



Rereading Charters: Security Organizations' Responses to the June 2010 Conflict in Kyrgyzstan

by Matthew Stein

The June 2010 conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan was a significant event for regional and international security organizations. Kyrgyzstan belongs to several of these organizations: the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations (UN). Kyrgyzstan's government and security services struggled to stop the conflict and requested outside intervention, particularly from the CSTO. However, no forces from any organization deployed to Kyrgyzstan to enforce or keep peace. Instead, these organizations provided humanitarian assistance but did not intervene in a member's domestic problem, per their charters. Some members of Kyrgyzstan's government and the international community criticized these responses; from their viewpoint these organizations did not provide an adequate response. An examination of these organizations' responses to the June conflict alongside their charters can demonstrate their capabilities and constraints.

Kyrgyzstan underwent significant changes in the years prior to the June conflict. The most recent of these happened when Kurmanbek Bakiyev became president in 2005 following the Tulip Revolution. Bakiyev's fellow revolutionaries and the population hoped that political and economic reform would follow. However, over the course of four years, Bakiyev developed into an authoritarian ruler, consolidating control over political, military, and security positions.¹ Bakiyev gave these positions of power to family members and other associates.

Since 2005, disillusionment and frustration with Bakiyev grew among the population and, most importantly, among the opposition in government.² This opposition was made up of key participants of the Tulip Revolution, including Roza Otunbayeva. A combination of events in late 2009 and early 2010 pushed the situation over the edge. The imprisonment of popular former defense minister Ismail Isakov, clampdowns on local media and internet access, and the rise of electricity prices contributed to anger against Bakiyev.³ On April 6-7, 2010 the population staged protests in Bishkek and other cities in northern Kyrgyzstan. The protests in Bishkek turned violent outside the main government building; security forces clashed with protestors on April 7 before losing control, causing Bakiyev to flee to his power base near the

¹ "Kyrgyz Official's Resignation Result of Power Struggle," *Achyk Sayasat*, January 9, 2009; "Kyrgyz Experts Comment on Latest Government Reshuffles," *Bishkek Press Club*, January 23, 2009.

² "Kyrgyz Party Leader Accuses President of Nepotism," *Agym*, September 15, 2006; "Kyrgyz Opposition Leaders Accuses Government of Starting to Build 'Khanate'," *De-Fakto*, June 12, 2008; "Kyrgyz President's Ex-Allies Disappointed with 'Tulip Revolution'," *Interfax*, March 24, 2010.

³ "Kyrgyz Ex-Defense Minister Jailed for Eight Years for Abuse of Office," *Interfax*, January 11, 2010; "Kyrgyz Human Rights Body Accuses Authorities of Blocking Websites," *Bishkek Press Club*, March 12, 2010; Kyrgyz Leader Says Increase in Electricity Bills 'Forced' Measure," *Kyrgyz Television 1*, February 18, 2010; Russia sets oil export duty for Kyrgyzstan," *AKIpress Online*, April 5, 2010.

city of Jalal-Abad. He remained in country until April 15, when he flew to Kazakhstan and eventual exile in Belarus. He officially resigned his office on April 16.⁴

The interim government, headed by now president Otunbayeva, had a fragile hold on security in Kyrgyzstan, especially in the southern regions. Pro-Bakiyev supporters broke into and took over government buildings in the Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Batken Provinces on May 13. Government forces retook the buildings within a day, allegedly with the help of Uzbek community leaders from these provinces.⁵ On the night and early morning of June 9-10, a fight broke out between Kyrgyz and Uzbek youth at a casino near the city of Osh. Over the following days the fight turned increasingly violent and spread across the Osh Province and into the city and province of Jalal-Abad.⁶ The level of violence overwhelmed government security forces. There were dozens of reported murders and rapes, and groups of people looted and destroyed businesses and homes in various cities, towns, and neighborhoods across the two provinces.⁷ The groups that fought each other were mainly ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz. Certain groups targeted security forces; in one incident they hijacked an armored personnel carrier and disarmed the crew. The government confirmed the hijacking and other reports of armed groups.⁸

The government of Uzbekistan reinforced its border with Kyrgyzstan, but allowed mainly ethnic Uzbek refugees. An estimated 75,000 refugees crossed into Uzbekistan.⁹ The government of Kyrgyzstan imposed curfews in Osh and Jalal-Abad, and even issued a shoot-to-kill order to police to stop law breakers on June 12.¹⁰ The same day, President Otunbayeva formally appealed to Russia for help. Kyrgyzstan's government requested peacekeepers, according to media reports.¹¹ However, in Otunbayeva's official statement on June 12, she stated the need for "*tret'tikh cil*" (third forces). This did not specify peacekeepers or peace enforcers. Given the urgency of the situation, it is possible to interpret this as peace enforcers, which would have meant utilizing a reaction force either from the CSTO or the Russian military. In any case, the charters of these organizations determined the response, which will be explored in next section.

A minister in the Kyrgyz government made a statement on June 14 that a "third party" was responsible for starting the conflict. He stated that Bakiyev hired mercenaries from Tajikistan to shoot both ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in order to start an ethnic conflict, though he later said those involved have no nationality or country of origin.¹² There was also speculation that Bakiyev hired members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) or another Islamic

⁴ "Bakiyev Has Left Kyrgyzstan – OSCE," *Interfax*, April 15, 2010; "New Kyrgyz Govt Gets Bakiyev's Resignation Letter," *ITAR-TASS*, April 16, 2010.

⁵ "New Kyrgyz Authorities' Supporters Retake Local Government Building in South," *Interfax*, May 14, 2010.

⁶ "Large Youth Groups Gathering on Osh Outskirts Despite Curfew," *ITAR-TASS*, June 10, 2010.

⁷ "Witnesses Say Troops Not in Control of Situation in Kyrgyz South," *24.kg*, June 11, 2010.

⁸ "Mob Hijacks Armored Vehicle in Kyrgyz South Despite Curfew," *24.kg*, June 11, 2010.

⁹ "Over 75,000 Refugees from Kyrgyzstan Cross Uzbek Border," *RIA-Novosti*, June 13, 2010.

¹⁰ "Kyrgyz Police Have Right to Shoot to Kill During Curfew," *AKIpress Online*, June 12, 2010.

¹¹ "Russian Armed Forces Not To Be Used To Settle Situation In Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 12, 2010; "Kyrgyzstan Asks Russia for Peacekeepers as Violence Goes On (Update)," *RIA Novosti*, June 12, 2010, <http://en.rian.ru/news/20100612/159400063.html>, (accessed June 29, 2010).

¹² "Tajik Nationals May Be Linked to Disturbances in Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 14, 2010; "Kyrgyzstan: Ferghana.ru Sources Confirm the Involvement of Tajik Contractors in the Osh Massacre," *Fergana.ru*, June 15, 2010, <http://enews.ferghananews.com/news.php?id=1739&mode=snews>, (accessed June 28, 2011).

terrorist organization to start the conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan.¹³ The government of Kyrgyzstan maintained that a third party was responsible for the violence.¹⁴

While it is possible that criminals from outside Kyrgyzstan were involved, the IMU made no claims of fighting in the June conflict. This is in contrast to the demonstrations of strength the IMU have posted to their website from mid-2010 into 2011.¹⁵ The IMU announced solidarity and condolences to Muslim victims in Kyrgyzstan in a statement on June 15, 2010.¹⁶ The only other IMU announcement came on January 14, 2011, in Kyrgyz, where they stated solidarity with Muslims in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia.¹⁷ The government finally contained the violence by June 15-16 in Osh and in Jalal-Abad. Only sporadic incidents in the two provinces were reported after this.¹⁸ The final death toll reported over 400 killed; a human rights group in Kyrgyzstan compiled a list that is periodically updated.¹⁹ Some estimates double that number, since many of the deaths went unreported.²⁰

While Kyrgyzstan's government and security forces ultimately restored order in the south, their requests for outside forces were not met. These organizations provided humanitarian aid but no peacekeeping or peace enforcing group. There was a general sense that the organizations, particularly the CSTO, failed to appropriately respond to the conflict.²¹ Before any kind of assessment can be made, it is necessary to look at their responses alongside their charters.

¹³ Richard Orange, "Kyrgyzstan Troubles to Spur Rise of Al-Qaeda in Central Asia," *The Telegraph*, June 28, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kyrgyzstan/7836073/Kyrgyzstan-troubles-to-spur-rise-of-al-Qaeda-in-Central-Asia.html>, (accessed June 28, 2011); "Kyrgyz Security Chief: Bakiyev Family, Islamic Militants Behind Ethnic Clashes," *RFE/RL*, June 24, 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Security_Chief_Bakiev_Family_Islamic_Militants_Behind_Ethnic_Clashes/2081318.html, (accessed June 28, 2011).

¹⁴ The Kyrgyz Government also cited third parties as responsible for starting the violence in a National Commission report; this commission investigated causes of the events, and again cited this view in their response to the Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC). For background on the Kyrgyz National Commission, the KIC and the Kyrgyz Government response to it, see: "Kyrgyzstan: Glava Natskomissii Po Izucheniiu Iiun'skikh Sobytiĭ - O Brat'yakh-Uzbekakh, Batyrove i Natsional'nom Dostoinstve, Kyrgyzstan: The Head of the National Commission for the Study of the June Events – About Uzbek-Brothers, Batyrov, and National Dignity," *Fergana.ru*, January 24, 2011, <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=6876>, (accessed June 24, 2011); "Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, About KIC," <http://www.k-ic.org/en/about-kic.html>, (accessed June 24, 2011) and "Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission, Report, Comments of the Kyrgyz Government," http://www.kic.org/images/stories/kg_comments_english_final.pdf, (accessed June 24, 2011).

¹⁵ For information on the IMU's activities, including videos and photos, see: <http://furqon.com/>, (accessed June 29, 2011).

¹⁶ "O'zbekiston Islomiy Harakatining Racmiy Notiqi Abdul Fattoh Ahmadiyning Qirg'iziston Janubidagi Qonli Fojialar Borasidagi Baenoti, The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's official speaker Abdul Fattoh Ahmadiy's statement on the bloody tragedies in southern Kyrgyzstan," June 15, 2010, <http://furqon.com/Maqolalar/ahmadiy06.2010.html>, (accessed June 29, 2011).

¹⁷ "Kyrgyztandagy (sic) Akyrky Okuyalarga Karata Kaïryhuu, To Address the Recent Events in Kyrgyzstan," January 14, 2011, <http://furqon.com/Maqolalar/abbas-mansur-kg.html>, (accessed June 29, 2011).

¹⁸ "Night in Kyrgyzstan's Osh Was Relatively Calm – Police Head," *ITAR-TASS*, June 16, 2010; "Kyrgyzstani Soldiers Restore Order in Osh for Now," *Kommersant Online*, June 16, 2010; "Curfew hours reduced in Kyrgyz southwest," *24.kg*, June 16, 2010.

¹⁹ See: Kylm Shamy, Center for Defenders of Human Rights, "Spisok Umershikh," List of the Dead, January 27, 2011, http://www.ksh.kg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=288:2011-01-27-14-01-52&catid=48:2010-05-23-06-38-19&Itemid=61, (accessed June 30, 2011).

²⁰ "Several Hundred People Killed in Clashes in Kyrgyzstan South – ICRS," *ITAR-TASS*, June 16, 2010.

²¹ Robert Coalson, "Six Months Into OSCE Chair, Kazakhstan Found Wanting in Kyrgyz Events," *RFE/RL*, June 30, 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Six_Months_Into_OSCE_Chair_Kazakhstan_Found_Wanting_In_Kyrgyz_Events/2086883.html, (accessed May 19, 2011); Hugh Raiser, "CST D'Oh!," *Eurasianet.org*, August 16, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61752>, (accessed June 2, 2011); Sergei Blagov, "Russia, CSTO, SCO Struggle to Settle Kyrgyz Unrest," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, June 28, 2010, http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Bttnews%5D=36539&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=484&no_cache=1, (accessed June 30, 2011).

The Responses and Charters

Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

The CSTO is an intergovernmental military organization that formed following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The former Soviet republics created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) when they became independent, mainly to cooperate on economic and security transition issues. Within the framework of the CIS, several former Soviet republics created and signed the Collective Security Treaty in 1992. This treaty later turned into the CSTO in 2002. Current members of the CSTO are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.²²

The CSTO is the most important military or security organization to which Kyrgyzstan belongs. Through CSTO agreements Kyrgyzstan is able to purchase weapons and equipment from the Russian defense industry at the same prices the Russian military pays.²³ The CSTO is also the main organization with which Kyrgyzstan's military has consistently conducted military exercises, in particular the *Rubezh* (Frontier) joint training exercises. Kyrgyzstan's military participated in *Rubezh* exercises in 2004-2008 and 2010.²⁴ In addition to collective exercises, the CSTO created the Collective Rapid Reaction Force (*Kollektivnyye Sily Operativnogo Reagirovaniya* KSOR) in 2009. The purpose of this force is to improve security of member states against terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and disaster response. KSOR held a collective military exercise in Kazakhstan in October 2009, including troops from Kyrgyzstan.²⁵ It was only logical that the Kyrgyz government appealed to the CSTO first for assistance in stopping the June violence.

The CSTO very likely became aware of and followed the situation in Kyrgyzstan when it started on June 9 and 10, but did not make a statement until June 11th. Russian president Dmitry Medvedev announced on June 11 that the situation in Osh did not require the involvement of CSTO armed forces.²⁶ As violence continued in Osh and spread to Jalal-Abad on June 12, Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva formally appealed for peacekeepers, as Kyrgyz authorities were not able to control the situation.²⁷ CSTO Secretary General Nikolai Bordyuzha talked with representatives of member states, and a spokeswoman for Bordyuzha said that peacekeepers can

²² Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Basic Facts," http://www.odkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm (accessed April 11, 2011).

²³ "Gendarme of Eurasia," *Kommersant*, October 8, 2007, http://www.kommersant.com/p812422/CIS_CSTO_Russia_Lebedev/ (accessed April 13, 2011).

²⁴ "Rubezh-2004 Military Exercise Over in Kyrgyzstan," *Pravda.ru*, August 6, 2004, <http://english.pravda.ru/news/world/06-08-2004/58505-0/>, (accessed May 19, 2011); "Counter-terrorist Exercise 'Rubezh-2005' to End in Tajikistan Soon," *RIA Novosti*, April 6, 2005, <http://en.rian.ru/onlinenews/20050406/39697501.html>, (accessed May 19, 2011); Richard Weitz, "The CSTO Deepens Military Ties," *CACI-Analyst*, October 18, 2006, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4252>, (accessed May 19, 2011); Erica Marat, "Fissures in the Force – Multilateral Co-operation Can Only Go So Far," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 1, 2007, <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/Marat0507.pdf>, (accessed May 19, 2011); "Former Soviet States Boost Defense Capability in Joint Drills," *RIA Novosti*, July 22, 2008, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20080722/114629594.html>, (accessed May 19, 2011); "Joint CSTO Troops Fight 'Terrorist Attack,'" *RIA Novosti*, April 28, 2010, <http://en.rian.ru/video/20100428/158782610.html>, (accessed June 30, 2011).

²⁵ "Russia Ratifies Regional Security Force Agreement," *RIA Novosti*, December 8, 2010, <http://en.rian.ru/russia/20101208/161688635.html> (accessed April 26, 2011).

²⁶ "Medvedev Rules Out Use of CSTO Forces in Kyrgyzstan," *Interfax*, June 11, 2010.

²⁷ "Russian Armed Forces Not To Be Used To Settle Situation In Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 12, 2010.

be sent to southern Kyrgyzstan only through the CSTO charter, which includes coordination with the UN.²⁸

Bordyuzha was likely referring to Articles 3 and 5 in the CSTO's charter, under Chapter II, Purposes and Principles. Article 3 states "The purposes of the Organization are to strengthen peace and international and regional security and stability and to ensure the collective defense of the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the member States, in the attainment of which the member States shall give priority to political measures. Article 5 states "The Organization shall operate on the basis of strict respect for the independence, voluntary participation and equality of rights and obligations of the member States and non-interference in matters falling within the national jurisdiction of the member States."²⁹

Additionally, Article 4 of the CSTO Treaty on Collective Security states "If an aggression is committed against one of the States Parties by any state or a group of states, it will be considered as an aggression against all the States Parties to this Treaty. In case an act of aggression is committed against any of the States Parties, all the other States Parties will render it necessary assistance, including military one, as well as provide support with the means at their disposal through an exercise of the right to collective defense in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter. The States Parties will immediately inform the United Nations Security Council of the measures taken in accordance with this Article. While taking these measures, the States Parties will abide by the relevant provisions of the UN Charter."³⁰ Any military action taken by the CSTO would be conducted through the UN Charter and Security Council.

As the situation in Kyrgyzstan worsened on June 13, Bordyuzha and the secretaries of the Security Council of the CSTO met and offered aid to Kyrgyz law enforcement agencies. Bordyuzha stated that "They have enough personnel, but lack equipment and hardware, helicopters, surface vehicles, supplies, and fuel."³¹ The secretaries followed up with a statement that said "The efforts of the Interim Government of the Kyrgyz Republic are as yet insufficient to stabilize the situation in the country."³²

As violence in Osh and Jalal-Abad continued and then peaked on June 15, the CSTO affirmed its position of providing Kyrgyzstan's security forces with supplies and not peacekeepers to help stabilize the situation.³³ On June 16, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that the CSTO would also help Kyrgyzstan identify the instigators behind the unrest. He mentioned again that the decision not to send peacekeepers was based on the articles of the CSTO.³⁴ On June 25, CSTO leadership visited Kyrgyzstan and reiterated its decision to not send a peacekeeping force to southern Kyrgyzstan. The leadership pledged to work with and help Kyrgyz security agencies.³⁵ While the CSTO did not deploy any peacekeeping force, the Russian government received criticism because it reinforced its airbase in Kant, Kyrgyzstan

²⁸ "Moscow Says Peacekeepers Can Go to Kyrgyzstan Only Under CSTO (sic) Charter," *ITAR-TASS*, June 12, 2010.

²⁹ Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Documents, Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organization," http://www.dkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm, (accessed June 23, 2011).

³⁰ Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Documents, TREATY on Collective Security," http://www.odkb.gov.ru/start/index_aengl.htm, (accessed June 30, 2011).

³¹ "CSTO Offers Equipment, Fuel For Kyrgyz Law Enforcers," *ITAR-TASS*, June 14, 2010.

³² "Kyrgyz Government's Steps Insufficient," *RIA-Novosti*, June 14, 2010.

³³ "CSTO Plans to Provide Kyrgyzstan with Non-Lethal Law-Enforcement Equipment," *Interfax*, June 15, 2010.

³⁴ "Russia to Consider CSTO Norms in Decision on Peacekeepers," *ITAR-TASS*, June 16, 2010.

³⁵ "CSTO Sees No Need for Sending Peacekeepers to Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 25, 2010; "CIS Security Body to Send Working Group to Help Kyrgyz Security Forces," *Interfax*, June 25, 2010.

during the April 2010 Revolution and the June conflict.³⁶ Russia claimed that these forces are for the protection of service members and their families, not for settling the situation in southern Kyrgyzstan.³⁷

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

The SCO, originally called the “Shanghai Five”, is a security organization formed in 1996 with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan as original members. Uzbekistan joined in 2001 and the organization renamed itself the SCO. India, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan are observer states in the organization. The SCO mainly focuses on security issues among member states, particularly on border security. In more recent years the focus widened to include economic and trade cooperation.³⁸ The SCO is an important security organization to for Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan’s military participated in several military exercises related to the SCO, including a joint exercise with China in 2002, and exercises with SCO members in 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2010.³⁹ The SCO does not have a military reaction force to respond to a crisis. The closest mechanism to a conflict response unit is the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure, a separate section in the SCO, not a military unit. It can facilitate cooperation among member states to conduct operations and other activities in fighting terrorism, separatism, and extremism.⁴⁰ The SCO’s charter, specifically Article 2, states that it will not interfere with the internal affairs of a member state.⁴¹

Leadership of the SCO did not convene during the June conflict, and, coincidentally, the organization held its annual summit in Tashkent on June 10-11, 2010. The official response was not unlike the CSTO’s: leaders acknowledged the situation and announced that SCO members would provide humanitarian aid.⁴² Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev said that helping Kyrgyzstan will be a top priority during Kazakhstan’s chairmanship of the SCO in 2010-2011.⁴³ On June 20, the SCO member states appealed for stability in southern Kyrgyzstan and noted the need to provide emergency humanitarian aid to refugees of the violence residing in Uzbekistan.⁴⁴

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

The OSCE is a security organization that grew out of the Helsinki Accords in 1975; a declaration to improve relations between the communist bloc and the west. It formally became the OSCE in 1995. Member states stretch from North America to Europe and to the former Soviet Union, including Kyrgyzstan, which joined in 1992. The OSCE views security as having

³⁶ “Russian Paratroops Dispatched to Kyrgyzstan Carry Small Arms,” *ITAR-TASS*, April 8, 2010; “Russia Confirms Reinforcing Troops in Kyrgyzstan,” *ITAR-TASS*, June 13, 2010.

³⁷ “Russian Armed Forces Not To Be Used To Settle Situation In Kyrgyzstan,” *ITAR-TASS*, June 12, 2010.

³⁸ The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, “Brief introduction to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation,” <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/brief.asp> (accessed April 11, 2011).

³⁹ Yan Wei, “Partnership in Security,” *Beijing Review*, August 9, 2007; Ding Ying, “Practicing for Peace,” *Beijing Review*, September 23, 2010.

⁴⁰ The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, “The Executive Committee of the Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure,” <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/AntiTerrorism.asp> (accessed April 26, 2011).

⁴¹ See: “Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Article 2, Principles,” <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=69>, (accessed May 17, 2011).

⁴² “SCO Countries to Give Aid to Kyrgyzstan – Russia Foreign Minister,” *ITAR-TASS*, June 11, 2010.

⁴³ “Kazakh Leader Urges Shanghai Bloc State to Help Kyrgyzstan,” *Interfax-Kazakhstan Online*, June 11, 2010.

⁴⁴ The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, “Chronicle of main events at SCO in 2010,” <http://www.sectsco.org/EN/show.asp?id=255> (accessed April 21, 2011).

three dimensions: politico-military, economic and environmental, and human.⁴⁵ The OSCE Centre in Bishkek has been involved in politico-military activities including border management, conflict prevention, and policing. Unlike the other previously mentioned security organizations, the OSCE does not hold collective military exercises.⁴⁶ The organization would not have provided peacekeepers, but because of its programs it is a security organization with a vested interest in Kyrgyzstan. Significantly Kyrgyzstan's neighbor, Kazakhstan, held the OSCE chairmanship during the conflict. This was the first time a non-European country held this position.

The OSCE first responded to the conflict on June 13, when OSCE Chairman Kanat Saudabayev sent his representative to Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁷ This OSCE representative met with President Otunbayeva on June 14.⁴⁸ While violence continued on June 15, OSCE member states convened a special session of the Permanent Council in Vienna, urging ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz to refrain from violence.⁴⁹ After the majority of the violence ended, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly announced it was coordinating with the European Union (EU) to deploy a police force in southern Kyrgyzstan. The projected force would not be peacekeepers in military terms, but rather offer technical advice.⁵⁰ An evaluation team from the OSCE arrived in Kyrgyzstan on June 25 to extend support for post-conflict restoration efforts, specifically whether or not to deploy a police force in Osh and Jalal-Abad.⁵¹

About a month later the OSCE met and made plans to send a police mission to southern Kyrgyzstan to prevent further destabilization. The OSCE mission would include 52 police and security personnel that would be tasked with training Kyrgyz police. They will monitor and advise police departments in the Osh and Jalal-Abad regions.⁵² On September 1, President Otunbayeva's office announced that talks on the OSCE police deployment would continue despite a disagreement over the four-month length of deployment. Otunbayeva said the country was interested in the help of the police group and would not refuse it.⁵³ However, there was resistance among members of the government. On November 19 the OSCE agreed to adapt the deployment of police advisors to Kyrgyzstan. The deployment turned into a new project to help Kyrgyzstan's Interior Ministry over a period of one year; there would be no police mission of advisors.⁵⁴ Essentially, the OSCE cancelled the mission because the Kyrgyz government and population would not accept a foreign police presence. The new project would add to OSCE police reform programs already in place.

United Nations (UN)

The UN is the most internationally recognized military or security organization to which Kyrgyzstan belongs. Formed in 1945 following the end of the Second World War, the UN is made up of member states from around the world, including Kyrgyzstan, which joined in 1992.

⁴⁵ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "History," <http://www.osce.org/who/87> (accessed April 11, 2011), "What we do," <http://www.osce.org/what> (accessed April 11, 2011).

⁴⁶ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "OSCE Centre in Bishkek: Policing, and Politico-military activities," <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/43316>, <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/44392> (accessed April 21, 2011).

⁴⁷ "OSCE Chair-in-office Sending Representative to Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 13, 2010.

⁴⁸ "Kyrgyz Interim Leader, OSCE Envoy Discuss Situation in Troubled South," *24.kg*, June 14, 2010.

⁴⁹ "OSCE Urges All Communities in Kyrgyzstan to Stop Fighting," *Interfax*, June 15, 2010.

⁵⁰ "Finnish MP: OSCE Weighs Police Mission to Kyrgyzstan," *YLE.fi*, June 23, 2010.

⁵¹ "OSCE Police Evaluation Mission Arrives in Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 25, 2010.

⁵² "OSCE Police Mission in Southern Kyrgyzstan May Avert New Riots," *ITAR-TASS*, July, 23, 2010.

⁵³ "Kyrgyz Official Says Talks on OSCE Police Mission to Continue," *Kabar Online*, September 1, 2010.

⁵⁴ "OSCE Participating States Agree to Adapt Police Support to Kyrgyzstan," *UzReport.com*, November 19, 2010.

The UN is involved in a wide range of activities and programs, some of which are military or security focused. Kyrgyzstan is not involved with the UN in the same kind of security or military activities as it is with the other three organizations. Perhaps the most interesting, or even relevant, UN activity Kyrgyzstan participates in that relates to the June conflict is peacekeeping operations. Kyrgyzstan has been contributing personnel to UN peacekeeping operations in the past few years; in 2010 Kyrgyzstan sent ten military police and nine military experts on UN operations.⁵⁵ The UN does not require member states to provide peacekeepers; Kyrgyzstan volunteered to send its forces on these missions.⁵⁶

While the UN may not have been Kyrgyzstan's first option for a peacekeeping force, the issue received notice from various entities within the organization. On June 11, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for calm in Osh and urged Kyrgyzstan's government to take measures to ensure the peaceful coexistence of all citizens in Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁷ On June 13, the UN sent a humanitarian envoy to Bishkek.⁵⁸ It was not until June 14, however, that the UN Security Council met in a closed session to discuss the situation.⁵⁹ On the same day, the UN office in Bishkek urged the warring factions in southern Kyrgyzstan to stop the violence.⁶⁰ This statement was a response to members of Kyrgyz human rights organizations that held a rally outside the UN office asking for the UN to send peacekeepers.⁶¹

The UN Security Council made a formal announcement on June 15 condemning the violence and calling for the restoration of the rule of law. Council members also said that they supported efforts to deliver aid to the region.⁶² Additionally, President of the Security Council Claude Heller, announced that the Security Council supported actions taken by UN officials and members of regional organizations for improving the situation in the region.⁶³ No mention was made about a UN peacekeeping force deploying to Kyrgyzstan or coordinating with the CSTO to deploy a force.

The Kyrgyz View of the Responses

The June 2010 conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan demonstrated how these security organizations respond to a crisis in a member state. The CSTO's response not to send a reaction force, but instead supply other forms of aid, should not have come as a surprise. The purpose of the organization is to respond to outside threats to a member or an incident that threatens territorial integrity and sovereignty. The CSTO followed its charter in the decision not to deploy peacekeepers, specifically the multi-national KSOR, even if there are different interpretations or expectations of Articles 3 and 5. The SCO's response was similar; the organization's charter says that it will not interfere with the internal affairs of a member state. While Kyrgyzstan was very likely frustrated that no reaction force deployed to assist in stopping the violence, the

⁵⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Resources: Publications, Year in Review 2010, p. 80,"

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/publications/yir/yir2010.pdf>, (accessed April 25, 2011).

⁵⁶ United Nations Peacekeeping, "Peacekeeping Operations: Financing Peacekeeping, How are peacekeepers compensated?," <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>, (accessed April 25, 2011).

⁵⁷ "UN Secretary General Calls For Tranquility in Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 11, 2010.

⁵⁸ "OSCE Chair-in-office Sending Representative to Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 13, 2010.

⁵⁹ "UN Security Council to Hold Closed-Door Consultations on Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 14, 2010.

⁶⁰ "UN Office in Kyrgyzstan Urges Warring Parties to Stop Violence," *ITAR-TASS*, June 14, 2010.

⁶¹ "Rally in Bishkek Urges UN Peacekeeping Assistance," *ITAR-TASS*, June 14, 2010.

⁶² "UN Security Council Condemns Violence in Kyrgyzstan," *ITAR-TASS*, June 15, 2010.

⁶³ "World Community Should Help Kyrgyz Government," *ITAR-TASS*, June 15, 2010.

interim government expressed gratitude to Russian, CSTO and SCO member states in an official statement on June 16. The UN, EU, and Uzbekistan were also thanked in the statement.⁶⁴

The OSCE, after July meetings in Vienna, planned to deploy a 52-member unarmed police force to Osh and Jalal-Abad tasked with the training and advising of Kyrgyz police.⁶⁵ In response to this, acting Defense Minister Ismail Isakov said that the CSTO and SCO had a more suitable framework for security cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. Isakov spoke out against the OSCE police deployment because in his view, Kyrgyz and OSCE forces “have totally different mentalities, laws, and levels of military training.”⁶⁶

The OSCE’s response to the Kyrgyzstan conflict was similar to that of the other organizations; it did not intervene to stop the violence. It planned the deployment of a police force over a month after the conflict ended. This response followed along with the OSCE’s activities, particularly in its policing efforts in post-conflict regions.⁶⁷ On July 23 people in Osh protested against the deployment, saying they did not want their country to turn out like Serbia, with a part of the country splitting off like Kosovo did.⁶⁸ On October 5, members of a political movement threw animal dung at the OSCE building in Bishkek.⁶⁹ The government of Kyrgyzstan appeared to support the police deployment, but never signed a memorandum with the OSCE allowing the police advisors to come. The OSCE then changed the mission, essentially cancelling it and continuing with previous police assistance programs.⁷⁰

The UN response attracted the least amount of attention from the Kyrgyz. If a UN peacekeeping mission had deployed, it would have taken place only after careful consideration.⁷¹ Most significantly, few in Kyrgyzstan had expectations for a UN response. Only a small group of people from a Kyrgyz human rights organization gathered at the UN building in an appeal for UN peacekeepers.⁷² The UN Security Council’s meeting and response on June 15 received little attention in Kyrgyzstan, other than the gratitude expressed by the interim government.

One Kyrgyz official, Deputy Prime Minister Azimbek Beknazarov, criticized the CSTO and SCO, saying “...we appealed for help to the CSTO and the SCO through official channels the same day (June 11), but we were ignored.”⁷³ Beknazarov also criticized the OSCE police deployment, saying that “...many people in Kyrgyzstan are against foreign police.”⁷⁴

Considerations

The four security organizations responded to the conflict in Kyrgyzstan within their respective charters. The CSTO and SCO do not interfere in a member state’s internal conflict,

⁶⁴ “Kyrgyz Government Thanks Russia, UN, EU, CSTO, SCO for Support,” *ITAR-TASS*, June 16, 2010.

⁶⁵ “OSCE Police Mission in Southern Kyrgyzstan May Avert New Riots,” *ITAR-TASS*, July, 23, 2010.

⁶⁶ “Kyrgyz Defense Minister Against OSCE Police Mission Deployment,” *Interfax*, July 20, 2010.

⁶⁷ See: “OSCE, What We Do, Policing,” <http://www.osce.org/what/policing>, (accessed May 18, 2011).

⁶⁸ “People in Kyrgyz South Protest Against Deploying OSCE Police,” *Interfax*, July 23, 2010.

⁶⁹ “Kyrgyz Protestors Throw Dung at OSCE Office in Capital,” *AKIpress Online*, October 5, 2010.

⁷⁰ “OSCE Participating States Agree to Adapt Police Support to Kyrgyzstan,” *UzReport.com*, November 19, 2010; Also see the OSCE announcement: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, “OSCE Chairmanship, Press Release, OSCE Participating States Agree to Adapt Police Support to Kyrgyzstan,” <http://www.osce.org/cio/74164>, (accessed June 23, 2011).

⁷¹ “United Nations Peacekeeping, Peacekeeping Operations, Forming a New Operation,” <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/newoperation.shtml>, (accessed May 19, 2011).

⁷² “Rally in Bishkek Urges UN Peacekeeping Assistance,” *ITAR-TASS*, June 14, 2010.

⁷³ “Kyrgyz Deputy Prime Minister Criticizes CSTO, SCO,” *Interfax*, August 11, 2010.

⁷⁴ “Kyrgyz Official Criticizes Foreign Partners,” *RFERL*, August 11, 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Official_Criticizes_Foreign_Partners/2125164.html, (accessed June 2, 2011).

no matter what security cooperation or capabilities they highlight or statements they make. They saw this as Kyrgyzstan's issue to deal with, which it ultimately did; Kyrgyz security forces contained most of the violence within a week. The OSCE can provide police advisors following a conflict, but only in situations that improve police capabilities and under acceptable terms to the host nation. The OSCE planned a police mission, but cancelled it when Kyrgyzstan could not agree to the set of terms for deployment. The UN can provide peacekeepers, but only after a lengthy process involving assessments and a resolution from the UN Security Council, among several other steps. In the end, the UN never really became a factor in solving this conflict.

Why the criticism of the responses? One possible explanation these organizations, particularly the CSTO and to some extent the SCO, took blame for inadequate responses is that they created an impression of cooperation that Kyrgyzstan may have misunderstood. The *Rubezh* exercise as recently as April 2010 included an enemy force (an armed non-state actor) and circumstances (conflict among a civilian population) similar to what happened in June, but the exercises included an enemy that penetrated the border of a member country. Only Kyrgyz officials saw this as a regional, not internal, incident, and cited a third party as responsible for instigating the violence. While there little evidence to support this claim, it is important not to dismiss it, but perhaps to look at it differently. One recurring factor of the June conflict was that the violence, among other crimes, appeared to be opportunistic. Both major ethnic groups, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, fought and suffered in the conflict. Whether they or a third party started it is not as important as the fact that a non-state actor was involved.

There is certainly room in these security organizations for reform, and they need more mechanisms to adapt to new threats. Each of these organizations has a vested interest in a stable and secure Kyrgyzstan, particularly with ongoing operations and the situation in Afghanistan. The fact that the CSTO, OSCE, and UN all held meetings in response to the situation, besides the coincidental SCO summit, demonstrates at least an acknowledgement of the conflict; they did not completely ignore Kyrgyzstan. The conflict ultimately presents an opportunity for these, and possibly other security organizations, to fill in the gap of responding to conflict in the Central Asia region with non-state actors, even if the actors are the population.

Matthew Stein is an analyst at the Foreign Military Studies Office, at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. He was a National Security Education Program (NSEP) Boren Fellow in Kazakhstan from 2008-09.

This is a single article excerpt of material published in [Small Wars Journal](#).
Published by and COPYRIGHT © 2011, Small Wars Foundation.

Permission is granted to print single copies for personal, non-commercial use. Select non-commercial use is licensed via a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 3.0 license per our [Terms of Use](#).

No FACTUAL STATEMENT should be relied upon without further investigation on your part sufficient to satisfy you in your independent judgment that it is true.

Please consider [supporting Small Wars Journal](#).

