

CSIS-IND TASK FORCE

Supporting Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship Agenda



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the Institute for New Democracies (IND) are supporting Kazakhstan's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) by providing expert advice and policy recommendations generated by the U.S.-Kazakhstan OSCE Task Force. The initiative is supported through a grant from the government of Kazakhstan. The task force aims to bring together policymakers, regional specialists, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, representatives of former OSCE chairing countries, and business leaders to offer implementable recommendations for effective and successful OSCE chairmanship. The CSIS-IND Task Force consists of two working groups based in Washington, D.C., and Astana.

This Policy Case Study is issued by the project's Washington Task Force; the principal author is Richard Weitz, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute. The task force provided input and recommendations to the Kazakh government as OSCE chair at the onset of the crisis in Kyrgyzstan. This paper does not represent the views of the government of Kazakhstan.

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Policy Brief Case Study

The OSCE and the 2010 Crisis in Kyrgyzstan

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Executive Summary

When Kazakhstan president Nursultan Nazarbayev met with U.S. president Barack Obama on several occasions during the former's April 11–14, 2010, visit to Washington, one of the issues the two leaders discussed was the volatile political situation in Kyrgyzstan. They were also joined on at least one occasion by Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, who was in Washington for the April 12–13 Nuclear Security Summit. The three governments were eager to share assessments about developments in Kyrgyzstan after the April 6–7 civil strife there killed about 80 people and wounded over 1,000. The ensuing chaos led Kazakhstan and other neighboring countries to close their borders with Kyrgyzstan and begin intensive consultations on an appropriate response.

Kazakhstan's role in dealing with the crisis was doubly important due to its considerable influence in Kyrgyzstan and its status as the 2010 chair-in-office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The success of the OSCE in preventing the outbreak of a Kyrgyz civil war and promoting a peaceful resolution after days of civil unrest is attributable to the closeness of Kazakh-Kyrgyz relations as well as Kazakhstan's close ties with U.S. and Russian leaders. Although a desire to ensure stability in a neighboring country would have motivated a Kazakh response to the crisis in any case, the decision of the Kazakh government to address the crisis primarily through the OSCE was a consequence of Astana's status as OSCE chair. The chair gave Kazakhstan the mandate to act more prominently and more decisively during the Kyrgyz crisis. It managed to simultaneously promote its own regional security interests as well as bolster the international standing of the OSCE (and of Kazakhstan itself) by using the organization's diverse tools to help resolve the Kyrgyz crisis in a peaceful manner. The generally successful OSCE response to the crisis has in turn enhanced the prestige of both the organization and the Kazakh government.

Kazakhstan's Influence in Kyrgyzstan

Kazakhstan is Kyrgyzstan's most important neighbor. The two countries have established deep social, economic, and political ties. Their senior officials engage in frequent meetings, bilaterally and at multilateral gatherings, giving Kazakhstan many points of contact in Bishkek. Kyrgyz officials have demonstrated support for Nazarbayev's efforts to promote greater unity among Central Asian countries. In April 2007, the two governments signed an agreement to establish a bilateral International Supreme Council as a step toward a broader Central Asian Union.

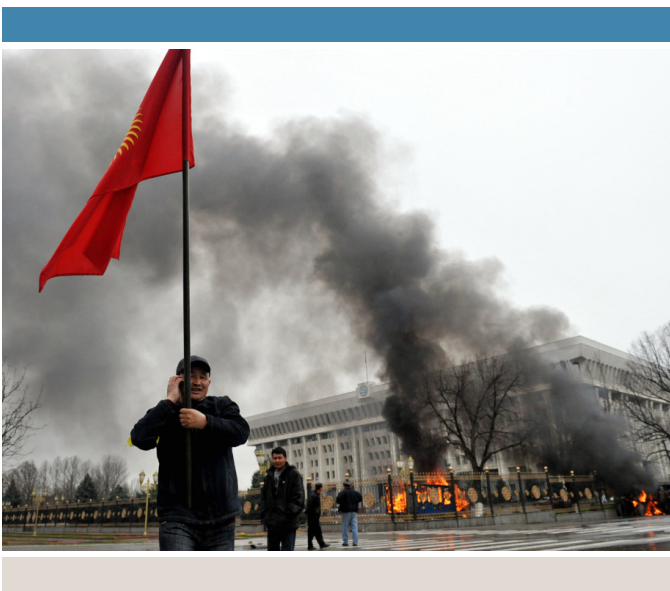
Two-way trade between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan amounts to almost half a billion dollars annually. Kazakhs also provide the main source of foreign capital in Kyrgyzstan, with over \$300 million invested in various projects. The two governments established a common investment fund in 2007. Although Kazakhstan provides most of the capital for the fund, the larger part of the investment goes to projects in Kyrgyzstan in the form of joint Kazakh-Kyrgyz enterprises. Kazakh entrepreneurs have already created hundreds of joint ventures in Kyrgyzstan in the banking, construction, energy, and other sectors. According to one estimate, Kazakh investors hold one-third of the total equity of the banks in Kyrgyzstan. Bishkek imports about one-fifth of its wheat from Kazakhstan, and in recent years,

Kazakhstan's booming economy has led more Kyrgyz labor migrants to seek work in Kazakhstan than in Russia. An estimated 200,000 Kyrgyz migrants work in Kazakhstan. Tourism, especially involving Kazakhs living near the Kyrgyz border, as well as cultural ties, also bind the two nations together.

Kazakh representatives have long urged their Kyrgyz counterparts to make greater progress in their domestic reform programs, especially in the economic sphere. During his April 2007 visit to Kyrgyzstan, Nazarbayev expressed interest in increasing Kazakhstan's support for the country's economic development. He told his hosts that, under the right conditions, Kazakhs were "ready to invest billions of dollars in Kyrgyzstan's economy." Nazarbayev offered to support Kyrgyzstan's hydropower sector by helping to finance its 1,900-megawatt Kambarata-1 and 240-megawatt Kambarata-2 power plants, despite the fact that Kazakhstan's own plants can generate electricity at cheaper prices than Kyrgyzstan. Investing in Kyrgyzstan's hydropower facilities—including the two Kambarata plans, whose combined projection costs could exceed \$2 billion—would benefit Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries, who share water and electricity. Recognizing that the investment could take some time to materialize, Nazarbayev pledged \$100 million in emergency humanitarian aid, as well as wheat and fuel supplies, to help the country deal with an immediate food shortage due to a poor 2006–2007 harvest.

However, Nazarbayev bluntly warned during his April 2007 visit that political instability and widespread corruption were discouraging Kazakh businesses from investing in Kyrgyzstan, a view shared by the Asian Development Bank and other international financial experts. Nazarbayev urged all Kyrgyz political factions to negotiate a political compromise to their disputes, which remained acute even in 2007. Otherwise, he asserted that Kyrgyzstan could emulate Afghanistan and turn into an enclave of instability.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have significant multilateral ties. Both are full members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the



Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the United Nations (UN). They also participate in NATO's Partnership for Peace and support the alliance's security mission in Afghanistan. Indeed, when Nazarbayev held a bilateral meeting with Obama on April 11, 2010, the Kazakh president announced Astana's agreement to permit U.S. planes conveying troops and equipment to Afghanistan to fly over Kazakhstan's territory en route to the U.S. military base at Manas Airport in Kyrgyzstan.

Although Kazakh officials employed these diverse bilateral and multilateral tools during the recent crisis, they relied most heavily on the OSCE, which has developed some specific mechanisms to address urgent domestic political crises in Eurasia by resolving the immediate conflict. The decision to award Kazakhstan the OSCE chairmanship in 2010 acknowledged the country's growing importance in Eurasia. Kazakh officials viewed the decision as an endorsement of successful state building and economic development, their leading role in Central Asia, and their contribution as a bridge between the former Soviet republics and Europe's OSCE members. Other governments hoped that the OSCE chairmanship would bolster the organization's influence in the former Soviet bloc, as well as promote a greater commitment to all three OSCE baskets, including democracy and human rights.

Resolving the 2005 Kyrgyz Crisis

The OSCE played an important role in resolving the 2005 crisis in Kyrgyzstan. After a month of small-scale protests primarily in the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, on March 24, 2005, tens of thousands of demonstrators gathered in front of the main government building in the capital of Bishkek. The protestors were angry over the parliamentary elections held on February 27 and March 13, in which several opposition candidates were barred. Many international observers, including the OSCE, judged the ballot fundamentally flawed. After some skirmishes, a mob stormed the government headquarters, while other parts of Bishkek and other cities experienced widespread looting and violence. President Askar Akayev, who had ruled Kyrgyzstan since the breakup of the Soviet

Union, fled the country, and Kyrgyzstan became the third former Soviet republic after Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004 to experience a "colored revolution" in which a government fell due to mass demonstrations following the holding of fraudulent elections.

While the political confrontation over election results was similar to that of Georgia and Ukraine, the major driving forces for the 2005 protests in Kyrgyzstan were the low standard of living, widespread poverty, lack of economic opportunities, and government corruption. The protests were spontaneous, chaotic, and violent; they lacked political organization and coordination and even a clear political purpose. Therefore the rapid success of the "Tulip Revolution" in ousting President Akayev surprised everyone, including the opposition.

The OSCE's negative interpretation of the 2005 ballot helped contribute to the popular revolt. As the demonstrations grew in size, the OSCE center in Bishkek called on all sides to refrain from using violence in resolving their political differences. It urged all parties to observe the law, maintain constructive dialogue, and respect the basic principles of human rights and civil freedoms. The OSCE then assumed the important role of neutral mediator between President Akayev and the interim government established by the opposition. The OSCE chair-in-office, Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel of Slovenia, stressed that the OSCE did not want to take sides but would defend democratic processes. The OSCE focused on encouraging a political dialogue between Akayev and the new interim government aimed at finding a realistic and legal solution to their differences. When the two sides agreed to have the OSCE as the mediator, the personal representative of the OSCE chair-in-office flew to the country on March 24 to perform that role.

The OSCE played an important role in returning the country to the constitutional path of democratic elections. It sought to end the legal dispute between the two rival parliaments, both of which claimed legitimacy due to their different interpretations of the election results. The OSCE sent officials and legal experts to Bishkek to establish a procedure that would allow for holding early presidential elections. The OSCE recommended amendments to Kyrgyzstan's election legislation and the country's constitution. It also generated an action plan for implementing its strategy against corruption,

which had been a major source of popular discontent that had helped precipitate the political instability. An August 2003 agreement provided for OSCE assistance to reform Kyrgyz law-enforcement bodies. Indeed, Kyrgyzstan was the only Central Asian country to receive such a special police assistance program. The goal was to enhance public safety, improve the work of law-enforcement agencies, their relations with the public, provide them with necessary equipment, and reform the internal security forces to meet international standards. Finally, the OSCE helped coordinate international efforts—including those of the United Nations, the European Union, international financial institutions, and national governments—to help stabilize the situation in Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE helped initiate regular meetings between representatives of embassies, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) active in Kyrgyzstan.

The OSCE continued its reform efforts for several years after the crisis. It provided additional funding for the Kyrgyz police to help them ensure stability in the run-up to the July 2005 presidential elections. On June 1, 2005, the OSCE established a one-year police emergency support program. Police in Bishkek and their subunits acquired 38 vehicles, over 1,000 pieces of communication equipment, special equipment used by dog-handling teams, as well as Xerox machines and computers. Police officers received training from skilled experts to maintain public order. The project also established a police emergency call center. These measures aimed to increase the standards of service provided to citizens, the efficiency of operational measures to stop unlawful activities, and the supervision of officials and subunits responsible for organizing police in response to people's complaints. In July 2005, the OSCE, in collaboration with the UN Development Program, launched a conflict prevention project designed to monitor and alleviate political conflicts related to upcoming elections.

Three negative developments detracted from the subsequent OSCE efforts in Kyrgyzstan. First, Russian officials were suspicious of the March 2005 Tulip Revolution, seeing it as a foreign-inspired putsch organized by a small group of pro-Western politicians who used the OSCE to gain international legitimacy. They criticized the OSCE mission to the March 2005 parliamentary elections for employing double standards that denounced alleged government improprieties while ignoring infringements committed by the opposition.

Second, as Martha Brill Olcott of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace points out, each time nondemocratic elections lead to successful protests, it increases the stakes for the next country that tries to hold nondemocratic elections. Seeing what happened in Kyrgyzstan, following the previous “colored revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine, made other former Soviet governments less inclined to hold their own free elections. Russian officials in particular saw a Western hand behind these three regime changes aimed at weakening Moscow's influence in the former Soviet Union. And third, Kyrgyzstan continued to experience political problems after 2005 despite the OSCE's efforts to place the country on a democratic path. The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) criticized the December 16, 2007, parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan, in which President Kurmanbek Bakiyev's ruling Ak Zhol Party won each of the 90 contested legislative seats, for not meeting international standards.

The 2010 Kazakh-OSCE Crisis Response

The persistence of problems after 2005 set the stage for the April 2010 crisis in Kyrgyzstan, one of the most acute in recent Central Asian history. Widespread popular discontent grew due to the rising costs of food and electricity, government-tolerated nepotism and corruption, and the July 2009 presidential elections, which implausibly gave Bakiyev more than three-fourths of the vote. In late February and March, protests broke out in various cities against price increases in government services. The authorities sought to preempt the rising discontent by arresting opposition leaders. The move backfired and provoked widespread demonstrations in Bishkek and other areas on April 6. The protesters, some of whom used violence, initially demanded the release of the arrested opposition leaders. After the beleaguered security forces responded with deadly force, the protesters expanded in numbers and demands. They overwhelmed the government's defenders and seized key government buildings, including the presidential residence. At least 83 people died and more than 1,500 were wounded in the resulting violence, in which looters joined the initial political protests.

President Bakiyev fled the capital and returned to his power base in Jalalabad, in southern Kyrgyzstan.

Although the April 6–7 violence was not repeated, public safety and ethnic tensions continued to present problems. Of the country's 5.3 million people, three-fourths are ethnic Kyrgyz, but ethnic Russians, Turks, Uzbeks, and other minorities make up the remaining quarter. Additional deaths and injuries resulted when ethnic Kyrgyz forcefully tried to take back land from villages populated by ethnic Russians and Meskhetian Turks. Rural violence also broke out north of Bishkek. Five people were killed on April 19 when violence erupted between landowners and squatters in the village of Mayevka. Concerned members of the international community were especially eager to restore public safety and resolve the power struggle between Bakiyev and the new Kyrgyz provisional administration.

Following Bakiyev's departure from the country on April 15, the provisional government announced that it would hold a referendum on a new constitution, which would rebalance political power from the presidency to the parliament, followed by national elections within six months. Their planned domestic and foreign policies remain less clear, with different government leaders offering differing and sometimes conflicting statements. Tensions persist over such important issues as the degree of state control of the economy, how to reduce tensions between the northern and southern parts of the country, and what should be the main directions of the country's foreign policy. The country's economic situation remains dire as Kyrgyzstan lacks the oil, natural gas, and other natural resources of some of its well-endowed neighbors. The leadership of the transitional authority has remained in flux, with even key posts frequently changing hands. Nonetheless, many of the incumbents have had previous government experience under Akayev or Bakiyev.

The OSCE's response to the April 2010 crisis in Kyrgyzstan differs somewhat in how the organization addressed previous political crises in a member country. Often, the foreign minister of the country holding the OSCE chair would meet with competing political factions to promote agreement on how to resolve the crisis. A common solution was for the competing factions to agree that the OSCE would organize new national elections and help monitor them to ensure that the ballot was free and fair. ODIHR would send

its well-respected electoral observers, while other OSCE bodies, assisted by its members and other international institutions such as the United Nations, would support these efforts. Various NGOs would also dispatch election observers and provide humanitarian assistance. The OSCE followed this process in both the 2005 and the 2010 crises in Kyrgyzstan.

Under Kazakhstan's chairmanship, the OSCE roughly followed this standard crisis management script during the April 2010 crisis, with some modifications. The immediate OSCE priority was to avert further civil strife and restore peaceful economic and political life in Kyrgyzstan. On April 7, the OSCE chair-in-office, Kanat Saudabayev, who is also Kazakhstan's state secretary and foreign minister, conducted a phone conversation with Kyrgyz foreign minister Kadyrbek Sarbayev over the unrest in Kyrgyzstan. Saudabayev conveyed the OSCE's readiness to facilitate dialogue between the incumbent government and the opposition. On the same day, the OSCE representative on freedom of the media, Dunja Mijatovic, called for restoring information flows to journalists who were covering the deteriorating situation in Kyrgyzstan following reports that the authorities were blocking media broadcasts.

On April 8, Saudabayev initiated the multinational conflict resolution process by telephoning a number of senior European and Eurasian officials, including the heads of several other international organizations and foreign ministries as well senior Kyrgyz officials. Saudabayev's most important act was to appoint a special envoy, Zhanybek Karibzhanov, to



go to Kyrgyzstan and manage the crisis in the field. Karibzhanov was an excellent candidate for that position since he is deputy speaker of the Majilis (lower house of parliament) of Kazakhstan and chair of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz interparliamentary group. Using the knowledge and contacts he had previously developed through Kazakh-Kyrgyz exchanges, Karibzhanov rapidly identified and met with key members of the provisional government and other influential members of Kyrgyz society. After he arrived in Bishkek later on April 8, he immediately urged the parties to stop fighting and engage in dialogue. Karibzhanov took a nonjudgmental attitude. Using his status as special envoy of the OSCE chair-in-office, he convened meetings with leaders of the provisional government and representatives of political parties to facilitate dialogue and assess the need for further OSCE involvement.

That same day, UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon attended a special session of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. The Permanent Council is the main decisionmaking body of the 56-country OSCE. The UN secretary general addressed the OSCE Permanent Council. He called for a return to constitutional order and emphasized the need to improve coordination between the United Nations and the OSCE on the ground. While reminding the council that chapter 8 of the UN Charter calls for members to work together to manage crises, he commended the OSCE's role in regional conflict prevention. Ban had fortuitously visited Kyrgyzstan a few days before the April 6 riots as part of a trip to all five Central Asian countries. He therefore had a better understanding and interest in the Kyrgyz crisis than would normally be expected of a UN secretary general.

The international team of special envoys and other international representatives also took shape at this time, with Kazakh diplomats coordinating the multinational response under OSCE leadership. While in Vienna, Ban announced that the UN special envoy, Jan Kubis, would collaborate with Karibzhanov in Kyrgyzstan to help restore constitutional order. Kubis was a valuable choice for this mission since, as OSCE secretary general in 2005, he helped resolve the previous major political crisis in Kyrgyzstan. Also on April 8, the EU special representative for Central Asia, Pierre Morel, joined Karibzhanov in Kyrgyzstan. Ambassador Herbert

Salber, director of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, went to Bishkek to support these efforts. Meanwhile, the OSCE parliamentary president, Joao Soares, expressed concern over the situation in Kyrgyzstan and the ensuing fatalities. He offered the support of the Parliamentary Assembly in facilitating broad-based political dialogue. Soares appointed Kazakh senator Adil Akhmetov, who is also the OSCE personal representative on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, as his special envoy to Kyrgyzstan.

Other foreign governments worked with OSCE representatives to ensure the safety of their nationals living in Kyrgyzstan during the riots and their immediate aftermath. Although few foreigners were injured during the April unrest, some Chinese businessmen suffered property losses when their shops were looted and burned along with most other business establishments in Bishkek. The Chinese-owned Guoying commercial center, a four-story building containing 4,800 square meters for business operations, was completely gutted. Kyrgyz security guards defending the Dangtang Chinese market killed a rioter and injured six others. Some of these Chinese commercial establishments were also attacked during the 2005 Tulip Revolution, when they lost over \$5 million.

After arriving in Kyrgyzstan, Karibzhanov indicated that his first step would be to consult with all influential local and foreign actors. Karibzhanov made clear that unless the parties in conflict were prepared to talk with each other, the intervention of the OSCE or other groups would likely fail. He urged members of the interim government to engage in talks with President Bakiyev, using an international mediator rather than a Kyrgyz national. Although the OSCE declined to mediate the domestic crisis without the approval of both sides, the OSCE Center in Bishkek, following an appeal from the interim administration, began providing assistance to citizen patrols and other bodies seeking to maintain law and order.

After meetings in Bishkek with representatives of the provisional administration, parliament, and civil society, OSCE envoy Karibzhanov reported on April 12 that the discussions had identified spheres where

the OSCE could make an effective contribution. Karibzhanov listed his immediate priorities as guaranteeing public safety, restoring commercial activities, and working with the provisional administration to strengthen the country's legal framework. He reaffirmed these priorities when he met with Roza Otunbayeva, head of the country's interim administration, on April 13. He told her that stability would require restoring the rule of law, public safety, and human rights and working closely with the international community. Summing up his efforts during the five days since his appointment and arrival in Kyrgyzstan, Karibzhanov asserted that he and his team had "established contacts with key political figures and facilitated dialogue between them, formed a comprehensive picture of the situation in the country, and assessed the need for potential enhanced OSCE assistance to Kyrgyzstan." These potential areas for greater OSCE efforts included: "support to public safety, targeted economic and environmental activities, legislative reform, electoral assistance, monitoring of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and support to public participation." Throughout his mediation efforts, Karibzhanov collaborated with his counterparts from the other main international organizations that had sent special envoys to Kyrgyzstan—Jan Kubis of the United Nations, Pierre Morel of the European Union, Adil Akhmetov of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and Valeriy Semerikov of the Collective Security Treaty Organization—as well as the local embassies of important foreign countries.

After a tense week, Saudabayev announced on April 15 that Bakiyev had agreed to leave Kyrgyzstan following an agreement with the interim government. Saudabayev described Bakiyev's departure as an important step toward stability and the prevention of civil war in Kyrgyzstan. The OSCE chair-in-office credited this development to the joint efforts of Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev, U.S. president Barack Obama, and Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, as well as active mediation by the OSCE, the United Nations, and the European Union. It became evident that Kazakh officials played the pivotal role in persuading Bakiyev to abandon his efforts to remain in office, potentially by force of arms, and instead go into exile. They arranged for him and

his immediate family to fly on the evening of April 15 on a Kazakh Air Force plane from the southern Kyrgyz town of Jalalabad to the regional center of Taraz in Kazakhstan. They also helped secure Bakiyev's signed letter of resignation beforehand.

Although the precise guarantees offered to Bakiyev to induce his departure remain unknown, Kazakh officials might have guaranteed his personal safety, as well as that of his immediate family members, many of whom were also threatened with prosecution by members of the new Kyrgyz administration. Bakiyev later thanked Nazarbayev for his assistance in an interview shown on Kazakhstan's Habar channel. On April 16, a few days before Bakiyev's television interview, Nazarbayev offered some details about how the political crisis was resolved. He explained that he feared Bakiyev would rally armed supporters in the south who were prepared to wage a civil war to maintain him in power. The interim administration was also reluctant to compromise and wanted to punish Bakiyev and his allies for their alleged crimes in office. "It was extremely hard to make an agreement with the new government to get flight permission for our planes," Nazarbayev recalled, "and it was hard to convince President Bakiyev to leave the country." With the immediate crisis over, Nazarbayev urged the new government to concentrate on the country's political and economic reconstruction. Astana offered emergency fuel and lubrication materials necessary for planting crops. According to Kazakh officials, this aid was essential because, if Kyrgyz did not plant crops in the spring, there would be another humanitarian crisis in the fall.

Dampening Great Power Rivalry

Not only did Kazakh leaders enjoy good relations with the leading political factions in Kyrgyzstan, but they also had close ties with their counterparts in Russia and the United States, the two largest bilateral aid donors to Kyrgyzstan. Both states had significant regional security interests at stake in the crisis. Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the world to host both a Russian and an American military base, and both facilities are located on the outskirts of Bishkek. The Russian base symbolizes Moscow's preeminent

security role in the region, while the U.S. facility plays a vital role in sustaining American and NATO military operations in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan also borders China's sensitive western province of Xinjiang, which Chinese officials fear could be infiltrated by terrorists and narcotics traffickers. Chinese businesses also have been expanding their economic presence in Kyrgyzstan. These diverse interests could easily have led to intense conflict among the larger powers, but they did not. Both Russian and U.S. officials were content to empower the Kazakh government to resolve the crisis. The Chinese, EU, and other foreign governments, including the other Central Asian republics, also followed Kazakhstan's lead in Kyrgyzstan. On April 9, for instance, the German, French, and Turkish foreign ministers expressed their "full support" for Saudabayev's efforts in Kyrgyzstan and "confirmed their readiness to assist Astana in every possible way."

According to Bakiyev and other sources, many Russian policymakers had grown dissatisfied with the Kyrgyz president. Russia's leaders allegedly believed that Bakiyev had reneged on what Russian officials interpreted as an earlier deal to close the American base at Manas after having received considerable Russian aid. They also believe Bakiyev had double-crossed them on another agreement, reached last year, to establish a new military training center in southern Kyrgyzstan under CSTO auspices and was instead allowing the Pentagon to open its own training facility in Batken. Paradoxically, given the extent of official corruption in Russia, Moscow also alleged embezzlement by the Bakiyev family of millions of dollars of Russian financial aid, as well as fraud committed against Russian companies.

Before the April 2010 uprising, Russian officials had cultivated good ties with the Kyrgyz political opposition and were well positioned to exploit their influence within the country's internal security forces. Russia was the first country to recognize the new Kyrgyz government and the first to offer major financial assistance in the form of a \$20-million grant and a \$30-million concessional loan to help stabilize the economy. Medvedev offered additional economic assistance to Kyrgyzstan after the country established effective governmental institutions

able to maintain order. Russian officials rejected Bakiyev's subsequent efforts to contest the legitimacy of his resignation. The Russian government gained further goodwill in Bishkek by arresting Bakiyev's former interior minister, Moldomusa Kongantiyev, in Moscow and sending him back to Kyrgyzstan for trial for his involvement in the April 7 crackdown.

As OSCE chair, however, President Nazarbayev was able to address Kyrgyzstan as an equal with President Medvedev, something that became apparent when the two men discussed the crisis on the phone on April 8. Russia chaired the CIS and the CSTO. Kazakhstan was a member of both organizations, but chose to rely primarily on the OSCE and its more extensive political mediation tools when addressing the crisis. In a speech at the Brookings Institution on April 13, Medvedev warned that Kyrgyzstan was "on the verge of civil war" and could become a "second Afghanistan." Medvedev seemed sufficiently alarmed by the situation that he apparently accepted the need for Kazakhstan and the OSCE to diffuse the immediate crisis, which would still offer Moscow opportunities to exploit the crisis for long-term strategic gains. For example, officials in the new Kyrgyz government have expressed interest in joining the customs union recently formed by Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

In addition, the Kyrgyz crisis also led President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan to move closer to Russia. Signs of Uzbek concern became evident when



the government closed its border with Kyrgyzstan following the outbreak of widespread riots. On April 20, Karimov made his first visit to Moscow in more than two years. After consulting with Medvedev and other Russian officials, he claimed that their viewpoints coincided completely. In what could be seen as a warning to Karimov and the leaders of other post-Soviet republics that resist Moscow's dominance, Medvedev refused to exclude "the possibility of similar scenarios in ex-Soviet states or other countries—everything is possible in this world, if people are not happy with the authorities, if the authorities do not make efforts to support their people."

During his April 11–14 visit to Washington, Nazarbayev was told by Medvedev, Obama, and leaders of other OSCE member states about their fears over the dangerous situation in Kyrgyzstan. Nazarbayev later related that Obama and Medvedev separately "asked me to work on it and to keep them informed," which he did. The three governments also coordinated their pressure on Bakiyev to resign and leave the country in order to end the immediate standoff.

When Robert Blake, U.S. assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs, visited Bishkek on April 15, he sought assurances that the provisional government was working with the OSCE to draft a new constitution that would result in national elections within the next six months. "The U.S. strongly supports the efforts of the OSCE and the Kazakhstan chair-in-office to find a resolution to the situation involving Mr. Bakiyev," he told a press conference, later adding that "we support the efforts by the interim government and the OSCE special envoy to find a peaceful solution to this impasse in a way that is in accordance with the Kyrgyz constitution." To achieve legitimacy, Blake advised the interim government to work closely with the OSCE to ensure that steps to restore democracy and human rights were in accordance with OSCE standards. He concluded the press conference by observing "that the U.S. has been in close touch with the government of Kazakhstan, both because it is a friend of the U.S., but also because it plays a very important role now as the OSCE chair-in-office, and I think Kazakhstan shares our interest in a return to democracy and in a peaceful outcome of the Bakiyev situation in accordance with the Kyrgyz constitution."

That same day, State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said in Washington that, while the United States had not yet recognized the provisional government, it was encouraged by the fact that Bishkek was committed to OSCE principles regarding democracy and human rights. Crowley confirmed that Nazarbayev, Obama, and Medvedev had discussed the Kyrgyz issue a few days earlier, saying this trilateral consultation "points to strong international cooperation to hopefully resolve a difficult situation peacefully." Crowley added that "this was an international effort led by the OSCE. Kazakhstan is currently the chair of the OSCE, and we're just happy that this has been successfully resolved peacefully." On April 16, Senator Benjamin L. Cardin, cochair of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, in a press release praised Kazakhstan's leadership of the OSCE, especially its government's contribution to securing Bakiyev's peaceful departure. "Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the OSCE has been vital in resolving this crisis."

On April 20, Saudabayev met with interim government officials in Bishkek to address local and regional security concerns. He argued that because the immediate crisis had passed it was time to move toward reestablishing longer-term political and economic stability in the country. Saudabayev told journalists in Bishkek that "the interim government now has conditions for implementing the declared programme, ensuring the supremacy of the law and, afterwards, dealing with the main socio-economic problems." He added that "conditions, which would make it possible to shift to further democratization, carry out constitutional reforms, parliamentary elections and ensure the lawfulness of the new Kyrgyz authorities, will be created only after this." Prior to visiting Bishkek, Saudabayev consulted with UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon, EU high representative for foreign policy Catherine Ashton, Spanish foreign minister Miguel Moratinos (representing the EU presidency), Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, and Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi. These discussions focused on how to integrate the new interim government rapidly into the international community.

Limited International Institutional Alternatives

As in earlier crises, one reason why foreign governments felt comfortable working with the OSCE was that, irrespective of its weaknesses, it was still a more appropriate tool for resolving an internal political crisis within a member country than the competing regional security institutions in Europe or Eurasia. Although some of these organizations possessed greater financial and military resources than the OSCE, they lacked the legitimacy the OSCE had acquired through its longstanding efforts to promote democracy and counter internal conflict in the broader European region. Moreover, Kazakhstan's decision to work primarily through the OSCE in addressing the Kyrgyz crisis further bolstered that organization's primary role. Other countries deferred to Astana's lead during the crisis given Kazakhstan's status as Kyrgyzstan's most influential neighbor, as well as its understanding of the complex nature of Kyrgyz politics. Although Kazakhstan was also a member of several other institutions that could have intervened more vigorously in Kyrgyzstan, the Kazakh government chose to address the crisis in their neighbor mainly under the OSCE's auspices.

The membership of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Russia in the CSTO, together with Armenia, Belarus, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, made that institution a possible player in the Kyrgyz crisis. However, the CSTO declined to intervene in what was seen as an internal political event within a member country rather than an act of foreign aggression requiring a collective response. CSTO secretary general Nikolai Bordyuzha said that the current situation is purely a domestic affair for Kyrgyzstan. The organization's new Collective Rapid Reaction Force, which included special internal security units, was designed to defend members against international terrorist groups, while the regular combat forces aimed to protect members from attacks by foreign militaries. Since these contingents remain under the national jurisdiction of the member states, the dispatch of any force would require an official request of the Kyrgyz government, a collective decision of the CSTO, and the consent of the national government of the unit concerned. Meanwhile, the CIS remained in a general state of

decay. As chair of both the CSTO and the CIS, Russia might have sought to use either institution to exert greater influence on Kyrgyz developments. However, Russian leaders felt comfortable deferring to the OSCE to promote a peaceful resolution while pursuing their own bilateral ties with the new authorities in Bishkek.

The European Union's effort during the Kyrgyz crisis, led by EU special envoy Pierre Morel, was primarily devoted to gathering information and supporting OSCE-led mediation efforts. Morel spent April 9–14 in Kyrgyzstan and returned to Brussels to brief EU ambassadors about the situation on April 14. The EU's high representative for foreign policy, Catherine Ashton, deferred to the OSCE's lead, which does not appear to have included any additional actions besides calling Saudabayev and listening to Morel's reports. On April 20, after the acute crisis ended, Ashton told the European Parliament that the European Union would provide financial and political support to the new Kyrgyz government, which it had yet to recognize, only if the government demonstrated a commitment to democracy and human rights.

Shortly after the riots in Kyrgyzstan, the secretary general of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Muratbek Imanaliyev, issued a statement expressing concern over events in Kyrgyzstan. However, the SCO remained disengaged from the turmoil until after it had largely ended. It was not until April 19 that Imanaliyev visited Kyrgyzstan to meet with officials of the new provisional government. The head of the interim administration, Roza Otunbayeva, pledged to fulfill all of the country's SCO obligations. Acting Kyrgyz defense minister Ismail Isakov tried to reassure Imanaliyev that the interim administration had restored internal and border security, while Imanaliyev promised to work with other SCO members to supply the new government with assistance.

The United Nations assumed a more important role than usual due to Ban's fortuitous visit to Kyrgyzstan a few days before the April 6 riots and his attendance at a session of the OSCE Permanent Council during the early crisis period. For a while, his special envoy, Jan Kubis, offered the only means by which Akaev and the political opposition could communicate. After

Bakiyev left Kyrgyzstan, however, Kubis ended his role, leaving it up to the UN headquarters in New York and the UN Regional Center for Conflict Prevention in Central Asia to help restore normal political life to Kyrgyzstan.

Next Steps

The OSCE Permanent Council advises participating states on the situation in Kyrgyzstan and will continue consultations on plans to restore stability in the country. In the longer term, the OSCE will need to address what Kazakh and OSCE officials have acknowledged are the major political, economic, and social causes of the unrest in Kyrgyzstan. President Nazarbayev, for instance, has repeatedly pointed to the country's lagging economic development as a source of continuing discontent.

The OSCE has offered to support the interim government pending the holding of a referendum on a new constitution that would decrease presidential powers, as well as new national parliamentary elections. Both of these ballots are scheduled for later this year. In the interim, the OSCE is urging the interim authorities to address the country's most urgent social and economic problems. ODIHR and the OSCE representative on freedom of the media are seeking to restore respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Kyrgyzstan. These and other OSCE bodies are also providing assistance to ensure continued public safety, monitor human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promote legislative and other political reforms in preparation for national elections.

There are clear limits on what an intergovernmental body such as the OSCE can do in terms of averting domestic conflict within a member country. Its rules of consensus, as well as the norms about tolerating diversity among members' political systems as long as they broadly conform to democratic norms, make it difficult for the organization to change flawed policies and practices other than publicize them through OSCE reports and the speeches of OSCE officials. That said, the OSCE might review in greater detail what went wrong in Kyrgyzstan after 2005 and try to ensure that similar mistakes are not repeated in the aftermath of the more recent political turnaround. Certainly the OSCE mandate, if fulfilled, would more

effectively address many of the common causes of domestic unrest, including fraudulent elections, economic problems, and state-sanctioned corruption. In addition, continuing unrest in southern Kyrgyzstan that some fear could precipitate a civil war and provoke territorial fracture and the involvement of neighboring countries, underscores the necessity for continuing and effective OSCE involvement.

ABOUT CSIS AND IND

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