



Central Asian Security: Two Recommendations for International Action

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Introduction

An Experts' Group on Euro-Atlantic Security, convened by the EastWest Institute as part of a larger Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative, is pleased to offer its first series of policy recommendations—an international Central Asian security initiative. Given the Kazakh chair-in-office of the OSCE, this is an opportune time to engage in concrete issues in the region.

In the first recommendation, members of the Experts' Group propose launching a comprehensive multi-year OSCE Central Asia Security Initiative aimed especially at countering the spillover threats from Afghanistan, such as northward flows of narcotics and violent extremists. A Security Initiative could begin as a new, intensive dialogue in the OSCE with its Central Asian members. It might focus on how to improve situational awareness about threats and how to assist regional members to carry out concrete measures to enhance security and lessen vulnerabilities. It is hoped that this recommendation be considered as a potential agenda item for the possible OSCE summit that Astana is seeking to hold while it is chair.

A second recommendation is also offered—one that seeks a larger role for organizations already having a strong presence in the region (notably the CSTO and SCO). While noting that the Kazakh chair-in-office is a unique opportunity, this recommendation does not prescribe a leading role for the OSCE. Instead, it proposes an international action plan to coordinate the efforts of the countries of the region themselves, international organizations with a presence in the region, and leading neighboring powers in the spheres of economic development and external security.

The Experts' Group is composed of diplomatic, military, and policy officials as well as experts from NATO states and Russia. The group was first convened in the 2009 to discuss broadly discuss visions for Euro-Atlantic Security. The results of those discussions were published in a short policy paper Euro-Atlantic Se-

curity: One Vision, Three Paths. Earlier this year, the group was reconvened to undertake a series of discussions to come up with concrete policy suggestions that could contribute to the stabilization of international security interactions among Euro-Atlantic states by catalyzing new confidence building mechanisms and strategies. The group meets regularly to discuss major issues in the Euro-Atlantic security realm. Additional recommendations will be forthcoming that we hope will also be items that could usefully put on an OSCE summit agenda, as well as discussed throughout the relevant capitals.

The Experts' Group on Euro-Atlantic Security is pleased to offer the following recommendations that resulted from many fruitful weeks of discussion among the members. Two alternative views are offered—but both share the sense that the international community has a greater role to play in stabilizing Central Asia, that the Kazakh chair-in-office marks a unique opportunity to foster renewed attention on the region, and that the situation in Afghanistan makes this need all the more urgent.

Recommendation One: An OSCE-led Central Asia Security Initiative¹

The Central Asian countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—face major security challenges and they are made worse by the fighting in neighboring Afghanistan. Internal security in Central Asia is major challenge as the events this month in Kyrgyzstan have shown. Moreover, Central Asian jihadists concentrated in Pakistan's tribal regions could return homeward as a result of expand-

* Special thanks to Expert Group member Ambassador William Courtney for taking the lead on drafting this recommendation based on initial discussions and for graciously incorporating subsequent comments and feedback.

ing coalition activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This could “set off a destabilizing cycle of terrorist action and government overreaction amid deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.”²

The security of Central Asia—a great asset for peoples of the region and the international community—is made more important to OSCE members because better security there could help stabilize Afghanistan’s northern border and stem the northward flow of illicit narcotics and violent extremists, and because the region is now an important transit route and source of logistical supplies for coalition forces in Afghanistan. In 2009 most Central Asian states agreed to become part of the Northern Distribution Route.³

OSCE Security Role

Over the past decade the OSCE has played a less important security role than in the 1990s. The most recent summit, at Istanbul in October 1999, capped a decade in which the OSCE played a major stabilizing role, in the Balkans especially. In the former Soviet Union the OSCE conducted peace observation and sought to facilitate progress on several frozen conflicts. The Adapted Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty was signed in Istanbul. Reflecting the diminished role over the past decade, in July 2009 the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly said it was “deeply concerned at the growing lack of political relevance of the OSCE.”⁴

In exercising comprehensive security responsibilities for its members the OSCE “works for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.” The Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) supports “political dialogue between OSCE participating States by implementing confidence and security building measures and by planning field operations and supporting their daily work. The CPC also addresses specific threats to security, such as those posed by surplus stocks of small arms, light weapons, and conventional ammunition, as well as security challenges related to border security and

management.”⁵

International Activities in Central Asia

In Central Asia the OSCE has already undertaken many useful security projects, although their scale has not been large. A number of them have built capacity for border control in such areas as surveillance, training, customs, and the transit of potential chemical weapons precursors. The OSCE conducts police field training in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and assists police to gain real-time access to Interpol data. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan the OSCE provides assistance to acquire new passports. In May 2009 an OSCE Border Management Staff College was established in Tajikistan. It conducts training of Afghan police in counter-narcotics; they return to Afghanistan to train others. Afghan police officers will be trained in Kazakhstan. The OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, promotes and enhances the principles and values of the OSCE in the Central Asia by providing “a regional and international public forum for professionals and students in the spirit of cooperation in the fields of international relations, comprehensive security, democratization, the rule of law and human rights.”⁶

Other international organizations promote security in Central Asia. In 2002 the European Union (EU) Border Management Assistance Program in Central Asia began introducing European-style Integrated Border Management methodologies and encouraging enhanced communication channels within a law enforcement service.⁷ The UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), established in 2007, assists the governments of Central Asia to build conflict prevention capacities, including through enhanced dialogue and confidence building measures.⁸ The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) sponsors the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) for combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors. The Centre is located in Almaty.⁹ On a limited scale the NATO

2 http://csis.org/files/publication/100324_Sanderson_FerghanaValley_WEB_0.pdf

3 <http://csis.org/publication/northern-distribution-network-and-afghanistan>

4 http://www.eerstekamer.nl/id/vibsmzghdnh/document_extern/090629_vilnius_declaratie/f=/vibsmzppmwnr.pdf

5 www.osce.org/cpc/13077.html

6 <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/13125.html>

7 http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/central_asia/docs/factsheet_border_management_en.pdf

8 <http://unrcca.unmissions.org/>

9 http://www.caricc.org/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=english

Partnership for Peace carries out cooperative training and exercises with Central Asian partners.

Russia has played a significant security role in Central Asia. Its forces based in Tajikistan helped contain the civil war there in the 1990s and they guard the border with Afghanistan. Russia has provided assistance in training and equipping military forces in the region. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), in which Russia is the leading participant, includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. These five countries plus China participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which addresses security-related matters in Central Asia. The SCO and CSTO are concerned with combating narcotics trafficking and violent extremism.

Last December in Athens, OSCE Ministers pointed out that “threats to security and stability in the OSCE region are more likely to arise as destabilizing consequences of developments that cut across the politico-military, economic and environmental and human dimensions.”¹⁰ This is relevant to Central Asia, where internal political, economic, and social challenges are aggravated by repercussions from the fighting in Afghanistan. Some Central Asian governments have resisted expanded OSCE activities, particularly in the human dimension. Tajikistan and Turkmenistan are burdened by weak border control regimes with Afghanistan.

Potential for Expanded OSCE Security Role in Central Asia

Concerns in Central Asia about spillover effects from the fighting in Afghanistan might offer a potential for the OSCE to play a greater security role. The 28 January London Conference on Afghanistan recognized that too little was being done in the region. It called for “support for increased regional cooperation to combat terrorism, violent extremism and the drugs trade, to increase trade and cultural exchange and to create conducive conditions for the return of Afghan refugees.” Yet, the Conference Communiqué did not mention OSCE as an instrument that could help.¹¹

A number of OSCE members are interested in promoting Central Asian regional cooperation and see security as an area in which the OSCE is well suited to

play a more meaningful role, such as to improve border security and management. It might be possible to build a consensus for a stronger OSCE role in Central Asia to address security challenges posed by the conflict in Afghanistan and its repercussions.

Kazakhstan has indicated an interest in giving greater priority to Central Asian security during its chairmanship. Lithuania has also expressed interest in Central Asia’s being a focal point of its 2011 chairmanship. On 2 February Foreign Minister Saudabayev told the U.S. CSCE Commission that “issues of Afghanistan are especially acute for regional countries.”¹² In London Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov called for fuller use of OSCE capabilities to create counter-drug security belts around Afghanistan.¹³

Having ties and interests in Europe and Asia, Kazakhstan is well-placed to use its position as Chair-in-Office to foster productive security relationships in Eurasia. Belonging to the OSCE and the SCO, Kazakhstan is in a good position to promote East-West dialogue. Being as well a member of the CSTO and having an Individual Partnership Action Plan with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, Kazakhstan should foster dialogue with and among the SCO, CSTO, NATO, and the EU on the security dimensions of the Afghanistan conflict. Border control projects already involve field-level cooperation with the CSTO, which has a regional counter-terrorism center in Tashkent. Russia encourages such cooperation on counter-narcotics activities.

Relying especially on OSCE field offices throughout Central Asia, an outwardly-looking Central Asian Security Initiative launched during Kazakhstan’s term as Chair-in-Office would help strengthen perceptions of the Organization’s role and contributions throughout Eurasia. A focus on practical cooperation to avert the spread of conflict and its repercussions throughout the region will facilitate this. OSCE field offices would continue to cooperate with host governments and other governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations in the region which promote security and cooperation.

A Security Initiative might reinforce and encourage OSCE efforts in the economic and human dimensions.

¹⁰ http://www.osce.org/conferences/mc_2009.html

¹¹ http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/Documents_Communique%20of%20London%20Conference%20on%20Afghanistan.pdf

¹² www.csce.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=ContentRecords.ViewTranscript&ContentRecord_id=467&ContentType=H,B&ContentRecordType=H&CFID=29142529&CFTOKEN=52140590

¹³ <http://english.ruvr.ru/2010/01/28/3956780.html>

Improved border security could reduce the risks of steps to facilitate transport across boundaries in Central Asia. In this regard, a prominent expert assessed in 2007 that “political problems today are far less serious an impediment to continental and regional trade than a decade ago.”¹⁴ Better border security could also enhance the effectiveness of measures to combat trafficking in human beings, a priority in the human dimension.

Potential OSCE Summit

Kazakhstan is pressing for the convening of an OSCE summit this year. It brings to the task both resources and political will; a summit is a national project for the country and its leadership. OSCE members look at the question of a summit from varying perspectives. Some momentum for a summit exists, but the principal challenge is the paucity of major activities since Istanbul which are worthy of being celebrated at a summit or have been negotiated and are ready for signature at one. Russia might be reluctant to agree to a summit because of a broader concern about the direction of the OSCE. It strongly backed Kazakhstan’s becoming chair-in-office, however, and may be not wish to sabotage what Kazakhstan regards as a top priority for the OSCE this year.

Possible OSCE Initiative

Particularly because of instability now evident in Kyrgyzstan and heightened spillover threats from Afghanistan, the OSCE might usefully launch a comprehensive Central Asia Security Initiative aimed especially at enhancing regional security and countering threats, such as northward flows of narcotics and violent extremists. Success in Afghanistan is a priority for many OSCE members. An Initiative which promotes Central Asian security and helps stabilize Afghanistan’s northern border may have appeal. An Initiative would build on a number of innovative OSCE projects already underway, including the training of Afghan officials described above.

A Security Initiative could begin as a new, intensive dialogue in the OSCE with its Central Asian members. It might focus on how to improve situational aware-

ness about threats and how to assist regional members to carry out concrete measures to enhance security and lessen vulnerabilities. An intensified dialogue could begin under the Kazakhstani chairmanship in 2010 and deepen in subsequent years.

An informal group of Friends of the Chair-in-Office might be formed to advise, add political momentum to an Initiative, build confidence among Central Asian members in the OSCE’s exercise of its security responsibilities, and help marshal resources for a sharply increased program of concrete measures. The Friends could consist of the OSCE Troika (the preceding, current, and following chairs-in-Office), and the EU, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as other interested states.

The Friends group would convene regularly through permanent representatives in Vienna and occasionally at the level of political directors or ministers. Friends would develop ideas, seek consensus, take proposals to the Permanent Council for decision, and play a leading role in mobilizing resources to implement a Security Initiative. Even with the help of a Friends group, it may not be possible to reach early agreement on an Initiative.

Getting an Initiative underway could require overcoming several challenges. Turkmenistan has been somewhat recalcitrant in cooperating with Western institutions and may require special attention from the Friends. Uzbekistan has agreed to a request from President Nazarbayev to support a summit but it could still be prickly on specifics. To gain traction on border security the support of Russia is important, but as noted above it may have ambivalences.

A number of OSCE members may be reluctant to give their fullest support to a Security Initiative unless progress in the economic and human dimensions is also achieved or likely to occur. An Initiative must balance on-the-ground security realities and challenges with the security interests and resources of OSCE members.

A Security Initiative, building on projects already underway, might seek to: 1) sharply enhance border management and security and efforts to counter illicit trafficking, while facilitating the flow of legitimate goods and people; this could involve training and mentoring of much larger numbers of border and customs personnel from Central Asia and bordering areas of Afghanistan; 2) build capacity for the collection, analysis, and dissemi-

¹⁴ S. Frederick Starr, Editor, *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, 2007. <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/inside/publications/GCA.html>

nation of threat information; a new information fusion center in Central Asia might be merited; 3) enhance capacity to warn of and counter security threats through modeling and simulation and tabletop and field exercises; and 4) expand the Border Management Staff College and perhaps establish a judicial training facility in Kazakhstan. The CPC would bring strengths to these endeavors.

As an Initiative gains momentum and OSCE members are willing, it might be extended to border areas inside Afghanistan. This may be influenced by the course of current programs to train Afghan law enforcement personnel. On-the-ground training and capacity-building in appropriate fields could complement and reinforce the training of Afghans in Central Asia by regional governments and the OSCE. In November Kazakhstan agreed to spend \$50 million over five years to educate 1,000 Afghans.¹⁵

In support of the 1999 Platform for Cooperative Security, which declares the OSCE's readiness to "further strengthen and develop cooperation" with other organizations, the OSCE would consult and cooperate with those operating in Central Asia, including the UN, SCO, EU, CSTO, and NATO. The Initiative should add value and complement but not duplicate activities of other donors and organizations. The decline of OSCE activities in the Balkans ought to make more resources available for Central Asia. Although the OSCE has limited finances, it has an advantage through its field teams in each Central Asian country. An Initiative should have oversight and limitations to ensure that programs serve their intended purposes and accord with OSCE principles. As with all OSCE activities, the Initiative would require consensus support.

The main goal of an Initiative should be to enhance the security and welfare of Central Asian countries and their peoples. Agreed OSCE principles would guide the design and implementation of the Initiative. As always, the OSCE would seek to complement and reinforce, but not duplicate, the activities of other entities which foster regional security and cooperation. Since the OSCE has significant resource limitations, it must leverage cooperation with others to make a greater difference.

¹⁵ <http://www.osce2010.kz/en/node/94>

Launching an Initiative

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly ought to be encouraged to support an expanded OSCE effort on Central Asian security at its Annual Session in Oslo from July 6 to July 10, 2010. OSCE ministers, meeting in Almaty also in July, might launch the intensive dialogue and establish the Contact Group. A summit later in the year could formally launch the Initiative, give it a mandate, and announce initial measures to strengthen security capacity and cooperation in Central Asia. The OSCE Ministers in Athens cautioned that a summit "would require adequate preparation in terms of substance and modalities."¹⁶ The launching of a meaningful Central Asian Security Initiative, complemented by initiatives in the economic and human dimensions, could help justify a summit. If a summit is not held, the ministers could launch the Initiative at their July meeting or at another meeting.

Recommendation Two: An International Action Plan for Central Asia

Towards a New Approach in the Sphere of International Assistance for Development and Security in Central Asia

Vadim B. Lukov

The Central Asian region: opportunities and challenges on the road to development

This vast region, with a population of more than 60 million and a territory of 4 million square kilometers, harbors contradictory trends which influence both prospects of the future development of five states and regional and international security.

On the one hand, independence permitted these countries to develop diversified foreign policies and economic relations. They succeeded in boosting ex-

¹⁶ http://www.osce.org/documents/cio/2009/12/41848_en.pdf

ports and attracting foreign investors. This, together with introduction of fundamentals of the market economy, helped them to achieve impressive growth rates in the last decade.

However, new (and in some cases—aggravating) problems overshadow the progress achieved so far.

Significant differences in levels of socio-economic development of the five countries persist. There is a six-to-seven fold difference between per capita income in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, on the one hand, and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on the other.

The rich economic and demographic potential of this region of the world is underutilized. This can be seen from the fact that the total GDP of these countries is 65–80 percent less than that of Turkey or Iran, although they are comparable in terms of population.

Moreover, a troubling rollback is taking place in Central Asia in many spheres in two last decades. The situation has considerably changed as compared to the Soviet period, when significant progress was achieved in increasing life expectancy, setting up a modern system of health care, and education.

Life expectancy has fallen sharply. There was massive emigration of engineers, medical workers and university-grade specialists to Russia, Turkey, the United States, and Europe. Poverty and inequality is becoming the most painful social problem. In 2003 the share of the population with the daily income of less than US\$ 2.15 was 21 percent in Kazakhstan, 70 percent in Kyrgyzstan, 74 percent in Tajikistan, 44 percent in Turkmenistan and 47 percent in Uzbekistan.

As a result, the Central Asian countries occupy modest places in the world human development index, with Kazakhstan being the most advanced (80th place in 2005), and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan occupying 98th, 109th, 111th, and 122th place respectively.

All these socio-economic factors provoke social tensions, creating conditions for a fusion between internal and external extremism coming from Afghanistan. One should also note relative weakness of law-enforcement agencies of these young states, and objective difficulties of controlling the border with Afghanistan—the main regional source of external threats (Islamic extremism, narcotrafficking, and arms trafficking).

Thus, the Central Asian countries, which have significant economic and demographic potential for

development, face objective and subjective difficulties in bringing this potential to fruition. The task of the international community is to elaborate a coordinated approach towards problems of assistance to the Central Asian “five”, to help governments and peoples of these states to ensure stable growth and adequate external security.

The experience of international assistance to Central Asian countries

Throughout the last two decades an array of international organizations were trying to contribute to the creation of favorable conditions for the economic development of the “five”. However, one should first of all single out the role of Russia and her partners in the CIS in containing the civil war in Tajikistan and in defending the Tajik border with Afghanistan in early 1990’s. Without accomplishing this task, which was vital not only for Tajikistan but for the rest of the region, it would have been very difficult to forecast the development of Central Asia as a whole. Russia also played a significant role in this period in training and equipping the national armies.

The creation of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) became a milestone in strengthening the external security of the states of Central Asia. The CSTO is the only regional organization in Eurasia that has an adequate legal base and means of protection of its member states, including those in Central Asia. The CSTO possesses an efficient instrument of collective self-defense in the Collective Forces of Rapid Deployment.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is also active in the region, both promoting economic cooperation and consolidating efforts of member states in their fight against narcotrafficking and violent extremism.

The OSCE strives to contribute, within its possibilities, to strengthening regional security. Projects implemented by the Organization in Central Asia are aimed at boosting border control and police units. At the same time it should be recognized that potential of the OSCE in the region is still limited. One of major reasons for this is the lack of sufficient confidence in this Organization on the part of some governments of the region. In no small part this is due to the background of continued polemics around the geographic and functional balance in its work, and the transparency of procedures used in setting its field missions

and defining their mandates. The imperative necessity of reform of the OSCE is obvious for many of its members. Concrete guidelines for such a reform were laid out in the Joint Statement by CIS countries that was adopted in 2004.

Another factor constraining productive international cooperation on Central Asia is the position of NATO with regard to repeated initiatives of Russia and CSTO states on starting meaningful cooperation in security sphere.

The international community should develop a new approach to assistance to Central Asian states in the spheres of economy and security

Such an approach should be based on cooperation of governments of the region, the UN and its offices in Central Asia, CIS, Eurasian Economic Union, CSTO, EU, and the OSCE.

This cooperation should be based on the following principles:

- Priority of interests of the states in the region: the ultimate goal of the international community should be security and welfare of the Central Asian states
- Sovereign equality of participants in cooperation. Any sign of paternalism towards countries of the region should be excluded
- Assistance in strengthening the sovereignty and statehood of the Central Asian states
- Respect of the role of regional organizations already active in the spheres of security and economic cooperation in the region (CIS, SCO, CSTO, Eurasian Economic Union)
- Respect of the interests of neighboring countries that have deep historic political and

economic ties with the countries of the region (China, India, Iran, Afghanistan).

These principles could form a basis for devising an Action Plan to coordinate the efforts of the countries of the region themselves, the above mentioned international organizations, and leading neighboring powers in the spheres of economic development and external security.

Such a Plan could provide for:

- elaboration, with the assistance of the UNDP, CIS, SCO, Eurasian Economic Union, and the EU, of a plan for the development of transportation and water infrastructure in the region; organizing a donor|investor conference for potential stakeholders in the projects
- development, with the assistance of the CIS, CSTO, and OSCE of a program of strengthening border and customs control services, police, and antinarcotics units of Central Asian countries
- joint analysis, in the framework of Russia-NATO Council and a CSTO-NATO dialogue, of present and future risks and challenges that may materialize under different scenarios for the evolution of the situation in Afghanistan.

Both member states of the OSCE and countries such as China, India, Iran, Japan, and some others should be invited to take part in elaboration of specific measures for such a Plan.

The idea of the international Action Plan for Central Asia could be presented, upon approval by the current Chair-in-Office of the OSCE—Kazakhstan—at the next OSCE Ministerial.

It could also be useful to set up an experts' group of the EastWest Institute for academic and practical support of the process of elaboration of such an Action Plan.