



Security Sector Reform in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: What Role for Europe?

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Abstract

The security sectors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are to different extents corrupt, lack democratic control and can even be a threat to the population. They differ in terms of both size and quality, as well as with respect to their willingness to reform. Security Sector Reform (SSR) based on democratic principles is urgently needed but not always welcome. The Western concept of SSR is not very well-known in Central Asia. States are mainly interested in military training and equipment, and less so in long-term measures to democratise and strengthen their security agencies and institutions. European actors hesitantly support Security Sector Reform in Central Asia. Is Europe on track? Should it do more, or less?



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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
1. The security sectors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan	6
1.1. Kazakhstan	6
1.2. Kyrgyzstan	8
1.3. Tajikistan	9
2. European support for Security Sector Reform	10
2.1. The European Union	10
2.2. EU member states	12
2.3. OSCE	14
2.4. NATO	15
3. Opportunities and constraints for Europe	17
Conclusion	19

Introduction

Central Asia's national security sectors are to different extents corrupt, lack democratic control and can even be a threat to the population. Over the last few years, international concerns have increased after a series of major incidents occurred in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where police and other security actors used violence against the population. During the June 2010 ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, on several occasions law enforcement agencies became involved in fights between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. In December 2011, stability in Kazakhstan was put into question when oil workers' protests in the western city of Zhanaozen turned violent and police opened fire on protesters resulting in several casualties. In summer 2012, when violence flared up in the Gorno-Badakhshan region in Tajikistan, law enforcement agencies played a dubious role in the fight against drug cartels while also allegedly being linked to the drug trade themselves.

Kazakhstan's Security Sector Reform (SSR) efforts seem to be more advanced than those of the other two states, especially in legislative terms and regarding

the armed forces. The country also has larger resources to pursue SSR, but the democratisation aspect of the reform remains largely overlooked. Kazakhstan is also the most active in terms of international cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and Russian-led organisations, foremost the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO). Kyrgyzstan is the most open to external assistance for SSR, especially after the 2010 revolution and subsequent elections. Kyrgyz security institutions, however, remain weak and largely resist overhaul reforms, while the country itself has little means to undertake changes. Tajikistan too has little resources and is even less willing to reform. Tajikistan is affected by a host of social-economic-related security threats, as well as by negative spillovers from Afghanistan and occasional regional violence. Tajikistan's leadership is mainly centred on maintaining the status quo and views reform as yet another threat to its grip on power, but assistance in the form of hardware and infrastructure is welcomed.

This paper regards SSR as a Western holistic concept, which incorporates agencies that are allowed to use force on behalf of the state (especially the armed forces, intelligence services, police and border guards), the government agencies controlling these structures (mainly the presidency, and the ministries of internal affairs, defence and justice, including public prosecutors), and oversight mechanisms (foremost the judiciary, parliament and civil society). Moreover, SSR is seen as combining two inter-twined aspects that should go hand in hand: first, reform aimed at strengthening and improving the effectiveness of security agencies; and second, the 'democratisation' of the security sector to ensure civilian oversight and democratic control, including good governance.² The assumption is that better democratic governance will lead to increased effectiveness, as open, accountable and reliable security forces help to raise public confidence, which in turn strengthens the legitimacy of the security forces themselves.

In Central Asia there is little understanding of what SSR entails. It is easily misunderstood for military training, technical support and hardware delivery. In this sense, it is first necessary carefully to explain all the components of any broader SSR programme, including the long-term democratic reform aspects and the role of oversight mechanisms, as well as the

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¹ This paper is based on extensive desk research and a series of interviews by the authors carried out throughout 2012 in all three countries with security experts, civil society experts, policy-makers, and donor representatives. The authors would like to thank Merijn Hartog, David Lewis, Barah Mikail, and Jeremy Smith for reviewing an earlier draft of this working paper.

² For more background on SSR theory and concept see: *OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform. Supporting security and justice* (Paris: OECD, 2007), available at: <http://www.oecd.org/development/incaf/38406485.pdf>.

eventual benefits derived from greater and more effective support from the broader population. In the Western narrative, an SSR process is important first to protect human rights: security is first and foremost about protecting society. In Central Asia, however, the security sector is rent-seeking and works at the will of the ruling regime. Second, while SSR seeks to strengthen state accountability, in Central Asia parliamentary oversight is largely a rubberstamp process and civil society is marginalised. Third, SSR is needed to control the might of security actors so as to prevent them from becoming a state within the state. In Central Asia, while the security sector is under civilian control due to Soviet heritage, regimes use it as a mechanism to stay in power. Fourth, a country with a dysfunctional security sector can have a destabilising impact at the regional level. This is certainly the case in Central Asia, where regional cooperation is largely absent – besides in externally-driven initiatives – and where states are distrustful of each other. In this sense, SSR can also contribute to regional stability.

SSR is all the more important given the elusive stability of Central Asian states. Even with a robust security sector that guards rulers against unexpected protests, events such as the sudden death of a president or otherwise could lead to unrest and severe instability. However, Central Asian leaderships are likely to continue thinking about short-term profits and clinging on to power instead of reforming their countries and security sectors. Security Sector Reform is thus part and parcel of a democratisation process that Kazakhstan stalls, Kyrgyzstan struggles to get off the ground and that Tajikistan largely blocks.

Whereas the U.S. has been relatively active in SSR programming in Central Asia, often focussing on the ‘hardware and training’ aspects, European actors have been less involved and their programmes have tended to emphasise the ‘soft’ aspects that often only relate indirectly to the security sector: general support to rule of law or civil society. The exceptions are border control and police reform. In both cases the European Union (EU), member states individual support and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) have taken an active approach.

Nevertheless, there are questions regarding the usefulness of SSR support to these three countries. Over the last decade, SSR has proven to be effective only if requested by the recipient country and, more importantly, backed-up by firm political will. Unfortunately, while the former aspect mostly

relates to hard security support, the latter is largely missing in Central Asia. So why should European donors spend resources on programmes that lack national support and that run the risk of beefing-up authoritarian regimes’ capacity to use strengthened security mechanisms to remain in power and oppress the opposition? Or does support for the democratisation of the security sector offer hope for gradual change and increased understanding of the need to reform? This dilemma stands central in this EUCAM paper.

This paper looks into the security sectors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and assesses European SSR support. These three countries have been chosen because they offer similar characteristics, such as ill-preparedness and corruption, as well as divergent factors, like the size and quality of their security apparatuses and their level of interest in external assistance for SSR. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not addressed here. European assistance for SSR to Turkmenistan is almost non-existent, and the closed and authoritarian character of the state makes it unlikely that European actors will engage any time soon. Whereas there is some SSR involvement with Uzbekistan – mainly prison-reform and rule of law projects – European involvement remains limited and curtailed, also due to the authoritarian and unpredictable nature of the Uzbek government.

The first section of this paper briefly assesses the security sectors of the three countries under study. Part two examines the activities and engagement of the main donors: the EU, member states, OSCE and NATO. In part three, both aspects come together in analysing if there is room for further European SSR engagement or if (the already modest) support should be scaled down.

1. The security sectors of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

1.1. Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has made more progress with SSR than the other Central Asian states. Over the past decade, the country has developed a considerable body of new security and defence legislation and has managed to create the region’s largest professional contract-

based army.³ Kazakhstan has also sought to deepen cooperation through NATO's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), which urges democratic control of the armed forces and assists countries that want to create peacekeeping battalions for potential international deployment.⁴ Finally, in 2011 Kazakhstan adopted a new military doctrine and reshaped its intelligence services. For several years now, Kazakhstan has sought to rely on national funds for SSR implementation, while U.S. and EU donors are mostly invited for consultancy purposes.

However, the future of SSR in Kazakhstan is unclear, given uncertainties over President Nursultan Nazarbayev's succession. For now, the president enjoys wide domestic support amidst strong economic growth, while the opposition is marginalised. To date, most military reforms were implemented at the president's directive. Alike in other post-Soviet countries, in Kazakhstan the political leadership controls the military with virtually no public oversight. Parliamentary oversight remains weak, while civil society rarely deals with security issues. Most parliament members and government officials are unaware of how state funds allocated to the security sector are spent.⁵

In October 2011, Kazakhstan adopted a new military doctrine (its fourth since 1991).⁶ It lays out a plan to construct lean, technologically-equipped and highly-mobile armed forces. According to the doctrine, the process of improving inter-agency collaboration on state military security issues is continuous and includes the joint development of Ministry of Interior troops to protect individuals, society and the state, as well as to protect citizens from crime and rights infringements. The doctrine also lists a series of ongoing improvements to the military, including strengthening national emergency prevention and intensified training in rapid reaction for the armed forces.

One major difference between Kazakhstan's doctrine and those of the other Central Asian states is that Astana addresses specific potential challenges such as spillovers from growing unrest in Afghanistan, the

region's tense socio-political situation, existing border and territorial disputes, trans-national water-sharing disputes, religious extremism, transnational drug-trafficking and illegal migration. The doctrine also highlights the uneven distribution of natural resources and the growing disparity between developed and developing countries. There is, however, no indication that the document in fact serves as the principal SSR guide for Kazakhstan and is thus rather symbolic.

Astana has implemented several judicial reforms. Some of the most notable include the establishment of the National Human Rights Ombudsman in 2002 and the introduction of trial by jury in 2008. In 2009, Kazakhstan adopted a National Action Plan for Human Rights for the period 2009-2012 that sought to strengthen the rule of law to protect human rights and meet OSCE standards. Despite these policy directives, however, the country's courts are still used by the state to prosecute political opponents, while corruption continues to plague the judicial system.⁷

Finally, Kazakhstan's intelligence services have also undergone some changes. The democratic nature of this transformation is, however, largely absent. In February 2009, President Nazarbayev disbanded the 'Barlau' intelligence service, which had functioned since 1997, and created a new one, the 'Syrbar', under his direct control. Nazarbayev had reportedly been dissatisfied with Barlau's efforts in tracking regime opponents living abroad.⁸ Like its predecessor, Syrbar is the most secretive component of Kazakhstan's security service, which has two main branches: the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, which gathers intelligence inside the country, and 'Syrbar', which focuses on foreign intelligence.

Other aspects of Kazakhstan's SSR are lagging behind, however. President Nazarbayev had urged the government to consider police reform already in the early 2000s. Although the police has since received better equipment and financing, little has been done to overcome its Soviet legacy of acting primarily as an instrument of the state's powers rather than as a services-oriented, crime-preventing entity. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is still heavily militarised and is authorised to carry out some functions of the Ministry of Defence during emergencies. The December 2011 deadly face-off between police and protesters in the western cities of Zhanaozen and Shepte has brought to the fore the police's inability

3 S. Peyrouse, 'Security Reform in Kazakhstan' in Merijn Hartog (ed.), 'Security Sector Reform in Central Asia: Exploring Needs and Possibilities', *Greenwood Paper* 25, Centre for European Security Studies, 2010.

4 'NATO's Relations with Kazakhstan', available at: <http://eurodialogue.org/NATO-relations-with-Kazakhstan>.

5 Interview with Kazakh expert representing the Nur-Otan party, Astana, October 2012.

6 The doctrine is available at: <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-201111010034>.

7 B. Dave, 'Kazakhstan', *Nations in Transit* 2010, Freedom House, 2010.

8 F. Sharip, 'Nazarbayev Embarks on Foreign Intelligence Reform', Jamestown Foundation, 10 March 2010; Peyrouse, op. cit.

peacefully to disperse mass protests.⁹

Kazakhstan experts attribute the lack of police reform to existing patronage networks between political officials and members of the interior ministry who are not interested in change.¹⁰ According to this view, various political factions rely on the Ministry of Internal Affairs to hide their own corrupt activities and do not want to transform the police. To date, police reform in Kazakhstan has consisted of a series of *ad hoc* experiments in community policing, not a broad interior ministry overhaul.¹¹ The role of civil society in police reform has also been marginal, and thus reform initiatives lack a broad basis.

On an international level, Kazakhstan has been able to sustain a balanced approach toward security cooperation. Along with fostering relations with NATO, Kazakhstan is an active member of the Russian-led CSTO and the China-dominated Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). In 2011, Kazakhstan's foreign ministry announced that it would send four servicemen to Afghanistan as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).¹² This made Kazakhstan the first Central Asian nation to deploy personnel in Afghanistan. The initiative, however, encountered strong domestic criticism from political analysts and the Muslim clergy who warned the government that sending a contingent to Afghanistan would expose the country to potential terrorist attacks. In response, Kazakh parliamentarians rushed to assure that aside from the four servicemen, who will engage in civilian activities, Kazakhstan does not plan to deploy a military contingent to Afghanistan.

1.2. Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan's modest SSR attempts were stalled due to two violent regime changes in the past six years – in March 2005 and in April 2010. Most SSR reforms carried out in the early 2000s were undone by President Kurmanbek Bakiyev (2005-2010), who preferred to appoint cronies to key posts, including the head of security and military institutions. His appointments distorted the traditional hierarchy

of military and police structures, as he distributed positions according to personal loyalty rather than rank or qualifications.

After Bakiyev was ousted in 2010, the new interim government of President Roza Otunbayeva restored old security institutions and moved away from some of Bakiyev's most corrupt practices. The new regime restored the Drugs Control Agency, which Bakiyev had shut down in late 2009 to cover up the illicit transit of Afghan heroin through Kyrgyzstan.¹³ The interim government also disbanded the State Security Service, which had played a leading role in intelligence gathering in Kyrgyzstan and beyond. The service's main task was to protect top state officials, visiting foreign heads of state and foreign delegations on Kyrgyz territory. But the agency was often used to spy on opposition leaders and civil society activists. Security agencies' control over civil society has weakened over the past three years, mostly in the northern parts of the country. In Kyrgyzstan's south, however, the situation remains bleak with local law enforcement agencies' continuous surveillance of activists dealing with the post-conflict human rights situation in the Osh region.

Kyrgyzstan retains a 15,000-troop army and several contract-based special forces units destined to protect the president, engage in anti-terrorism campaigns and combat drug-trafficking. All special forces have undergone some training abroad, including in Russia, Turkey and the U.S. Kyrgyzstan has been open to assistance from the OSCE, U.S. and EU donor organisations. Yet, change is slow, mostly because the security sector is still populated by officials with a Soviet background who are unwilling to implement radical change.¹⁴ At the same time, the military's Soviet-inherited rigid ranking system has been giving way to patronage networks among top officials. Corruption remains a problem among law enforcement and border troops. Especially in southern Kyrgyzstan, security structures are notorious for their involvement in drug-trafficking and for covering up organised criminal groups.¹⁵

Kyrgyzstan has also tried to reform the police. Bishkek has considered Georgia's model of police reform, which converted the Soviet-style militsiya

⁹ Interview with a security expert in Astana, October 2012.

¹⁰ Interview with a politician in Astana, October 2012.

¹¹ D. Lewis, 'Reassessing the Role of OSCE Police Assistance Programming in Central Asia', *Central Eurasia Project Occasional Paper Series* 4, April 2011, available at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/reassessing-role-osce-police-assistance-programming-central-asia>.

¹² J. Kucera, 'About Those Kazakh Troops in Afghanistan: Never Mind', *Eurasianet.org*, 24 March 2011.

¹³ E. Marat and D. Isa, 'Kyrgyzstan Relaxes Control Over Drug Trafficking', *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 4 February 2010.

¹⁴ Interview with a Kyrgyz Interior Ministry representative, Bishkek, October 2012.

¹⁵ A. Kupatadze, 'Organized Crime before and after Tulip Revolution: changing dynamics of upperworld-underworld networks', *Central Asian Survey* 27:3, 2008.

into Western-style street police, but so far with little tangible implications.¹⁶ Violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in June 2010 demonstrated the police and army's inability to deal with inter-ethnic strife. Security agencies were accused of protecting ethnic Kyrgyz and attacking ethnic Uzbeks.¹⁷ Law enforcement officers arrested far more ethnic Uzbeks than Kyrgyz, despite most of the victims being Uzbek. The number of people sentenced to life in prison more than doubled in 2011 as a result of ethnic violence. To a large extent, the lack of professionalism and ethnic diversity within the police and army has contributed to such unprofessional behaviour. The number of ethnic minorities, especially ethnic Uzbeks in the police, has further decreased since the violence.¹⁸

President Almazbek Atambayev, elected in October 2011, pledged to continue interim President Otunbayeva's initiatives, but it remains to be seen whether SSR will be among his top priorities. Since the adoption of a new constitution in June 2010, parliament has more powers and the president is more dependent on parliamentary oversight of security policies. To date, however, the decentralisation of political power has only served to slow the pace of SSR. It took over two years, for instance, for the police reform concept to be negotiated among the interior ministry, parliament, other government agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The police continues to be a militarised and deeply corrupt institution.

In June 2012, Kyrgyzstan adopted a new National Security Concept developed by government representatives with military and civilian backgrounds along with elected representatives and members of the Public Advisory Council (PAC) – local NGO activists and independent observers.¹⁹ It considers both hard security challenges, such as drug-trafficking and terrorism, and soft security threats such as poverty and migration. The concept emphasises that Kyrgyzstan's weak economy is primarily dependent on Russia and Kazakhstan. Developments in Afghanistan beyond 2014 are identified as important to Kyrgyzstan's internal security. The document further focuses on inter-ethnic peace as a critical domestic issue. It

emphasises the importance of fostering the rights of all citizens, independent of their ethnic origin.

Since the April 2010 regime change, Kyrgyzstan's NGOs have sought to influence reform efforts in the security sector by participating in PACs and other venues for public discussion. Kyrgyzstan has also become more open to international efforts to implement democratic SSR. Yet three years after the ouster of the authoritarian regime, only modest change has been achieved. Top officials in power institutions are often divided, some pledging loyalty to parliamentarians, and others to the president or prime minister, slowing down policy formulation and implementation. Finally, the poor record of civil-military relations has not been improved by the current parliament that enjoys greater independence from the executive. The military is still considered by many parliamentarians as a highly-specialised area, in which decision-making should predominantly involve specific expertise and less so parliamentary and public debate.

1.3. Tajikistan

Over the past decade, most of Tajikistan's SSR efforts have focused on strengthening the country's military and law enforcement structures, often to the detriment of transparency and public oversight.²⁰ After a few years of relative calm following the civil war (1992-1997), anti-government clashes resumed in 2008-2012 in various parts of the country. In all cases, President Emomali Rakhmon responded swiftly by sending troops to affected areas without consulting parliament. Rakhmon's ability to act without scrutiny demonstrates how the better-trained and equipped special forces are loyal to the president and stand ready to protect his regime. In times of security tensions, public access to mass media is also often restricted.

Tajikistan has received ample security assistance from European countries (and the U.S.) to strengthen border control, combat drug-trafficking, and improve its law enforcement agencies.²¹ Of all Central Asian states, over the past decade Tajikistan has received the greatest amount of assistance within border

16 More details can be found at: http://www.mvd.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=184&Itemid=68&lang=ru.

17 A. Mamahaimov, 'Aziza Abdirasulova: My popytalis opredelit' rol' organov vlasti vo vremya iun'skoi tragedii', *Voice of Freedom*, 19 September 2012.

18 Interview with two Osh policemen, Osh, September 2011.

19 The concept can be found at: http://vesti.kg/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=13270:kontseptsiya-natsionalnoy-bezopasnosti-kyrgyzskoy-respubliki&Itemid=117.

20 A. Matveeva, 'Security Reform in Tajikistan' in Hartog, op. cit.

21 J. Kucera, 'U.S. Military Aid to Central Asia: Who Benefits?', *Central Eurasia Project Occasional Paper Series 7*, September 2012, available at: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/us-military-aid-central-asia-who-benefits>; G. Gavrilis, 'Central Asia's Border Woes and the Impact of International Assistance', *Central Eurasia Project Occasional Paper Series 6*, May 2012, available at: <http://www.soros.org/reports/central-asia-s-border-woes-impact-international-assistance>.

management programmes. This has included the training of roughly 1,500 border officials since 2006 as part of the EU's BOMCA programme, UN Office on Drugs and Crime programmes and OSCE activities. Yet, these have had limited impact. Better-trained border guards have not been able to deter drug-trafficking and corruption.²² Furthermore, the 15 renovated or newly-built border outposts on the Tajik-Afghan border have not been properly utilised by the Tajik government. The army and border guards are infamous for corruption and their participation in drug-trafficking.

Today, police reform is among the most visible elements of SSR in Tajikistan. The OSCE office in Dushanbe, together with a U.S. contractor, completed a Community Policing and Law Enforcement Development Programme in Tajikistan in 2010. Efforts aimed at developing and strengthening the relationship among community members, local government officials and police 'by creating multiple forums for interaction and involvement, including Community Policing Partnership Teams'.²³ The result is a Tajikistan-specific model for further expanding the Community Policing Programme throughout the country. As part of its police reform, Tajikistan has moved to rename its militsya to politsiya, so as to change the image of the agency from a militarised formation into a more services-oriented entity.²⁴

Tajik high-level officials regard EU (and possibly other donors) assistance to implement SSR primarily in terms of infrastructure and hardware delivery and technical material assistance. Interest fades when donors emphasise reform and training of the implementing ministries, agencies and oversight institutions as the most essential part of any SSR assistance. Meanwhile, security matters remain firmly entrenched in the hands of the president and the elites around him, leaving little to no room for parliamentary oversight or civil society involvement.

Tajikistan's armed forces today total 20,000 troops and several special forces battalions. The country still relies solely on a conscript army; only a few units of the special forces loyal to the president have an arrangement resembling a contract-based

service.²⁵ The country's security services include the Security Council, the Ministry of Security, and the Drugs Control Agency. The Ministry of Security is still considered to be the main intelligence agency. The legal basis for its functions has either not been amended since 2002 or the revised versions are not publicly available.²⁶

A few security sector-related documents are available to the public, but most legislation dates back to the 1990s and early 2000s. In October 2005, Tajikistan became the last Central Asian country to adopt a post-Soviet military doctrine. This delay reflected the long process of consolidation of state control over the armed forces and the definition of the army's legal function in post-civil war Tajikistan. In 2010, Tajikistan's legislature was updated to grant parliament rights and responsibilities to sustain the country's defence. In reality, however, neither parliament nor the broader public has access to the security decision-making process, while the new doctrine is mostly symbolic.

Tajikistan has a long road ahead in terms of genuine SSR. So far, the meagre reform efforts have failed to address corruption and establish good governance. European (and U.S.) assistance to Tajikistan is largely driven by security concerns related to Afghanistan (spillover effects) and the country's short-term stability. This risks undermining Tajikistan's political and economic development by further strengthening the president's political control over the security sector at the expense of democratic development.²⁷ In this sense, the limited support to Tajikistan – with the exception of border control programmes – should be increasingly tied to performance in terms of governance reform and the fight against corruption.

2. European support for Security Sector Reform

2.1. The European Union

The EU's approach and contribution to SSR support in third countries is fairly recent. The 2003 European

²⁵ Interview with a Tajik security expert, Dushanbe, May 2012.

²⁶ The law is available at: http://www.adh-geneva.ch/RULAC/pdf_state/Law-on-Military-Intelligence-TJ.pdf.

²⁷ For more on the security-development dilemma for European donors see: J. Boonstra and N. Shapovalova, 'Thinking Security, Doing Development? The Security-Development Nexus in European Policies in Tajikistan', *EUCAM Policy Brief* 27, October 2012, available at: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/EUCAM-PB-27-EN-OSCE-Police-Reform.pdf.

²² Gavrilis, op. cit.

²³ USDOS and the Emergence Group handout on Tajikistan.

²⁴ For more information see: E. Marat, 'OSCE Police Reform Programmes in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Past Constraints and Future Opportunities', *EUCAM Policy Brief* 27, October 2012, available at: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/EUCAM-PB-27-EN-OSCE-Police-Reform.pdf.

Security Strategy mentioned the possibility of providing external assistance to Security Sector Reform.²⁸ In 2005-2006, the European Council and the Commission issued separate documents that defined their concepts and possible actions in this area.²⁹ This was followed by the Council Conclusions of June 2006, which intended to bring the two concepts together under the common EU SSR policy framework.³⁰ The EU's framework draws on the very broad OECD-DAC definition of SSR, which implies the reform of all national security-related actors and oversight mechanisms in accordance with democratic and good governance principles.³¹ Brussels thus sees SSR support as a contribution to the broader democratisation process and the strengthening of human rights, good governance and the rule of law.

The EU has developed a variety of tools to support SSR in third countries. These range from military and civilian missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy aimed at maintaining stability in fragile states and building the capacity of national security structures to European Commission development cooperation programmes to facilitate locally-driven legal and judicial reform.

In Central Asia, the EU does not pursue an explicit SSR agenda. While both the 2007 EU-Central Asia Strategy for a New Partnership and its 2012 Implementation Review emphasise the importance of security issues in inter-regional relations, neither document mentions SSR assistance as a priority.³² Only the European Parliament's 'Report on the State of Implementation of the EU Strategy for Central

Asia' calls for European support to SSR in the region.³³

Nevertheless, there are a number of relevant EU initiatives that can be linked to SSR. First, there is bilateral and regional SSR-related assistance channelled through the European Commission. According to the 2011 Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Justice and Security Sector Reform (JSSR), over 2001-2009 the EU provided about €9.8 million of bilateral SSR-related aid to the five Central Asian countries, of which €5.6 million went to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.³⁴ Overall, the largest amounts of bilateral support were committed to the border management and justice sectors. Very little assistance was devoted to support oversight mechanisms. One of the very few examples included the 2004 'Human Rights and Ombudsman Outreach Project' in Kazakhstan that aimed at preventing, documenting and acting against human rights violations by security actors.

Assistance from the Commission, guided by the Regional Assistance Strategy for Central Asia (2007-2013), incorporates the promotion of security and regional cooperation among its main objectives, but this is much broader than the specific JSSR figures mentioned above. This aid is in line with the key priorities of the 2007 EU political strategy for Central Asia. Yet, funds are rather limited. Of the €321 million in development assistance allocated to Central Asia for 2011-2013, only €10 million were foreseen for regional rule of law, border management, customs and the fight against organised crime.³⁵ During this period, the EU allocated 'broad' SSR assistance mainly to Kazakhstan (€10 million) and Kyrgyzstan (€14 million) to support justice reform and the rule of law.³⁶ In 2009, the European Commission provided a €2.5 million grant to a UNODC-led project on prison reform in Kyrgyzstan³⁷ and in 2011 it initiated a study on transparency and accountability of Kyrgyz state

28 'A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy', Brussels, 12 December 2003, available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

29 The two documents are The Council's 'EU Concept for ESDP Support to Security Sector Reform', Brussels 13 October 2005, available at: http://www.initiativeforpeacebuilding.eu/resources/EU_Concept_for_ESDP_support_to_Security_Sector_Reform.pdf, and the Commission's Communication to the Council and the European Parliament 'A Concept for European Community Support for Security Sector Reform', Brussels, 24 May 2006, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0253en01.pdf.

30 Council Conclusions on a Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform, Luxembourg, 12 June 2006, available at: http://www.initiative-forpeacebuilding.eu/resources/Council_Conclusions_Policy_framework_for_SSR.pdf.

31 Security System Reform and Governance, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, OECD 2005, available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/39/31785288.pdf>.

32 Cf. The European Union and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership, European Council, June 2007, available at: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/docs/2010_strategy_eu_centralasia_en.pdf; and Progress Report on the Implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia: Implementation Review and Outline for Future Orientations, available at: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/docs/20120628_progress_report_en.pdf.

33 Report on the State of Implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, European Parliament, 2011, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A7-2011-0338+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>.

34 These amounts exclude regional programmes, foremost the bulk of border management assistance. See: Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Justice and Security Sector Reform, *Final Report*, November 2011, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation_reports/reports/2011/1295_vol4_en.pdf.

35 European Commission, Central Asia DCI Indicative Programme 2011-2013, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/docs/2010_ca_mtr_en.pdf.

36 Notably, Uzbekistan has also been allocated €15 million to support judicial reforms and local government bodies.

37 For more information see: The EU Delegation to the Kyrgyz Republic, Case Studies: Supporting Prison Reform in Kyrgyzstan, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/projects/case_studies/index_en.htm.

bodies in preparation for future EU rule of law action in the country.³⁸

One of the largest EU-funded regional initiatives directly related to SSR is the Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). With a budget amounting to €33 million for 2003-2014, the programme aims to introduce modern coordinated border management methods in Central Asia, improve regional cooperation, and facilitate legal cross-border trade and transit.³⁹ The emphasis is currently shifting from providing border infrastructure to sustainable knowledge transfer through training for border guards, customs officers and future trainers. While the delivered courses have sometimes included a human rights component, greater parliamentary and judicial control of border security agencies has not been tackled. A recent attempt to include local Kyrgyz communities in border security discussions is a notable step ahead in facilitating public oversight of border management issues.⁴⁰

The EU devotes special attention to rule of law in Central Asia and does so mostly in connection with democracy and human rights, much less from a security standpoint. The EU Rule of Law Initiative (RoLI) for Central Asia seeks to support partner countries with legal and judicial reform, including administrative and criminal law, by providing expertise and training and by facilitating professional networks with the involvement of independent lawyers and civil society.⁴¹ So far, judicial reform in the security sector specifically has hardly been covered. This is partly due to the RoLI's emphasis on the beneficiaries' ownership and the ability of Central Asian governments to determine the thematic scope of the Initiative, which is unlikely to include a more security-oriented approach to rule of law. Still, the newly-established Rule of Law Platform might offer an opportunity to integrate some SSR issues into the dialogue with Central Asian states, but the EU would need to be tactful in trying to persuade the governments of the region of the need for this approach.

The EU's approach to human rights is another area where SSR is barely part of the debate, even though it should be. EU bilateral Human Rights Dialogues (HRDs) take place annually and serve to raise human rights concerns in each of the Central Asian countries. The issues of justice and prison reform have already been touched upon during HRD-related Civil Society Seminars in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The debate could be broadened to include oversight questions in the first two countries.⁴² This might also be a viable option with regard to Tajikistan, if it is backed-up by high-level political dialogue and the EU Special Representative for Central Asia; the entry point would be Tajikistan's emphasis on security cooperation with its (European) partners.

In addition to the Civil Society Seminars, civil actors' involvement in security policy oversight could be facilitated by supporting relevant projects through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development (NSA-LA), and/or the Instrument for Stability (IfS). Examples of such projects already exist in Kyrgyzstan. IfS funds were provided for civilian monitoring in response to the 2010 crisis in the south of the country. In 2006-2008 and 2009-2011, the Public Association of Soldiers' Mothers implemented two quite successful EIDHR-funded projects that enabled cooperation with the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defence. Supporting similar projects in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan through the EIDHR and NSA/LA, integrating support to SSR in Central Asia into the IfS long-term component, and establishing cross-country civil society networks active in the field could be the next steps in transferring the above experience to other Central Asian countries.

2.2. EU member states

EU engagement in Central Asia is complemented by individual member states' assistance. Alike the EU institutions, none of the European governments has a strategy specifically dedicated to promoting SSR in the region. The focus is rather on achieving broader development and governance objectives. Direct bilateral support to SSR is almost non-existent. EU member states are mainly involved in SSR-related

³⁸ The report summarising the results of the study can be found at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/documents/press_corner/news2012/background_note_on_transparency_and_accountability_december_9_2011_qa_en.pdf.

³⁹ Data taken from the BOMCA website: <http://bomca.eu>.

⁴⁰ For more information see Gavrilis, op. cit.; and Boonstra and Shapovalova, 'op. cit.', pp. 9-10.

⁴¹ See also: Interview with X. Barré, Attorney and Team Leader, EU Rule of Law Platform, 'Rule of Law Support for Central Asia', *EUCAM Watch* 14, January 2013, available at: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Newsletters/EUCAM-Watch-14.pdf.

⁴² In fact, in Kyrgyzstan the oversight role of civil society organisations has already been addressed at the civil society seminar in February 2012. See: EU-Kyrgyz Republic Civil Society Seminar on Human Rights 'The Role of NGOs in the Implementation of the Rule of Law and Human Rights', 8-9 February 2012, Bishkek, available at: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/kyrgyzstan/documents/eu_kyrgyzstan/cs_seminar_report_en.pdf.

activities through multilateral programmes.

Germany is by far the most active European state in aid delivery to Central Asia. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is particularly active in rule of law support. While this does not include an SSR perspective, it can potentially contribute to the strengthening of the judiciary and thus could provide the foundation for improved judicial oversight in the long run. German political foundations, such as the Friedrich Ebert and Konrad Adenauer foundations, also support contacts with political parties and parliaments in Central Asia and engage in human rights awareness-raising and parliamentary control. Whereas German support can be considered through a security-development nexus lens, there are barely any direct security programmes besides financial support to international border control projects and some military training of Central Asian officers in Germany.⁴³ German military presence in Termez, Uzbekistan, has also not led to greater SSR engagement in the region.

While France has developed its own SSR approach,⁴⁴ its engagement in this respect in Central Asia is modest at best. The French government held the first EU-Central Asia Forum on security issues in September 2008, which was part of France's EU Presidency agenda. France maintains a military presence in Tajikistan with roughly 200 French soldiers stationed at the Dushanbe airport. In this connection, it has co-funded the construction of a new airport terminal, provided training support and promoted the teaching of French in the Tajik military.⁴⁵ However, this is mostly unrelated to SSR in Tajikistan and should be considered within the framework of NATO's engagement in Central Asia and support to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

Similarly, the UK's security interests in Central Asia largely relate to the situation in Afghanistan and the UK's involvement in NATO operations there. Throughout 2012, the British defence secretary and the armed forces minister paid several visits to the Central Asian states to secure the reverse supply of military equipment from Afghanistan in preparation for the 2014 NATO drawdown and to discuss further

possible cooperation.⁴⁶ So far this cooperation has been limited to the UK offering expertise on joint UN peacekeeping operations, support to the teaching of English to military staff, and training courses in the UK and with the British Military Advisory Training Team. In addition to these activities that are part of NATO's cooperation with the Central Asian states, the UK is expected to sell some military hardware used in Afghanistan to the Uzbek army as part of the deal over the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), a highly controversial issue considering the Uzbek regime's human rights record.⁴⁷

At the same time, the UK offers assistance to Central Asian civil society organisations in the areas of good governance and human rights. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) has provided support to judicial and penal reform projects, including torture prevention and the abolition of the death penalty. In Kyrgyzstan, the focus has been shifting to conflict resolution following the 2010 crisis in the south of the country, including projects aiming at the professionalisation of Kyrgyz police and border agencies in cooperation with the OSCE.⁴⁸

Austria is particularly active in border management and security in Central Asia. In 2003 it started the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI), as a platform for dialogue and exchange with both local actors and international donors. At the initial stage CABSI contributed to the launch of the EU's BOMCA programme and now continues reviewing its progress. Dialogue is mainly exercised through annual meetings organised by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior in partnership with several European countries.

In recent years, Finland has been increasing its assistance to Central Asia through the Wider Europe Initiative that includes security-related assistance among its priorities. Finland has focussed particularly on support for rule of law projects (the 'Equal Before the Law: Access to Justice' programme is one example),⁴⁹ anti-trafficking through financial support for the Central Asian Regional Information

46 'Defence Ministers visit Central Asian countries', UK Ministry of Defence Announcement, 28 February 2012, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-ministers-visit-central-asian-countries>.

47 'Army to sell military hardware to authoritarian Uzbekistan in retreat deal', *The Times*, 8 February 2013.

48 See List of Projects in Kyrgyzstan in 2008-2011, available on the website of the British Embassy in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: <http://ukinkz.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/working-with-kg/projects-and-funding/>.

49 Equal Before the Law: Access to Justice in Central Asia, Programme Summary, available at: <http://equalbeforethelaw.org/program-summary>.

43 Boonstra and Shapovalova, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

44 Security Sector Reform: France's Approach, August 2008, available at: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/12-Ang-MAEE-RSS-final.pdf>.

45 Boonstra and Shapovalova, op. cit., p. 14.

and Coordination Centre (CARICC),⁵⁰ and border management through support for the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe.

There is very little information available on smaller bilateral SSR projects supported by individual EU member states. Few known examples include 'Starlink Kazakhstan: Building Capacity for Democratic Governance in the Security Sector', financed by the Netherlands in 2008-2009, and a border management training programme for Tajik officials funded by the British government in 2011 – both projects implemented by the Dutch Centre for European Security Studies (CESS).⁵¹ While the latter project could be considered along OSCE and BOMCA activities, Starlink included a capacity-building component to promote the democratic reform of Kazakhstan's law enforcement and defence forces in the context of NATO cooperation. In this sense, the two projects reflect a general trend: due to the large overlapping membership in the EU, NATO and the OSCE, European states often co-fund projects and programmes, including police and military training, implemented under the auspices of these organisations.

2.3. The OSCE

The OSCE has pioneered SSR efforts in Central Asia since the 1990s. The organisation emphasises the importance of comprehensive security, which includes three dimensions: politico-military, economic and environment, and human security. While these offer a sound basis for SSR, they are rarely referred to directly by the OSCE. The OSCE's Code of Conduct obliges participating states to establish civilian oversight over the armed forces, para-militaries, intelligence services and the police. But with a few exceptions, OSCE recommendations in terms of Security Sector Reform are largely ignored in the region.⁵²

Over the past decade, the OSCE has been consumed with building regional cooperation among authoritarian states around transnational threats such as drug-trafficking, human trafficking, and other forms of organised crime. These efforts are noteworthy, given the relatively few resources available for the region. Overall, the OSCE's funding

of programmes in Central Asia, including SSR, has been substantially lower than its activities in South Eastern Europe. In 2011, for example, the total budget for all five Central Asian countries together (roughly €18 million) was lower than that for Kosovo (€22.6 million), and almost four times less than the total spending in South Eastern Europe (€61.4 million).⁵³

OSCE involvement in Central Asia has long been criticised for its lack of sensitivity to the local context and for failing to engage Central Asian leaders in political dialogue.⁵⁴ Most of the OSCE's assistance to SSR in Central Asia since 2001 has aimed at improving professional training, with an emphasis on counter-terrorism activities, not at enhancing the governance of security structures.⁵⁵ The OSCE has at times been accused of appearing too willing to help authoritarian regimes build stronger law enforcement agencies which in turn are used to control regime opponents.

The OSCE has also had to deal with the unwillingness of Central Asian political, military, and law enforcement officials to engage in SSR. The Central Asian rent-seeking elites have sought the OSCE's help when their interests matched, only to ignore or criticise the organisation when politically-expedient at home.⁵⁶ For instance, Kazakhstan criticised the OSCE's approach to the riots in Zhanaozen.⁵⁷ Yet, Kazakhstan had failed to implement judicial sector reform and a range of other reforms promised in preparation for its 2010 OSCE chairmanship. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have both used the OSCE's help to reform their police forces when local law enforcement agencies proved unable to respond to drug-trafficking, religious extremists, and organised criminal groups. Yet, both countries have consistently failed to follow-up on the OSCE's recommendations to improve human rights and encourage democratic processes.

Over the past two decades, the organisation has developed a distinct set of programmes in each country. In Kazakhstan, where economic resources allow SSR activities to be carried out without donor financial support, the OSCE emphasises the importance of

53 'OSCE Annual Report 2011', 30 March 2012.

54 V. Shkolnikov, 'Missing the big picture? Retrospective on OSCE strategic thinking on Central Asia', *Helsinki Monitor* 20(4), November 2009.

55 D. Lewis, 'Security Sector Reform in authoritarian regimes: the OSCE experience of police assistance programming in Central Asia', *Helsinki Monitor* 22(2), September 2011.

56 More on elites' predatory behavior in the realm of international security cooperation see Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

57 J. Lillis, 'Kazakhstan: Nazarbayev Bashes OSCE amid Domestic Tension', *Eurasianet.org*, 7 March 2012.

50 See: CARICC, Donors of the Project, available at: <http://www.caricc.org/index.php/en/unodc-project-on-establishment-of-caricc/donors-of-the-project>.

51 Project information can be found on the CESS website: <http://www.cess.org>.

52 For a detailed analysis of OSCE's police reform programmes see Lewis, op. cit.

promoting political liberalisation and respect for human rights, and links its SSR engagement with larger state-building processes.

Shortly before becoming the OSCE chair in 2010, Kazakhstan made a visible effort to modernise its legal code to bring it up to international standards. Furthermore, in 2009 Kazakhstan adopted a National Action Plan for Human Rights for the period 2009-2012. According to the Kazakh government, the plan sought to strengthen the rule of law to protect human rights in the country and to meet UNDP and OSCE standards. Finally, in mid-2012 Kazakhstan made a commitment to reform its police force in order to increase its ability to democratically police multi-ethnic communities. The initiative stemmed, in part, from the riots in Zhanaozen and Shepte in December 2011. So far, however, it seems to have more of a declaratory nature rather than being a large-scale reform project of the interior ministry.

In Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE has learned to engage civil society groups in order to build dialogue with state institutions, which often lack the capacity and strategic skills of local NGOs. There the OSCE deals with border security and management, the rule of law, good governance, legislation, environmental protection, and regional cooperation. Specifically, border management programmes have included assisting the Kyrgyz government to develop long-term solutions for customs training, document security, combating terrorism and drug- and human-trafficking. The rule of law programme has included building dialogue between the state and society to help the judicial sector and law enforcement agencies to develop respect for individual human rights.

Following the June 2010 violence in southern Kyrgyzstan, the OSCE deployed 28 community police officers to the region. The initiative was first welcomed by the country's interim government, but soon some officials complained that the foreign policemen lacked knowledge of the local context. The OSCE had initially planned to dispatch 52 officers, but it had to reduce the number and visibility of the international personnel. Their deployment was not made public and functions were considerably scaled back.⁵⁸ The police officers now mostly serve as consultants to Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies and do not have direct contact with the population.

The OSCE maintains a stronger emphasis on the politico-military dimensions of security in Tajikistan. Security priorities have shifted from peacebuilding during and after the 1992-1997 civil war to building Tajikistan's capacity to counteract drug-trafficking. The OSCE attempts to bring several donors such as the EU, U.S. and UNDP together with Tajik border agencies (border guards, customs etc.) under one coordinated mechanism, while the EU has taken on donor coordination among the many donors active in Tajikistan. In 2009 the OSCE opened a Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe to train border officers from across the Central Asian region. In 2007 the OSCE moved towards integrating several Tajikistan and Afghanistan programmes on border control.⁵⁹ In 2011 and 2012, with the EU-funded Border Management Northern Afghanistan project, the OSCE conducted a series of trainings of Afghan and Tajik border officials on how to deal with transnational security challenges.⁶⁰

While some advances have been made, the OSCE continues to face resistance from Central Asian governments and security establishments to conduct full-fledged SSR. Given the organisation's modest budget in general, and for SSR specifically, future prospects are rather dim. There is also the possibility of participating states initiating and funding extra-budgetary projects: an option that could increasingly be used if European states (or others) are ready to invest and the Central Asian host state agrees (which will not always be the case). Meanwhile, the OSCE must continue reminding Central Asian governments of their signatory status and their membership commitments. The OSCE should also continue to emphasise its comprehensive approach to security, which most other donor organisations in the region lack.

2.4. NATO

Similar to the EU, its member states and the OSCE, NATO's SSR aims to enhance security sector governance in accordance with democratic norms and international standards. Yet, due to its distinct

59 K. Samuel, 'Fostering Relations with the Host Country: A Case Study of OSCE and Tajikistan', *Helsinki Monitor* 20(4), November 2009.

60 'OSCE ready to strengthen engagement with Afghanistan as part of international effort, says OSCE Secretary General at Bonn Conference', OSCE Secretary General, 5 December 2011, available at: <http://www.osce.org/sg/85784>; 'OSCE, UNDP train Afghan border police, customs officials on border management', OSCE Office in Tajikistan, 5 June 2012, available at: <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/91074>; and 'OSCE trains Tajik and Afghan border officials on detecting forged documents', OSCE Office in Tajikistan, 26 April 2012.

58 A. Ostlund and M. Mueller, 'People's security – today's challenges of a new approach to policing: working experience of the Community Security Initiative (CSI) project in Kyrgyzstan 2011', *Helsinki Monitor* 23(1), March 2012.

political nature and mission, NATO generally focuses on hard security and (democratic) defence reform, leaving other SSR components largely unattended. The Alliance has notably contributed to the democratisation of the defence sectors in the states that sought membership of it or in countries where it had a military operation (Bosnia-Herzegovina in the past and Kosovo and Afghanistan currently).⁶¹ However, in Central Asia where there are no membership perspectives and security sector democratisation is unwelcome, NATO does little to promote comprehensive reform.

NATO started political dialogue with the Central Asian states in the early 1990s. After the launch of the operations in Afghanistan, it became keen to intensify cooperation. Given the need to ensure stable support to ISAF, NATO member states – specifically Germany, France and the U.S. – established a military presence in the region. More recent NATO efforts have resulted in the creation of the Northern Distribution Network, a logistical undertaking comprising transit routes to and from Afghanistan via Central Asia. With the ISAF drawdown envisaged for 2014, the participating NATO states will have to increasingly rely on the network for evacuating their troops and equipment from Afghanistan.⁶² This significantly boosts the strategic importance of the Central Asian states, but reduces NATO's leverage in SSR negotiations with those countries.

NATO Security Sector Reform-related activities in Central Asia currently include political dialogue and practical security cooperation through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme. Dialogue is maintained through the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), NATO's 50-nation consultation forum between allies and partner countries, and through the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The PfP in Central Asia started with a regional approach – through the creation of the joint Central Asian Battalion (CentrAsBat) that included mostly Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek forces. The aim was to build their inter-operability with NATO operations

through a series of joint exercises under U.S. central command.⁶³ However, efforts to establish greater regional cooperation proved rather ineffective and already in the early 2000s the battalion was dissolved. This eventually shifted NATO's approach to Central Asia from multilateral initiatives to predominantly bilateral engagement.⁶⁴

So far, Kazakhstan is the Central Asian country that cooperates most with NATO. It is the only state in the region that implements the Individual Partnership Action Plan and participates in the Partnership Action Plan-Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB), which includes a governance component in defence reform. In cooperation with NATO allies, Kazakhstan also hosts annual military exercises – 'Steppe Eagle' – and has created a peacekeeping battalion – Kazbat – that can be deployed as part of NATO or UN operations.⁶⁵

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have yet to achieve this level of inter-operability with the Alliance. So far Kyrgyzstan's practical cooperation with NATO has been guided by the country's annual Individual Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP), which includes security and peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, border security and crisis management. In 2007, Bishkek also joined the PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP) that supports the government's efforts to reform military command and control structures and which shall enhance the ability of Kyrgyz forces to participate in NATO operations. Under this framework, NATO has provided military language training, search and rescue education, border security and human rights courses along with the re-training of released military personnel.

Due to the civil war in the 1990s, Tajikistan was the last Central Asian state to start practical cooperation with NATO. It joined the PfP framework only in 2002. Together with the Tajik government's agreement to host French military aircraft at Dushanbe Airport and the 2004 transit agreement allowing an ISAF supply route to cross Tajik territory, these were the key milestones in Tajikistan-NATO bilateral relations. Currently, cooperation includes joint exercises and training, and is structured through the Individual Partnership Programme (IPP) that is jointly agreed

61 J. Boonstra, 'NATO's Role in Democratic Reform', *FRIDE Working Paper* 38, May 2007, available at: <http://www.fride.org/publication/128/nato%27s-role-in-democratic-reform>.

62 H. Reisinger, 'How to Get Out of Afghanistan: NATO'S Withdrawal through Central Asia', *NDC Research Paper* 79, available at: http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current_news.php?icode=411; and A. Cooley, 'Road-blocks on the New Silk Road: The Challenges of Externally Promoting Central Asian Economic Cooperation', *EUCAM Watch* 11, February 2012, pp. 4-5, available at: http://www.eucentralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Newsletters/EUCAMWatch-11.pdf.

63 The Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division in Tajikistan has also provided troops for CentrAsBat. For details see: E. Marat, *The Military and the State in Central Asia: From Red Army to Independence* (London-New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 106-108.

64 M. B. Olcott, 'NATO and Security in Central Asia' in Hartog, op. cit.

65 Kazbat was deployed in Iraq between 2003 and 2008 in a de-mining mission. More in R. N. McDermott, 'Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends', February 2009, available at: <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/summary.cfm?q=904>.

every two years. Emphasis is placed on counter-terrorism, border security and mine-clearing activities.

So far, NATO engagement with the Central Asian states has had little to no practical impact on the reform of national defence structures. The main focus of cooperation has remained developing the inter-operability between Central Asian armed forces and NATO operations, but even in this field of military cooperation NATO plays a minor role in the region. To this end, emphasis is placed on upgrading capacities of selected military units, which hardly leads to the modernisation and democratisation of the defence sector. With the current scope and level of engagement, this is not expected to change in the near future. Even in Kazakhstan, whose cooperation with NATO is most advanced, the organisation's work is not free of challenges. Alike Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan is cautious of closer involvement with the Alliance due to its membership commitments under the Russian-led CSTO and China's SCO.⁶⁶

3. Opportunities and constraints for Europe

Europe has a unique role to play in helping SSR in Central Asia. While the U.S. focuses on the hard security aspects of SSR, and Russia and China (though on a smaller scale) engage on military and security cooperation, European actors are known for valuing human security over hard security challenges. Europe should continue to emphasise the inter-dependence between security and social-economic development aspects, including democracy, good governance, the rule of law and human rights.

However, there are serious limitations to applying this Western holistic view of SSR in all three states. The Central Asian states will object to reforms that attempt to change current power balances. Reform of the intelligence services is thus too sensitive for instance. Where Central Asian leaderships are willing to cooperate, implementation is mostly half-hearted at best, while they prefer material gain over structural reform.

But there are also restrictions on the European side. First, Central Asia does not rank high on Europe's agenda, which in turn makes it unlikely that European

countries and organisations with shrinking budgets will invest substantially in SSR in the region. There needs to be a clear political will, as is the case with border management support, which is interlinked with EU policy objectives in Afghanistan. Second, there are doubts regarding the effectiveness of SSR programmes in countries that are not committed to reform. Whereas European donors often report successes of assistance programmes to ensure the continuance of funding, experts on the ground paint a bleaker picture: little headway has been made on police reform and border assistance has not decreased drug trade.⁶⁷ Third, there is a risk that programmes that mix hardware support with soft elements aimed at structural reform – and most projects are based on such a combination – can backfire, as authoritarian regimes might use the equipment against the population.

European assistance is thus limited, ill-coordinated and mostly *ad hoc*. There are questions over the usefulness of European engagement where partners are often unwilling and results are so poor. Nonetheless, awareness-raising programmes on good governance and human rights values in the security sector are likely to have some impact. It is however essential that any undertaking includes security sector and government representatives, as well as civil society actors, with a view to increasing legitimacy and public support. Selecting priority areas is difficult and European donors should carefully assess the potential direct and indirect impact of their projects.

One SSR area that might be less sensitive is disaster preparedness. Here the EU, through the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), has invested substantially in Kyrgyzstan and especially Tajikistan over the last two decades. DIPECHO assistance, which is largely taken up by humanitarian aid organisations, could also focus on capacity-building, while urging also for reform in both countries.⁶⁸

While overlapping membership in the EU, NATO and OSCE might suggest an advanced level of inter-institutional coordination among European actors, often this is not the case. Coordination of border management efforts under BOMCA and CABSI seems to be most developed. Yet even here the

67 In interviews held with Western officials in the Central Asian region often a grim picture is presented of the potential for reform and results achieved. This in contrast with official documents and project updates.

68 See also B. De Cordier 'The EU's humanitarian aid and civil protection policy in Central Asia: Past crises and emergencies to come', *EUCAM Policy Brief* 29, January 2013, available at http://www.eucen-tralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Policy_Briefs/EUCAM-PB-29-EN-EU-Humanitarian-Aid.pdf.

66 See also: 'NATO and Central Asia', *EUCAM Watch* 11, February 2012, available at: http://www.eucen-tralasia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Newsletters/EUCAMWatch-11.pdf; and R. McDermott, 'Kazakhstan Downplays NATO's Role in Central Asia', *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 9 (183), 9 October 2012, available at: [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39942](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39942).

intensity and participation in national coordination meetings varies significantly in each Central Asian state, while regional cooperation conferences bring donors together only once a year. At the same time, discussions on border security are largely separate from other fields such as military, police or justice reform. This also holds true for the EU Rule of Law Initiative, which barely touches upon broader security reform issues. While European SSR efforts seem to be complementary to each other at first sight, at a closer look they remain largely unconnected and project-specific and do not follow a holistic approach.

European donors have so far mainly focused on three areas of SSR: border management, police reform and civilian oversight (including the legislature, judiciary and civil society).

Border management

In view of the 2014 NATO troop drawdown, the U.S. and European states will probably increase border assistance to Central Asia due to potential threats associated with Afghanistan. These threats are highlighted by the Central Asian states (particularly Tajikistan) in order to continue receiving aid and attention. While the region's governments welcome hardware and infrastructure support, Western border management programmes such as BOMCA run a risk of neglecting their broader aims – contributing to human security and enhanced cross-border cooperation among civilian actors. Involving non-state actors and local communities in border security discussions would provide an apt response strategy that would account for local interests and facilitate public oversight of border management issues. Whether this strategy can be successfully accommodated within BOMCA will depend on donors' ability better to target the assistance and exert leverage on recipients.

With a shift in focus toward greater engagement with civil actors, existing project management and evaluation methods would also need to be adjusted. The current approach of providing infrastructure and training to border security agencies has relied on methods that allow for measuring short-term effects and reporting successes based on the number of delivered equipment, conferences held and people trained. Yet, the questions that often remain unanswered are whether the equipment was properly utilised on the ground, how interested conference participants were in cooperation and whether the necessary expertise could be actually transmitted to those trained. Building cross-border partnerships among non-governmental actors and creating

meaningful oversight mechanisms would require a different programme management and evaluation strategy that accounts for the impact of assistance on the population in the long run.

Police reform

External efforts to support police reform in Central Asia have had a limited impact. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan show that political regimes readily accept external material support to transform police forces, but fall short of making law enforcement more transparent and accountable to public oversight. Merely training and equipping police forces will not lead to structural and behavioural changes of police personnel. Instead, OSCE and EU police reform efforts should focus on building new institutions and forms of interaction between society and the police, while post-Soviet interior ministries should become responsive to the concerns of the population. Ideally, the police will begin to work on behalf of the public, not the regime, and to obey the rule of law rather than government orders. This will be a long-term process, but one which will eventually ensure that foreign aid is not used to protect incumbent regimes. In this sense, European actors will need to step-up civil society involvement in police reform programmes so as to strengthen public involvement and awareness.

Civilian oversight

The legislative branch should be encouraged to play a leading role in fostering civil-military relations and building mechanisms for civilian oversight of the security sector. The situation differs in each country. In Kazakhstan, although parliament mainly represents the president's party, individual legislators can speak out to challenge some government decisions. In addition to the Committee of International Affairs, Defence and Security, more parliamentary committees should be involved in SSR discussions. When possible, Kazakh parliamentarians should be invited to open fora to discuss the future of SSR together with NGO representatives and the mass media. The NATO and OSCE Parliamentary Assemblies and the European Parliament could take up the issue as part of the inter-parliamentary dialogue, while the established contacts of European NGOs, such as the German political foundations, with Central Asian civil society and political circles could also offer a window of opportunity.

In Kyrgyzstan, where parliament is composed of five political parties, international donors' efforts must continue to focus on individual MPs who understand the significance of parliamentary deliberations and

interpellations. Elected representatives from all parties should be invited to local and international discussions on various mechanisms of parliamentary oversight of the security sector. When possible, parliament should be encouraged to collaborate with NGOs, media outlets, and the local expert community on SSR issues.

The Tajik parliament has virtually no control over security decisions. Thus efforts must be directed towards preventing the adoption of yet harsher laws regulating mass media, the NGO sector and the political opposition, while also promoting awareness and debate with elected representatives and parliamentary staff. In support to parliaments in the region, several European NGOs, institutions and parliaments could play a positive role through support, training and cooperation programmes.

If SSR-related support is to be provided to Central Asian states, greater emphasis must be placed on dialogue, by including SSR issues into existing EU formats such as the Human Rights Dialogues and the Rule of Law Platform. This would help to raise awareness of SSR issues and avoid misunderstandings regarding what SSR really means. While the dialogues could serve for expressing concerns at the government level, the seminars envisaged under the Rule of Law Platform could incorporate public oversight of police and penitentiary practices and include the participation of the agencies actually in charge of law enforcement. This might also offer an opportunity for closer coordination of EU initiatives with the activities of other donors, including OSCE police reform efforts, and could help bridge the gap between rhetoric and practice.

SSR-related support to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan should also be increasingly provided bottom-up, through civil society organisations. Existing mechanisms, such as the EIDHR and the NSA-LA programme, already offer appropriate platforms for civil society involvement. The Instrument for Stability has so far mainly targeted state bodies and only partial support has been provided to the non-governmental sector in Kyrgyzstan. The IfS could be increasingly used to address potential conflict arising from the lack of civilian oversight of the security sector in Central Asia. Assistance to state bodies, especially training (if at all provided), should be more targeted and adjusted to the absorptive capacities of the beneficiaries (arranging a two-week highly intensive training that includes all kinds of issues for border officials who are sometimes

barely literate is counter-productive). Training-for-trainers might be indeed a better option. This would make assistance more efficient. In sum, SSR should be promoted through the involvement of the government, security agencies, parliaments and civil society; awareness-raising of what SSR really means and how it can be forwarded would be a good first step.

Conclusion

Ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan in 2010, the violent suppression of riots in western Kazakhstan in December 2011, and the armed showdown in southeast Tajikistan in 2012 demonstrate that stability is elusive in Central Asia. The authorities' responses to these flashpoints have been aggressive, resulting in dozens of civilians dead and wounded. Almost no police or army officers have been prosecuted for unlawful activity, and those in charge have not been held accountable. Such government responses have led to further civic alienation from the state, especially in the remote and least economically-developed parts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This is largely a result of the Soviet legacy in which security and law enforcement agencies protect the political leadership from the unruly masses. While Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have made limited efforts at SSR, even in these countries change has been slow given the lack of achievements and political will.

Central Asian countries take little interest in SSR beyond infrastructure and hardware and they lack the political will to reform. Loosening the grip that elites have on the security agencies that are in place to defend regime security – not state security, let alone human security – is often seen as a threat to the governments' existence. A holistic approach to SSR is thus not on the cards and the very existence of SSR programmes can be questioned. Even if there was keen interest on the part of Central Asia, it is unclear whether one or more European donors would be able to pull enough resources and political interest to undertake serious SSR support in a region not firmly on the radar of European foreign policies and development assistance.

Meanwhile, European actors lack an agenda or strategy to drive their SSR engagement with Central Asia. This is not surprising given that assistance is fairly limited, possibly with the exception of border control. Moreover, the areas where donors are active – police reform, border management, rule of law, civil society support – are largely disconnected and fall

under different funding schemes and programmes. In this sense SSR support to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan remains mainly *ad hoc* and requires a careful balance between what donors are willing to offer – taking political and financial constraints into account – and what recipients are interested in accepting – avoiding overhaul reform of security actors and effective democratic oversight. Meanwhile donor coordination only takes place around some specific aspects of SSR, barely taking into account how assistance in one sector might affect another.

So far European (and other donors') assistance has had only little impact. Afghan drug flows through Central Asian states have not decreased as a result of border management programmes. In most states, the police is still regarded as oppressive and rent-seeking, not at the service of the community. Whereas new laws are drafted, practice remains arbitrary. Assistance programmes that not only focus on equipment but also on training, technical assistance and close cooperation might have though some bearing in the long haul, especially if civil society organisations are taken on board, as is increasingly the case in Kyrgyzstan. Straightforward discussions between European leaders and their Central Asian counterparts could further help raise some awareness and prepare the ground for a day when full SSR assistance might be welcomed.

European donors would do well to debate among themselves on what they hope to achieve with the diverse elements of SSR they support in Central Asia. The broader question of the risk to provide unintended support for repressive regimes versus promoting gradual change should be taken up in policy debates. Discussions should also include the U.S., the other SSR supporter that often shares the same objectives but uses different means. This would hopefully lead to a more uniform view on what can be realistically achieved. Meanwhile, European actors would do well to keep SSR factors in mind when delivering development assistance while also targeting concrete objectives, however limited these are, in the specific domain of SSR. Simply focusing on the lowest denominator agreed by donors and recipients might in some cases be seen as futile, while in other cases considered worthwhile for building cooperation and making a small difference.

SSR support should not be carried out having short-term objectives in mind, such as current concerns over the future of Afghanistan and the withdrawal of equipment through Central Asia. Instead, Europeans

should openly raise their concerns with Central Asian partners and focus on the tasks at hand in the states that offer some room for improvement.





Established in 2008 as a project seeking to monitor the implementation of the EU Strategy for Central Asia, EUCAM has grown into a knowledge hub on broader Europe-Central Asia relations. Specifically, the project aims to:

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