

Olivier Korthals Altes
Associate research fellow OSCE Academy
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Abstract: SSR assistance by European actors in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Security Sector Reform (SSR) is a widely used concept in academic and policy circles of international development and postwar reconstruction, and basically entails the process of creating or rebuilding modern, efficient and professional security institutions that takes into account the democratic standards and the principles of good governance. Although international organizations such as the UN, OECD and EU have significantly conceptualized SSR, its empirical evidence of actual impact remains limited. Nor have universal frameworks or indices of SSR been developed yet to actively measure the effects of SSR programs in concerned settings. In my research, I aim to explore this so called policy-practice gap of EU-OSCE initiated SSR programs in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and provide explanations of these findings in relation to theories of state building. Historically, states and societies have been formed through continuous series of compromises, adaptations, contestations and negotiations rather than planned or coordinated management solutions. As SSR processes cannot be seen apart from societal and foreign developments, it is difficult to indicate causal links between certain policy inputs and SSR outcomes. While the OSCE is the main provider of SSR in Central Asia, the EU mainly funds their cooperative programs. During my master thesis research, I will use different qualitative research methodologies. I firstly conduct document analysis of EU and OSCE policy formulations and implementations of SSR programs. Then, I will put forward a conceptual framework in consultation with local experts and stakeholders, to provide a) a contextual analysis of the regional dynamics of Central Asia, the socio-political contexts and engaged security sector actors in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, and b) SSR indices to measure progress on four SSR components, namely 1) border management, 2) drug trafficking, 3) counterterrorism and 4) democratic governance and state stability. Consequently, I will analyze links between these SSR developments and EU-OSCE initiated programs. Finally, I argue that SSR programs should mostly focus on the political aspect to ensure the willingness of major security actors to cooperate, and increase the local ownership in processes of SSR.

