political framework and leadership for the preventive activities of the UN country teams and resident coordinators in the region, and maintains close contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The mission's top three priority areas for 2012–2014 are the impact of transboundary threats facing the region, particularly

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

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| • Authorization Date | 7 May 2007 (SG Letter S/2007/279) |
| • SRSG | Miroslav Jenča (Slovakia) |
| • Budget | \$3.1 million (1 January 2012–31 December 2012) |
| • Strength as of 31 October 2012 | International Civilian Staff: 7
National Civilian Staff: 2 |

For detailed mission information see p. 430



with respect to Afghanistan; the implications of national developments on regional stability; and the management of common natural resources and environmental degradation.

The OSCE maintains permanent presences in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and a project coordinator in Uzbekistan. The OSCE field presences are tasked with assisting their host governments in various areas of the security sphere, including political, military, humanitarian, economic, and environmental aspects, and conducting activities on human rights, anticorruption, good governance, and gender awareness.

The European Union established an EUSR for Central Asia in 2005. In July 2012,

Pierre Morel left the post after six years and was replaced by Patricia Flor. The EUSR's current mandate is to promote good relations between the EU and Central Asian countries; to strengthen stability, cooperation, democracy, and respect for human rights in the region; and to coordinate EU action in Central Asia, particularly in terms of overseeing implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia. During her introductory tour in the region, EUSR Flor underlined her mission's aim to deepen existing relations with the Central Asian countries in six priority areas: human rights, the rule of law, good governance, and democratization; youth and education; economic development, trade, and investment;

energy and transport; environmental sustainability and water; and combating common threats and challenges.

Key Developments

Violent clashes erupted in Tajikistan's autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan on 24 July 2012 when local opposition strongman Tolib Ayombekov refused to support government investigations into the murder of a Tajik security services general. The Tajik government responded by launching a military operation in the region. Fighting between government forces and Ayombekov's armed followers ended the same day, but only after dozens of people were killed. The government and opposition forces began negotiations on a ceasefire the next day, in which the rebels eventually agreed to a number of concessions, including handing over weapons.

The OSCE's Tajikistan office has observed and supported the destruction of small arms handed over to Tajik authorities following an offer of amnesty for anyone who disarmed voluntarily. In September 2012 the OSCE office helped destroy more than 600 small arms and light weapons, many of which had been collected in the wake of the Gorno-Badakhshan clashes.

The OSCE also continues to operate the Community Security Initiative (CSI) in Kyrgyzstan. Launched as a response to violent interethnic clashes in June 2010 in the southern Kyrgyz provinces, the CSI contributes to enhancing police-community dialogue and cooperation, building confidence, and improving dialogue between the communities. Unarmed civilian police advisers assist in increasing respect for and protection of human rights by the police and restoring trust between police and communities. To further strengthen trust between actors, the CSI hosts monthly community-police discussion forums, where police, local authorities, and civil society representatives exchange their concerns. Through this information-sharing, these meetings contribute to building confidence between

OSCE Centre in Ashgabat

• Authorization Date	23 July 1998 (Permanent Council Decision no. 244)
• Start Date	January 1999
• Head of Mission	Ambassador Ivo Petrov (Bulgaria)
• Budget	\$1 million (1 January 2012–31 December 2012)
• Strength as of 30 September 2012	International Staff: 6 National Staff: 18

OSCE Centre in Astana

• Authorization Date	23 July 1998 (Permanent Council Decision no. 243), 21 June 2007 (Permanent Council Decision no. 797)
• Start Date	January 1999
• Head of Mission	Ambassador Natalia Zarudna (Ukraine)
• Budget	\$1.9 million (1 January 2012–31 December 2012)
• Strength as of 30 September 2012	International Staff: 6 National Staff: 20

law enforcement agencies and the local public. Kyrgyzstan's government has requested the OSCE to extend the activities of the CSI until December 2013.

Afghanistan and Central Asia

The most significant security challenge over the horizon in the region is the imminent transition in Afghanistan, with the gradual draw-down of ISAF forces ahead of an expected full withdrawal in 2014. In its current program of action, UNRCCA notes that the departure of international forces from Afghanistan presents the region with major challenges in terms of insecurity, terrorism, extremism, and illegal drug trafficking. Concerned about the impact of ISAF's drawdown and the clashes in Tajikistan, along the border of Afghanistan, some members of the Security Council are interested in including Afghanistan in the scope of UNRCCA's mandate.¹

OSCE Centre in Bishkek

- Authorization Date 23 July 1998 (Permanent Council Decision no. 245)
- Start Date January 1999
- Acting Head of Mission Ambassador Anders Troedsson (Sweden)
- Budget \$8.7 million (1 January 2012–31 December 2012)
- Strength as of 30 September 2012 International Staff: 21
National Staff: 82

OSCE Office in Tajikistan

- Authorization Date 19 June 2008 (Permanent Council Decision no. 852 [replacing the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe])
- Head of Mission Ambassador Ivar Vikki (Norway)
- Budget \$7.8 million (1 January 2012–31 December 2012)
- Strength as of 30 September 2012 International Staff: 25
National Civilian Staff: 127

EU Special Representative for Central Asia

- Authorization and Start Date 25 June 2012 (Council Decision 2012/328/CFSP), 28 July 2005 (EU Council Joint Action 2005/588/CFSP)
- EUSR Patricia Flor (Germany)
- Budget \$1.4 million (1 October 2011–30 June 2012)
- Strength as of 30 September 2012 International Staff: 7
National Staff: 2

Community Security Initiative (CSI)

- Authorization Date 18 November 2010 (Permanent Council Decision no. 961)
- Strength as of 30 September 2012 International Staff: 26
National Staff: 6

While international actors, including UNRCCA and the EUSR, mainly link ISAF's withdrawal to an increase in transboundary threats for Central Asia, the region could face an even greater challenge if NATO's departure also results in a strategic deprioritization of the region, and reduced support for Central Asia's governments. Currently, the governments receive considerable support from NATO while providing crucial transit and basing arrangements for ISAF. It is unclear whether NATO's assistance for the region will continue at the same level once the mission closes.

Strengthening Regional Cooperation

In November 2011, Central Asian states, together with relevant regional organizations, adopted a joint action plan for implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia,² which intends to strengthen efforts to assist Central Asian countries in combating terrorism and to establish a regional counterterrorism plan in line with the UN's global strategy.³ Building on this framework, the UNRCCA and the UN Counter-Terrorism Task Force (CTITF) co-organized a consultation meeting in June 2012 that brought together high-ranking representatives of Central Asian states and regional organizations, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, the EU, NATO, and the OSCE to map activities in the sphere of counterterrorism and to match these with priorities of Central Asian states based on the joint action plan.

Transboundary threats are also addressed through the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI). First launched by the Austrian interior minister in 2003, CABSI addresses mutual action on border management, border security, combating terrorism, and drug trafficking. In April 2012 the tenth ministerial conference took place within the CABSI framework, jointly organized by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, the EU, the OSCE, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Participants, including representatives of the Central Asian states,

relevant regional organizations, and other international stakeholders such as the EU, Russia, the United States, and Afghanistan, jointly agreed to enhance border management cooperation between Central Asian states and neighboring countries to combat various forms of trafficking, organized crime, and illegal migration.⁴

UNRCCA also continues to engage in enhancing the regional governments' management of common natural resources. In May and July 2012 UNRCCA and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations organized workshops on water, energy, and agriculture in the Aral Sea Basin. The workshops brought together officials and experts from all five Central Asian states and Afghanistan to identify the main factors affecting management of water resources in the basin, a critical issue for regional stability.

Conclusion

The common frameworks on regional cooperation regarding transboundary threats and the management of common natural resources—especially water—reflect an important foundation of coordination across multilateral missions, organizations, and UN agencies in Central Asia. Although outcomes reached thus far within these frameworks tend to be rather broad commitments on cooperation, the participation of representatives of Central Asia's authorities through these mechanisms can be seen as a success on its own. Given the mistrust and rivalry among these states, confidence building, elementary for joint action, will take time. Experts agree that long-term



OSCE/Eric Gourlian

Community Security Initiative and police officer of Police Station Number 2 on the street in Kyrgyzstan-Isfana, March 2012. The CSI uses mobile police reception cars to meet and interact with local populations.

stability of the region will ultimately depend on Central Asian states' ability to develop effective governance capacities bound by the rule of law,⁵ an assessment underscored by this year's violent clashes in Tajikistan.

As the Central Asian governments brace themselves for increasing security challenges stemming from the upcoming transition in Afghanistan, some observers predict a hardening of border security not only between countries directly bordering Afghanistan, but also between the Central Asian states. Against this background, the presence of the UN, EU, and OSCE in the region to encourage dialogue and joint approaches to regional challenges remains valuable for the future.

Notes

1. Security Council Report, "UNRCCA (Central Asia) August 2012 Monthly Forecast," 1 August 2012, http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2012-08/unrcca_central_asia.php.

2. United Nations, "Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia," 30 November 2011, http://www.un.org/en/terrorism/ctitf/pdfs/final_joint_action_plan_en.pdf.

3. 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.

4. Central Asia Border Security Initiative, “Ministerial Declaration,” 17 April 2012, <http://www.osce.org/sg/89735>.

5. See, for example, Cornelius Graubner, “Central Asia: A Look at Sources of Violence and Instability,” *Eurasia Net*, 7 August 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65760>; Philip Shishkin, “Central Asia’s Crisis of Governance,” *Asia Society*, January 2012, http://asiasociety.org/files/pdf/120215_central_asia_crisis_governance.pdf.